



# The influence of traditional and non-traditional educational models on children's beliefs towards education; future expectations and resilient attitudes

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## Abstract

Key words: non-traditional models of education; resilience; future expectations; mindset; children.

Education is considered as a protective and empowering tool against social problems. Recent studies have directed their attention to non-traditional methods of education due to their influence in positive academic and personal outcomes. In Uganda, the country where this study has been conducted, the education system has remained that which was introduced under the colonial era, predominantly the traditional model. Therefore, few schools -particularly those following international curriculums-, are promoting a non-traditional educational model, with emphasis on the child's holistic development including focus on social skills and knowledge application abilities. The present research aimed to compare possible influences of traditional and non-traditional educational models on children's beliefs towards education and its potential relation with their present life perceptions, future expectations and resilient attitudes. A cross-sectional and comparative case study research design was thus adopted using qualitative research methods mainly guided by grounded theory principles. Overall, eighteen children and three teachers from three different sets of schools - a public, private and an international- in Kampala district, participated in the study which was undertaken between February and March 2015. The main results indicate that there is a positive influence on learner's perceptions and beliefs towards education within the educational model that they were under. Children's attitudes and perceptions about education and learning favoured the model in which they were immersed and preferred the academic activities of each system because of their relation with the important elements promoted in each model. Also, children in traditional model seem to have more certainty about their future accomplishment, but the ones in non-traditional settings show a deeper reflective process towards their future. The economic status of children's families -instead of the educational model- emerged as a factor related to how children perceived their present life and their future aspirations. Using a social constructivist and ecological perspective which emphasize the importance of the environment, study concludes by affirming a difference in how educational models can foster resilient attitudes. Non-traditional models are more likely to promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes as opposed to traditional models which focusing on the academic excellence of the child almost exclusively, tend to promote fixed mindset and offer fewer opportunities to develop resilient attitudes. Recommendations point to changes on educational policies and interventions including teacher training on effective praising and innovative ways of promoting and integrating critical thinking in academics.

## ACRONYMS

DfEE	Department for Employment and Education (UK)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports (Uganda)
NACCC	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (UK)
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre Uganda
PTC	Primary Teachers' College (Uganda)
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UPE	Universal Primary Education (Uganda)

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The present research is focused on children's perceptions towards education, future expectations and the development of resilient attitudes by children studying in traditional and non-traditional educational models in Kampala, Uganda.

The first chapter presents a personal perspective and background in which I explain how I got involved in the subject of education and why I consider it as one of the main strategies to promote positive changes in the world. This will be followed by a discussion on the education system of Uganda and the schools which participated in this study. Finally, the chapter will show the research questions and objectives, the scope of the study and its significance.

### 1.2 Personal perspective and motivation to undertake this study

*“One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world”*  
Malala Yousafzai

The present study was born as a response of a personal necessity in research further about alternative and non traditional methods of education, particularly their relation with resilience and their benefits for children and society. Salbon (2014) and England (1994) assume that positionality is always present, since every written text is processed and influenced by the author. However, the dialogical process between the research and participant is also affected by fieldwork. The importance then of reflexivity as a self-critical introspection and continuous scrutinises of the self as a researcher for a more flexible approach. This process benefits the researcher by being open to challenges and step aside from the idea of the observer as an impersonal machine (Opie, 1992 in England, 1994 p.82). Following his idea, I considered it important to reflect about myself and explain the motives that led me to write this thesis and to look for research and interventions that address education as an effective way to create social changes.

All through my childhood, I grew up with an example of resilience. Both of my parents come from families with vulnerable circumstances. Nevertheless, both of them surmounted difficulties, and against all odds, they achieved professional degrees and thereby, became positive, hardworking and successful people. Since then, I wondered of how possible it was for them to have changed the path of their lives, while many of their friends and relatives did not. One of my parents used to say that it is all related to one self, and that everything is possible when people are focused on one objective; the other used to say that people around you and their examples are what make the difference.... But for me I always thought it was a combination of both factors that would determine one's success.

I had all of my education in public schools. Having been in a class of 45 classmates, I learnt a lot about life, friendship and teachers' love for their students and profession. As such, I cannot complain. In addition, having studied under a traditional model, I was in fact a "good" student... Despite of the fact that I had many to memorize all the summaries, I was lucky enough to find teachers and other people who looked for different ways to prepare for their class; interaction and research activities, words of encouragement and challenges are the things that I remember the most.

*"Why is it called a "problem"? People don't have time to solve other's problems.... I will call them "Maths exercises", my dad used to say while helping me with my Maths homework; and suddenly my perception to education started changing. I had my high school in an artistic school, how different! To study in a place where art has the same value as "academic" subjects is one of the best things that can happen to anyone. Later, when I started college, my generation was part of a pilot project of "Problem Based Learning". Once again, I had the opportunity to explore, propose, and decide what I considered important to learn and later research on it. It was not easy to take that responsibility and my classmates and I had many doubts about it, but retrospectively I can see how useful that method was, and through that experience, I can see what needs to be modified to make this form of learning more effective.*

My experience as a student in seven countries and as a teacher in two of them has reaffirmed my idea that school should be a place where students explore, share, interact and create together. When reading and experiencing how education is held in other countries I cannot avoid thinking that Mexico is actually doing a good job on its perceptions and projections of education, but that it still has a long way to go; particularly when providing teachers with proper conditions to develop their skills. As a teacher, I have faced the dilemma to go by the curriculum, return to things that students were supposed to "know" in order to understand new topics –but they don't-, or direct the class to topics that are actually relevant in their real life.

As a follower of Sir Ken Robinson and Sugata Mitra, my dreams target alternative and non-traditional educative models available for all students; teachers trained on these subjects and public policies supporting them. I know it is not an easy way, but I also know we are many who are dreaming and doing something about it. I hope this study can also contribute to it

## 1.3 Background to the study

In most of the countries, if not all, access to education is not only a basic right but also a key to address social problems, a tool to empower people, promote better opportunities and promote equality in the world. Investing in children and education implies positive returns for society by impacting on the existent inequalities, but also contributing to foster resilient individuals who are able to cope better with academic and personal situations (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Neil, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

Even as education is assumed as a protective and empowering factor, the way in which children use their time at school and the implemented teaching-learning techniques have been debated for many years. Authors like Paulo Freire (1998), Dewey (1997), Sir Ken Robinson (2010) or Mitra (2005) have pointed out how necessary it is to understand schools as opportunities for collaboration, innovation and knowledge construction. Traditional and non-traditional models of education –where the teacher is the main figure and students passively memorize the information, compared to environments that allow reflection, participation and knowledge application– have been part of this debate in relation to their utility and how the education system and its purpose is understood from different perspectives (Boumavá, 2008; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; NACCC, 1999; Paterson, Tyler, & Lexmond, 2014).

Similarly, in the past years Dweck (2009) has studied the concept of mindset – people’s basic beliefs about learning and abilities-; and its impact on behaviour and attitudes in class. She assumes that students with a growing mindset are more likely to perceive difficulties as challenges and work through them to solve them and learn from them as well. Scholars have studied these characteristics, as well as high future expectations as elements related to resilient attitudes (e.g. Burrell, 2008; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011). Therefore, for this research, resilience will be assumed not only as the capacity to overcome risky circumstances or adversity, but also as the ability to develop a proactive attitude that allows students to face failures, overcome and learn from mistakes, use the experiences as a source of personal growth and continue trying to reach goals (Dweck, 2009; Laursen, 2015; Mullen, 2010; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In the next section, I will discuss the education model of Uganda in order to understand the actual policies towards education and reveal whether students in this country have space to critically discuss information.

### 1.3.1 Uganda and its education model

Uganda is an East-African, nicknamed “the Pearl of Africa” by Sir Winston Churchill. It is the “second youngest” country on the planet, with 49 percent of its population being younger than 15 years which implies that half of the population is yet to enter into the workforce. In Uganda, the education system has not changed much since the colonial era. Education structure includes seven years of primary education; six years of secondary; and three to five years of tertiary education (MoES, n.d.). With the introduction of Universal Primary Education program (UPE) in 1997, Uganda became one of the first countries in Africa to have eliminated school fees for primary education. UPE’s major objectives were related to “making basic education accessible and equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities; as well as ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans to enable every child to enter and remain in school

until they complete the primary education cycle. From its onset, government committed itself to provide tuition fees for four children per family, text books, basic physical facilities, pay teachers' salaries; and train teachers".(MoES, 1999, pp7,10).

In Uganda, parents see education as an investment. After their children have completed schooling, which means, at least graduating with a degree or diploma, they expect that they will find a job with a good salary which in return will raise their social status (Meinert, 2009, p. 163 in Salborn, 2014). Therefore, the educational system in this context promotes grades as proof of capacity, and the perceptions and beliefs about education and future income are reinforced by parental and teacher's expectations and classroom activities.

Nevertheless, the Ugandan educational system is neither geared towards innovation nor the development of new solutions to old problems, and so the alignment of the Ugandan educational system does not match practical realities (Salborn, 2014 p.19). Generally, the performance of children and schools is entirely indicated through an exam-based merit system and the educational opportunities are fully based on that system. Statistics indicate that the majority of literate Ugandans go through two basic levels of education –primary and secondary- but very few make progress to university and other tertiary institutions (MoEs, 2000).Therefore, large numbers of students are forced out of the system at each transition because of limited capacity at the next level. In addition, the proportion of pupils starting the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary who reach the final grade of primary remains low (Vermeulen 2013, p.96). These facts mean that since the education system in Uganda is mostly based on completing a university degree or diploma, those who do not attain these qualifications are looked at as failures and it is not uncommon to find the same person judging themselves as failures.

### 1.3.2 Curriculum for upper primary

All Public and Private primary schools in Uganda are supposed to follow the official Ugandan Curriculum for primary. In upper primary (P) (P5-P7), the curriculum is subject based. It intends to promote competence-based learning, focusing competences on what a learner can do, instead of what he or she can remember. At primary six, methods should prepare learners for effective participation in doing simple investigations and further study of the topics in the next class and eventually in secondary level. Such methods among others include experimentation, discovery, play way inquiry, project, dramatization and discussion (NCDC, 2010, p. xvi).

The general methodology for the Primary Six Curriculum states that

“(Teachers) are expected to enhance learning through the most effective learner-centred activities (and) to facilitate learning as the learners do the activity-based learning of contents”. Furthermore, it is stated in the curriculum that “(chosen methods for each subject) should be those which contribute towards learner-centred activities for the achievements of the competences, learning outcomes and eventually lead to the achievements of the aims and objectives of Primary Education, (which among others) include: experimentation, discovery, play way inquiry, project, dramatization, and discussion” (NCDC, 2010, p. 13-14).

For comparative reasons, I also studied the curriculum of one of the International primary schools in Uganda. The selected primary school curriculum for this study employed the England and Wales Curriculum as well as the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) to support the first former.

“England and Wales curriculum aim is to provide pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement. It is assumed as one element in the education of every child, provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum” (England Department of Education, 2013 p.6).

The International Primary Curriculum is a

“comprehensive, thematic, creative curriculum for 3-11 year olds, with a clear process of learning and with specific learning goals for every subject, for International mindedness and for personal learning. It was designed to ensure rigorous learning but also to help teachers make all learning exciting, active and meaningful for children. It considers a global approach; helping children to connect their learning to where they are living now as well as looking at the learning from the perspective of other people in other countries” (IPC official website).

The Ugandan National Curriculum and the curriculum implemented in the international school present differences among each and are likely to promote different abilities, attitudes and learning.

## 1.4 Problem statement and research questions

Non-traditional models of education have been studied as strategies that positively impact creativity, collaborative work, critical thinking and grit (Boumavá, 2008; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel, Cater, & Varela, 2009; Mitra, 2005; NACCC, 1999; Robinson, 2010). Its use has been discussed as a protective factor for the development of growing mindset and resilient attitudes (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Similarly, perceptions towards school activities and self-competences seem to play an important role in how children face challenges and how they project their future (Dweck, 2009; Halleröd, 2011). In a Ugandan education context, which scholars have studied to reflect the colonial times (Salborn, 2014; Vermeulen, 2013), it becomes interesting to compare traditional and non-traditional models as well as their possible relations with children’s beliefs towards education, future and resilient attitudes.

Having said the above, the research questions that this investigation sought to answer are:

1. How do different educational model influence learner’s perceptions and beliefs towards education?
2. How do children studying in traditional and non-traditional educational models

- envision their future?
3. How do children studying in non-traditional and traditional educational models perceive their present life?
  4. Is there a difference on how non- traditional and traditional educational models can foster resilience among children?

## 1.5 General and specific objectives

The general objective of this study was to explore the possible influence of educational models on children's beliefs towards education and its potential relation with resilient attitudes in traditional and non-traditional curriculum-based schools in Uganda.

### **The specific objectives were:**

- I. To describe children's beliefs and perceptions about education and academic performance in traditional and non-traditional educational models;
- II. To describe future life expectations of children studying under traditional and non-traditional educational models;
- III. To examine present life perceptions of children studying under traditional and non-traditional educational models.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

This study explored possible relations among education models, beliefs towards educations, future expectations and resilient attitudes. It was based on an ecological and social constructivist perspective. The study employed a cross-sectional and exploratory research design, using qualitative methods of inquiry in a comparative-case oriented research.

It intended to increase knowledge in the area of alternative and non-traditional education on developing countries and its possible relation with resilient attitudes and social mobility. Data was collected within three different schools, a local public primary school, a Private primary school and a International primary school<sup>1</sup>, all situated in Uganda's Capital, Kampala. Schools were implementing either Ugandan Primary Curriculum or British curriculum and International Primary Curriculum. Public and Private school represented an educative environment based on traditional models, while the international school represented the educational setting based on non-traditional models<sup>2</sup>. In each school, 6 students and one teacher from grade 6 or primary 6 (P6) were interviewed, resulting into interviews with 18 children (9 boys and 9 girls) and 3 teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> Private and International school are both Private. The last one is mainly targeting children from different countries, offering education with International standards. Nevertheless, some Ugandans also purchase their education there. From this point on, schools will be differentiated as "public school", "Private school" and "International school".

<sup>2</sup> A definition of traditional and non-traditional educative models was created based on the available literature. During the interviews –both with children and teachers–, participants were asked about the activities developed in the classroom and how they were conducted, allowing to categorize public and private school under the traditional model and international under the non-traditional.

## 1.7 Study significance

This study attempted to go beyond the importance of education to promote resilience and a better future. It attempted to take advantage of educational research and programs implemented in other countries, and emphasize the power and importance of non-traditional education models for better prepared, more engaged and committed students that can improve their living conditions and generate social changes. In addition, the study findings can motivate children to reach higher levels of education, as well as to believe in their capabilities. Furthermore, the task of projecting positive future expectations is not only for teachers and parents, but also for everyone. If children and adolescents lack access to the prerequisite resources and opportunities, it can affect their development and the perceptions about themselves and their future. Interventions with children should include elements that allow children to reflect on their perceptions, beliefs and attributions. Therefore, investment in education and emotional wellbeing of children implies positive returns for all society (Esping-Andersen, 2009; NACCC, 1999; Paterson et al., 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

### 1.7.1 In educational policy development

The present research may contribute as background, evidence and an element to consider for impact in public and education policies in developing countries. Zhang (2012) states that social structure and educational systems, as well as perceptions on the roles of teachers and the values of education might be different when comparing developed and developing countries. Therefore, this author implies that exploring the mechanisms through which school processes may affect students' educational outcomes will bring insights into the educational stratification research. Similarly, Paterson et al. (2014) assumes that research and interventions related to develop personal characteristics like resilient attitude and character are one of the keys to promote social mobility.

Related to the above, It is assumed that if the state is already committed to provide universal education and increase quality life, it may be open to restructure policies and implement strategies that have proved its effectively and positive results on a immediate and long term scale. Therefore, research in the area is needed to understand the conditions of a specific context and propose how to amalgamate effective and interesting educative practices within a specific framework and culture.

### 1.7.2 In social work practice

This research adopts a preventive posture assuming education as a protective factor to promote, practice and develop resilience. By assuming analyzing and proposing specific strategies that can be implemented in vulnerable socio-economic or educational settings, it attempts to diminish the gap on educational advantages related with education as a commodity, intending to promote strategies to equalize opportunities and personal and academic outcomes -particularly for children in less favourable conditions-.

The study is also relevant for the social work practice due the emphasis on the context, culture and significant others –like teachers and classmates- on children’s abilities and perceptions about their capacities. The above reinforcing the importance of interactions outside familiar systems, and teacher’s figure as a key element for positive child development; particularly if teachers offer the opportunities to develop critical thinking, reflection and possibilities resilient attitudes.

### 1.7.3 In future research

This study will sum to the few information in Uganda about educational models and their impact on resilience, acting as referent points not only to research on different educational models and their relation with individual and social factors, but also will serve as a point of reference to design and implement specific interventions and analyze their impact and efficacy among population in vulnerable circumstances.



# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The present chapter explores and discusses how education has changed since it was imposed by Bismark in 1873, and how it maintains the characteristics that are now considered necessary for education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Similarly, the chapter explores curriculum evolution in the Ugandan educative system especially the upper primary. It brings up some of the critics that the efficacy of the model has particularly when comparing theory and what happens in reality. Personal and cognitive aspects of education are also discussed especially those addressing how and what learners think about education and how what they think or perceive of education influences their perceptions and behaviours. The concept of mindset as proposed by Dweck (2009) is explained and the suggestions to promote an effective mindset are also examined. Future expectations are important on children's present and future performance. The chapter then addresses the differences between traditional and non-traditional methods of education. Finally, the chapter ends with education and its impact on social mobility and a review and discussion of the ecological and social constructivist perspective in line with this study's conceptualisation.

### 2.2 Education in/for the XXI century

Formal education developed around 300 BCE, during the times of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates. In 1873, Otto Von Bismarck of Prussia made education mandatory for everyone; He believed that education automatically increases the effectiveness and working standards of the workers. Thus, everyone was forced to attend school in order to be appointed in any official post. Bismarck's model was remarkably successful that it was adapted by many nations around the world. Following Bismarck's imposition of education, the universal standard and the modern educational system were born (Marsh 2001; Steinberg2011, in Salborn, 2014).

Education as basic children's right, is associated with many development outcomes and interacts with other factors for the achievement of the related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Equal access to education must remain as a primary goal on the International agenda. However, the attention should also be directed to ensuring quality learning outcomes. As expressed by Sayed (2013, p. 9) "the focus on access and completion ignores what students actually learn...Education and training are not meeting the needs and demands of all young people to thrive and participate fully in society".

Curriculum, assessment and pedagogy are three important pillars of modern education, and the last one represents an area of opportunity to invest human and economic resources because it is how children learn that has the greatest impact. Therefore, special attention should be put on fostering trained and motivated teachers (Lambert, 2014). Lambert's remark indicates the importance of teacher's involvement in the education process, but also the dependency that teachers can have on a determinate school curriculum, education policies and situations related to education. As an example, in this study conditions among the three participant schools differed

not only in the type of curriculum, but also in the number of students and facilities, as well as familiar, economical and academic conditions of students. This reflects how different elements are interconnected and the importance on researching the implication of class methodologies and circumstances behind them.

Modern education is still functional, as millions of people successfully go through it, but it serves the purpose of conserving the status quo set by Bismarck and which served later the industrial revolution and economic process. In the case of Uganda, Salborn (2014, p. 24) affirms that one deeply rooted idea is that schooling leads to finding a job and having a good life because this reflects the way the job market used to function. However, this belief has drastically changed in the past years and will continue moving towards a different direction.

Education experts agree that the single minded focus on academic competencies is insufficient to prepare learners for success in an increasingly complex world (Laursen, 2015). Nowadays cultural change and diversity; change in the economic market; growing in population and the era of access to information, imply new challenges and priorities for education; emphasizing on a creative and cultural system and a new balance in teaching and in the curriculum. In an era where memorization is not needed anymore, education should focus on the process rather than the product. Education should address the cognitive, emotional and social aspects of students' life. To prepare for the realities of the future workplace and the rapidly changing technological landscape, it is critical to foster children's critical and flexible thinking to pursue answers, rather than on only memorizing facts (Mitra, 2005; Mitra, Leat, Dolan, & Crawley, 2010; NACCC, 1999; Robinson, 2010). Even as this knowledge is readily available, public education in Uganda, particularly those following traditional models, is still far from the experts' recommendations.

## 2.3 Ugandan curriculum evolution and its effectiveness

Uganda was one of the first African countries to establish free access to Education under the famous name of Universal Primary Education program (UPE) in 1997. The introduction of UPE aimed to “eradicate illiteracy and equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development as well as national development” by “promoting scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to enhance individual and national development” (NCDC, 2010, p. 8,9).

In his study, Vermeulen (2013) explains how primary education curriculum in Uganda has gone through different reforms. The first of them introduced by a Government White Paper in 1992 with the implementation of a new primary curriculum in 2000 and 2002. The reform(s) focused on vocational subjects and the use of local languages in lower primary grades. However, due to implementation problems, a new primary curriculum reform was again adopted in 2005, which finally led to the development and implementation of the Thematic Curriculum in 2007. It introduced a child-centred approach with new pedagogical teaching methods that were thought to make learning relevant to children's daily lives and interlocked throughout the different disciplines. This curriculum introduced a continuous assessment; a focus on reading, writing, numeracy and life skills, and the use of local language during the first three years (Ibid).

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) acknowledged that the introduction of UPE implied a big achievement given the fact that there was a drastic increase in primary school enrolment. However, the major challenge has been to ensure that the increase in enrolment is matched with quality. Among the interventions to improve the quality of UPE was the review of the Primary School and Primary Teacher Education Curricula; training of primary school teachers, and the introduction of the “Life skills curriculum”( MoES, 2011, p. i). In the next section it is discussed the evolution of the primary school curriculum.

### 2.3.1 Curriculum for upper primary

The current curriculum was introduced in 2007 (MoES, 2011). The curriculum at this level (P5-P7) is subject based. P6 –for example- is based on 1) English; 2) Mathematics; 3) Social studies; 4) Integrated science; 5) Local language; and 6) Creative Arts and Physical Education, CAPE which is divided into CAPE1 –music, dance and drama; CAPE2 – physical education; and CAPE3 –art and technology (NCDC, 2010). In addition, each lesson/period in P6 shall take 40 minutes, and it is suggested that practical subjects be given at least one double lessons to give time to practice the new skills (NCDC, 2010, p. xi).

According to the NCDC (2010, pp xvi), the P6 curriculum intends to promote competence-based learning, focusing on what a learner can do, instead of what they can remember. At this grade, the methods of teaching should prepare learners for effective participation in doing simple investigations and further study of the topics in the next class and eventually in secondary level. Such methods among others include experimentation, discovery, play way inquiry, project, and dramatization. Nevertheless, different authors agree that even when changes in the thematic curriculum are perceived as positive development, the reforms only are inadequate to address the challenges faced in public primary education. In other words, the thematic curriculum is assumed as good in theory but not in practice (Nishimura, Yamano, & Sasaoka, 2008; Vermeulen, 2013).

### 2.3.2 Theory and reality – critics to educational system efficacy

It is observable that, UPE, as a response to the Millennium Development Goals has decreased delayed enrolments and increased grade completion rates up to the fifth grade. Moreover, girls’ enrolment in school has also increased. However, it has increased enrolment to such an extent that the quality of education has fallen down, especially because of high levels of school dropout, repetition, low completion rates, and high pupil/teacher ratios.

Thematic Curriculum has shifted from teaching different subjects to teaching in several selected themes or learning areas. For the MoES, these changes make easier for teachers to handle large groups, since it is based on the direct environment. However, it is argued that teachers lack the training to handle this new approach. Moreover, even when teachers are considered as one of the most important actors to provide quality education, their terms and conditions are in general still poor (Vermeulen, 2013).

Schools in Uganda still face challenges in terms of low internal efficiency and the unequal quality of education with over-age enrolment and elevated attrition rates (Nishimura, Yamano, & Sasaoka 2008 pp161; Tamusuza 2011, pp110). Vermulen (2013) points out that the country is still trying to overcome the *access shock* caused by introducing UPE, and he assumes that challenges in education are too large to be tackled through only a curriculum change.

Other critics to the educative system in Uganda correspond to the time spent for actual teaching in relation to other activities during the day. Meinert (2009 in Salborn, 2014, p. 48) identified, that in some Ugandan schools more than half of the day goes by with disciplinary measures taken by the teachers. Similarly Salborn (2014, p.48-49), also points the attention to the didactics inside the classroom, which have a dynamics of repetition and memorization:

“A very frequent technique is for the teacher to start a sentence, then in the middle or end of it, he or she asks the question “What”, which signals to the students that they are expected to finish the sentence all together in chorus. This rhetorical technique (...) if done too many times per day becomes an automatic process of memorization and repetition where any kind of creativity, problem solving or critical thinking is not needed. This daily technique is so engrained into Ugandans that it can be found within daily conversations all over the country; through this technique, Ugandan students are conditioned to memorize and repeat”.

In summary, the new curriculum methods are perceived as a good accomplishment, but they are difficult to implement in practice because of the lack of training of the teachers (Vermeulen, 2013). Reflections then should focus on how to implement quality education among all students in Uganda; which are the current teaching-learning strategies and if they match the criteria of a child-centred curriculum, and which effect a real child-centred education can have among children and their present and future development.

## 2.4 Beliefs towards one self and education

Beliefs are often considered guiding perceptual forces that impose meaning on events in people's lives and can have effects on people's motivation to thrive and abilities to succeed. To form beliefs about themselves, people are likely to social-compare as a means of evaluation (Marino, 2014; Johnson & Stapel, 2010). Beliefs about effort, attributions for their setbacks and learning strategies in the face of setbacks explain how some students are more resilient than others when confronted in a challenging school transition (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). The latest emphasizes the importance of educative environments that favour positive self-beliefs and sense of accomplishment, focusing on achievements during the process and not only in the final mark.

Personal attributions, as well as expectations from caregivers and educators' influence on child's cognitions, behaviours and achievements (Kim, 2014). Nevertheless, when grades and teacher perceptions are understood as reflection of “cognitive ability”, children might experience stressful situations in order to adjust themselves to what the teacher or the system is demanding. Then, children's self-belief systems, emotional resources, positive images about themselves,

classroom management and relationships with teachers and peers may affect effort, achievement, goal choice and perceptions of education (McWilliams, 2015).

People's perceptions involve not only cognitive, social and behavioural skills, but what one can do with the skills one has. Therefore, beliefs will influence thought patterns, behaviour, and emotional reactions in different situations. Self-efficacy and positive beliefs have been listed as characteristics of resilient people, suggesting that high levels of them will lead to strong resilience (Bernard, 2004 & Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, both in Hamilton, 2012; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Similarly, the importance of positive beliefs towards oneself is supported by the premise that people who attribute success to internal factors, and consider external situations as elements for failure, are more likely to maintain feelings of competence and persist in the face of challenging circumstances (Seligman, 1999 in Crawford, 2006 pp39).

## 2.5 Fostering an effective mindset

People's assigned meaning to their experiences, and interpretations of their situations play a significant role on their outcomes (Crawford, 2006; Laursen, 2015; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In school, the way in which children respond to challenging situations and school achievements will impact their perceptions about being able to shape their own learning and on how to handle future situations (Hall & Pearson, 2003 in Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Halleröd, 2011; Johnson & Stapel, 2010). However, these interpretations are largely influenced by social expectations or teachers attitudes. In other words, different elements –personal, social and cultural– are continuously interacting and influencing people's perceptions of their situations. In this sense, it is important to explore and understand how children receive and interpret information from significant others about school and education, and how they use those interpretations when evaluating or comparing themselves.

Mindset has been defined as a person's basic belief about learning and ability (Dweck, 2000 & 2006, in Ravenscroft, Waymire, & West, 2012 p.707). It is usually independent of other situational variables and determines how people regard targets and how those influence self-evaluations and performance. Also, it determines what kind of social comparison information is influential, and affects cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to comparisons (Johnson & Stapel, 2010, p. 704).

Authors like Pride (2014) explain that students who want to take ownership in their learning will find a way to appropriate meaningful learning, even in restrictive classrooms. However, other studies assume that traditional educational practices can squash curiosity for learning, and have proved how certain education environments and academic practices can foster more adaptive and useful characteristics among students, reporting that students' mindsets, perseverance and grit have an influence on children grades, engagement, class attendance, assignment completion, learning from failure, and sticking to tasks until completed (*Farrington 2012 and Ricci 2013*, both in Laursen, 2015 p.20).

Dweck (2009, pp. 8, 9), defines two very different mindsets – fixed and growth and explains how people's beliefs influence their achievements.

“People with a fixed mindset believe that their intelligence is simply fixed, they usually value looking smart over learning, do not care to explore topics in depth; are not disposed to engage in critical thinking to gain and share knowledge; and they are low on self-accountability and self-assessment strategies. In fact, rather than trying to recognize their weaknesses, they run from them, conceal them, and even lie about them. On the contrary, students with a growth mindset believe that intelligence can be developed, seek out learning, develop deeper learning strategies, and strive for an honest assessment of their weaknesses so they can work to remedy them. They are usually engaged in school, possess critical thinking, persistence, and knowledge-sharing action”.

Previous researches have demonstrated that helping students to develop a growth mindset promotes constructive behaviours, leads to higher attributions of success and failure to effort; and promote perseverance through failure, setbacks and challenges (McWilliams, 2015; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Sriram, 2010). Scott Yeager & Dweck compilation of interventions in different schools around USA (2012) showed that students exposed to interventions about malleability of brains and incremental intelligence theory developed a growing mindset, even when many of those students belonged to risk groups.

Authors like Laursen and Droe (2015; 2013), agree with Dweck’s suggestions when they say that a growing mindset can be fostered by praising students for their learning process. When students are praised for intelligence, it makes them eager to “look smart” so they will avoid the possibility of making mistakes even if that implies new learning. Then, when a material becomes difficult, they think that the difficulty means that they are not smart and they no longer try in order to avoid mistakes. On the contrary, by praising the process, effort, or persistence, a growth mindset with its emphasis on learning and its resilience can be promoted. Usually, when these students face difficulties, they engage more fully, analyse the problems more deeply, persist, and improve (Dweck 2009, p. 9). The latest information became of primordial interest for this study because of the positive implications of specific mindset interventions regardless of the group where they are applied, even if they operate under traditional methods of education. Nonetheless, in order to implement these interventions on a traditional system, teacher’s training on growing mindset and effective praising strategies are needed as a first step.

Besides praising effort, mindset can also be directly taught to students by teaching them about the brain and its plasticity when learning new things. Studies have showed that efforts to change mindsets can increase resilience even without removing the adversities students encounter in school (Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Nevertheless, students risk not employing intellectual or social skills related with resilience adequately, unless their mindsets foster the idea that their academic and social adversities have the potential to improve (Blackwell et al., 2007; Yeager, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, in Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). As Paunesku, Yeager, Romero and Walton (2012 in Scott Yeager & Dweck 2012 p.305), explain, “even when effort is necessary it is not enough; children must learn skills to understand their brain’s connections and practice to develop new abilities and master the old ones”. Since Dweck (2009), assumes that twenty-first century will belong to passionate and resilient learners; teachers can support this processes by working in the classroom with “assigned learning goals” and strategies associated with the development of a growth mindset (Dishon-Berkovits, 2014; Dweck, 2009).

In summary, psychological characteristics like self-perceptions, beliefs and mindset are associated with resilient attitudes, which relates with the present study as it seems more likely that characteristics of non-traditional methods foster a growth mindset, positive academic achievements and personal implications like resilient attitudes.

## 2.6 Future expectations

The term “future expectations” has a reciprocal relationship with self-esteem and children’s achievements, and implies concrete plans for the future, visions in terms of goals, hopes and expectations as well as the belief that certain events will occur in their lifetime (Kim, 2014; Davis, 2013; Feliciano, 2006 in Minello & Barban, 2012; Nurmi, 1991 in Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004 p.188). As future images include external expectations and evaluation of one’s past successes and challenges, people’s expectations tend to be influenced by personal and social characteristics; particularly perceptions and interpretations of present and future events. (Cunningham, Corprew, & Becker, 2009; Kim, 2014)

Expectations are usually informed judgments based on stereotyping, self-esteem, risk-taking behaviour or all of them in combination. They reflect the child’s knowledge of his or her current situation, abilities and achievements; and in children above 12 years old, these expectations can have a long-term impact on their lives (Halleröd, 2011). Under the construct of future expectations resides the concept of academic future expectations, understood as a predictor of educational choice and as a measure of social integration (Minello & Barban, 2012). Within a feed-back process, students with higher academic future expectations do better in school and students who do better have higher academic future expectations (Cunningham et al., 2009). Nonetheless, a child’s early feelings of disengagement in school will have strong negative impact on his/her later educational expectations and achievements (Zhang, 2012).

The above reopen the discussion on how important it is to acknowledge emotional situations and children’s self-perceptions due to their influence on future expectations and school performance. Similarly, it is important to pay attentions to factors related to those expectations, and how, beside family, education models, teachers and classmates play a significant role on the self-concept and the expectancies towards future.

Socio-cultural and individual factors are also related to the type of future expectations developed by children and adolescents, particularly those in vulnerable conditions. Poverty has been studied as a risk factor for negative or low future expectations. There is a link between extreme poverty and a “hopelessness depression”, characterized by feelings and thoughts of having an undesirable future from which there is no escape (Bolland, 2003; Durant, Getts, Cadenhead, Emans, & Woods, 1995 in Burrell, 2008 p12). For instance, students from disadvantaged families tend to have lower expectations of themselves, which are closely connected with student poor achievements at school. Besides, other studies have found that in general teachers tend to have lower educational expectations for students from low-income families compared to their peers from higher-income families, and for students from minority groups (Zhang, 2014; Crano and

Mellon 1992 in Zhang 2014).

Despite of the fact that the relation that high expectations seem to have with positive future achievements, Halleröd longitudinal study (2011, pp. 79, 80) concludes with the assumption that “high expectations for the future are not enough. Expectations do not help much when reality kicks in. Some children know that, and the rest will eventually learn”. Nonetheless, the perception that children hold of their present life, their future situations and their abilities to achieve it, will definitely shape how their efforts and actions to achieve them. As mentioned before, success is not only about expectations or effort alone, but also the capacity to practice and master abilities and grit towards one’s goals.

Expectations towards future have been related with resilient adaptation and influence in later adjustment. They can modify a child’s response or ways of adapting to stress and are assumed as protective factors in times of transition, and for health outcomes in the future (Davis, 2013; Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004; Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993). Predictors of positive future orientations and actions to accomplish them are related to identity exploration and commitment, self efficacy, identity, internal control, self esteem, responsibility and self-worthiness (Kim 2014; Kerpelman& Mosher 2004). Perception of challenges and support is also considered as a significant factor for future expectations, which is also related to achievement performance and influenced by individual interpretations or previous achievements. (Cunningham et al., 2009; Eccles and Wigfield 2000 in Zhang, 2014).

The role of individuals influencing their environment is not a small one. Children’s influence in their environment and future through their expectations and actions, have been explained by theories like Ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 in Burrell, 2008); Expectancy-value theory (Wigfield and Eccles 2000 in Wood, 2009) and cultural-ecological theory (Ogbu and Simons 1998 in(Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012). As Wyman et al. (1993, p. 649) mentioned“(findings in future expectations), underscore the role children have in actively structuring their environments and, thus, influencing their development”.

## 2.7 Traditional and non-traditional methods of education

The foundations of the present education systems –not only in Uganda, but in many countries–relay at the end of the nineteenth century, when it was designed to meet the needs of industrialization (Robinson, 2010). However, education around the world faces economic, technological, social and personal challenges that have opened discussions on how schools should provide abilities that allow students to actively contribute to the social and economic life, and actively adapt to challenges of the 21st century. Among these abilities are self-esteem, collaboration, problem-solving, grit, perseverance, tenacity, self-control, creativity, critical thinking, computation skills, decision-making, communication and investigative research (Laursen, 2015, 2015; NACCC, 1999; Salborn, 2014)

Learning is a holistic and integrative process constructed from interactions between person and environment. It requires interest and motivation to engage student’s participation in knowledge creation (Michel et al., 2009). However, when the highest importance is put on quantifiable



results, the risk is that teaching focuses on the test, rather than engaging students in deep learning (Laursen, 2015). Then, exam-based education creates many failures because it discourages creativity and adaptive thinking, discouraging students from asking the critical questions that would instead lead to creativity (Kibuuka, 2008, p.44 in Salborn 2014). When exams and standardized tests promote the idea of “absolute truth”, mistakes are seen as wrong, undesirables and something to be avoided (Salborn 2014). Therefore, ideas challenging the system are usually rejected and children’s potentials, passions and creative capabilities have little chance to blossom (Salborn 2014). Traditional education paradigms keep being one of the main resources inside classrooms. However, many countries, schools and teachers are shifting paradigms and implementing alternative methods to face new challenges, keep students motivated and promote people able to be active and use theory and knowledge to propose solutions to real problems (Michael, Cartel and Varela 2009).

Traditional methods of education have been the dominant pedagogic strategies in the education system. They promote a teacher centred and text book oriented approach and are usually focused on areas of knowledge in isolation with little opportunity for group activities, discussions, experimental exercises or practical use of academic learning. The responsibility for teaching and learning is mainly on the teacher, and it is believed that students only have to be present and listen to the teacher’s explanations and examples to automatically acquire and use the knowledge. Students are expected to passively receive and internalize information through memorization. Also, grades are an important element, assigned mainly by exams results and determining students capacities (Boumavá, 2008; Michel, Cater, & Varela, 2009; Stewart-Wingfield & Black, 2005 in Michel et al., 2009; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006).

Non-traditional models attempt to shift the paradigm in which the student is only a receptor who has to memorize what the teacher considers important. These paradigms have received different concepts that in some cases can be used as synonyms, while in others they refer to specific activities. They can be grouped under the names of alternative education, non-traditional education or non-formal education. Generally, education should include principles of creativity, leadership and active learning (Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel et al., 2009; Robinson, 2010).

Non-traditional methods of education imply different models of instruction in which learners share responsibility and reflect about their own learning. Students have an active role in constructing their knowledge through creative, exploratory and dynamic activities that require discussion, participation and team work as well as reflections and implementation of academic learning on real-world problem solving. In these models a teacher acts more as a facilitator. Some of the strategies used under this model are collaboration, creativity, leadership, problem based and child driven learning among others (Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel et al., 2009; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006).

One characteristic of non-traditional methods are the learning environments intentionally designed to actively engage students in selection of learning activities and strategies, providing students with choice to garner ownership for learning goals and activities (Łubukgu, 2012 in Laursen 2015). In order to achieve this, active learning, problem-based, participative and cooperative learning have been used as strategies to promote dynamic classes, engage and motivate students and improve their learning outcomes. By allowing children to take part in

selecting activities or assignments in the class, work together in small groups and class discussions, and think about real life situations, it facilitates deeper understanding principles and process in each problem and can lead to improved cognitive outcomes in class-specific materials (Rotgans& Schmidt, 2011 in Laursen 2015; Michel et al., 2009; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006; Mills-Jones, 1999 in Michel et al., 2009).

A second important characteristic is collaborative learning, which enhance the learning process and student participation, influences the attainment of better learning achievements during the education process and saves time dedicated to study since students also tend to learn quicker within a group, and gain several skills, such as how to learn, who to ask for help, from whom to learn or how to find useful information (Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Benbunan-Fich and Hiltz, 2003 in Lukman & Krajnc, 2012). The importance of non-traditional approaches then lies in the possibility to encourage and empower children to cooperate and solve their challenges, rather than waiting for someone to solve them instead (Salborn 2014).

Besides personal factors related to learning and achievement, the teacher's role and characteristics are of high importance to effectively implement non-traditional education activities. This is because of the role that teacher's feedback, and instructional quality play in fostering student engagement and motivation to succeed (Crawford, 2006; Lambert, 2014; Booker, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2001 in Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012).

Diverse studies claim that active learning is more effective than passive learning (*Benek-Rivera & Matthews, 2004; Dorestani, 2005; Sarason & Banbury, 2004* all in Michel et al., 2009). Sugata Mitra (2010, 2005) who is well known for his research and experiments about self-learning states that when children have the opportunity to explore things they are interested in, and are able to work in teams and share their findings, they improve on reading comprehension, literacy, behaviour, language, creativity and problem-solving abilities. Children also develop habits to become a lifelong learner, strengthen their interpersonal skills, get better at integrating what they already know into classroom discussions, and increase their motivation to learn about more subjects and ideas. He states that child-driven learning is self-organized, curious, engaged, social, collaborative, motivated by peer-interest and fuelled by adult encouragement and admiration; and that education takes place most effectively if children have interest, motivation and can work together in small teams.

According to Meinert (2009, p. 9 in Salborn 2014) schools in Uganda focus purely on academic learning, which is in many cases unrelated to the daily reality of students. This leads to difficulties finding employment and living up to the families' expectations after the so-called investment into the child's education. Salborn (2014, pp. 45, 46, 53) mentions that

“Ugandan educational system socially conditions its students towards competition, development and economic growth; and generating uniformity where the desired students are all the same: obedient and disciplined, while autonomy over one's own future, critical thoughts and analytical skills are completely neglected”

Therefore rethinking educational practices has become an unquestionable topic. Alternative-active approaches and non-traditional methods of education have been studied and implemented in countries like UK, USA and Finland and all have produced positive results (Levin & Segedin,

2011). Research on the same area but in developing countries has also risen, bringing down the paradigm that innovative approaches are only for wealthy countries (Figueredo & Anzalone, 2003). However, there is still much to be done in research and interventions regarding teacher-students relations and learning environments in developing countries (Zhang, 2014).

## 2.8 Education, resilience and social mobility

During the past decades, resilience has been an important construct in the areas of psychology, education and social sciences with an assumption that individuals have the capacity to positively adapt despite adverse circumstances. It is understood as a multidimensional factor, associated with people's context and related more to a process rather than a single event (Cunningham et al., 2009; Luthar, 2006; Ungar, 2011). Conditions in which individuals are considered resilient include the exposure to substantial adversity in the present or in the past, and they adequately function despite this exposure (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2000; and Klimes-Dougan & Kendziora 2002, both in Crawford, 2006).

Recent research in resilience (Dweck, 2009; Laursen, 2015; Mullen, 2010; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012) have also studied it as an attitude that can be taught to promote better coping strategies when facing stressful or negative events. These authors adopt a posture in which is not necessary to have been exposed to substantial adversity or risk to be resilient; on the contrary, they assume that resilient attitudes –*abilities to face positively difficult or negative events in life*- can be taught and help individuals to cope effectively with change, and work constructively with human weaknesses and system failures. Therefore, for this study, *resilience* was not only assumed as the capacity to overcome risky circumstances or adversity, but also as the ability to develop a proactive attitude that allows one to face failures, overcome and learn from mistakes, uses the experiences as a source of personal growth and continues trying to reach goals.

Longitudinal studies have demonstrated how resilient individuals experienced a combination of individual factors – higher intelligence, easy temperament, social competence, high self-aspirations and the confidence that the odds can be surmounted; and contextual factors such as warm relationships with parents and other caregivers in the community, engagement in school and community, and involvement in athletic activities (Werner, 1989 in Crawford 2006). Other protective factors are associated to academic self-concept, social support, parental supervision; relationships with caring adults, positive and adaptive attributions, school belongingness, IQ, family attachment and cohesion, extracurricular involvement and self-esteem. (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013). Similarly, Pawlina & Stanford (2011), Cunningham et al. (2009) and Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley (1993) have identified that high future expectations, sense of agency, self-efficacy, and the developing of a framework for approaching problems, are necessary characteristics for resilience, and likewise, are fostered through resilient attitudes. According to those authors, individuals foster resilient outcomes when they perceive more support than challenges in their various contexts. On the opposite side, risk factors that can affect the development of resilience in children have been related to low parental education, neglect and maltreatment; family instability; minority status; single motherhood; antisocial behaviour and delinquency; limited parental supervision and structure; community violence; low socioeconomic status and grade retention (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013).

Scott Yeager & Dweck (2012) argue that interpretations are a fundamental part in mindset and resilience. Therefore, they assume that students can be taught to understand how mindset is formed and specific strategies to change it, allowing children to show more resilient interpretations and reactions to a challenge. This paradigm, in which resilient attitudes, mindset, social and academic skills can be taught and modified highlights the importance that practitioners and policymakers have to encourage and implement changes related to the development of those abilities (Dweck, 2009; Mazzone et al., 2007; Paterson et al., 2014; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Sriram, 2010). Education policy changes need to be done, and teacher's importance needs to be acknowledged, particularly because of their influence on children's confidence in their ideas, their understanding of challenges, and their decisions on what to do and how to work with those challenges. Similarly, when offering children different opportunities like normalizing challenges and the effort needed to meet them; helping children look at problems from a place of empowerment, building strategies for children to apply in difficult situations, and fostering a community that seeks and supports learning and problem solving through a wide range of experiences, students' mindsets can be changed and promote resilience.

The belief that "challenges offer a way to get smarter" is crucial for promoting resilience. Therefore, the importance of interventions addressed to promote growing mindsets, and the work with teachers characteristics and abilities to truly promote resilience. Challenges should be presented to students as things that they can take on and overcome over time with effort, new strategies, learning, help from others, and patience. When emphasizing people's potential to change, students will be more prepared to face life's challenges resiliently (Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

### 2.8.1 Education and social mobility

More than 30 years ago, Dorking (1981, in Kymlicka, 2002) mentioned that people's fate should depend on their ambition, not in the circumstances in which they pursued their ambitions. This is still not a reality for everyone; people position in the economic hierarchy is determined by one's relationship to the market, being unfair for some individuals to be disadvantaged or privileged by arbitrary and undeserved differences in their social circumstances. Unequal access to universal education presents an obstacle to social mobility, and people from less affluent backgrounds become less likely than their fortunate peers to develop the academic and "non-cognitive" skills required in the 21st Century (Checchi 2003 in Minello & Barban, 2012; Paterson, Tyler, & Lexmond, 2014).

Literature shows that great disparities in wealth entail heightened levels of social distrust (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), and that the risk of unequal life outcomes can be a result of social upbringing. Consequently, one way to respond and adapt to global economic change can be related to investing in children. Promotion of child welfare, ensure of developmental opportunities and educational attainment, turn into one of the key priorities for social and economic policy (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Neil et al., 2011). Related to the above, Rawls' ideas offer a general concept of justice focus on regulating disparity affecting people's life-chances;

assuming that when removing social inequalities, each person will have equal opportunities to acquire social benefits, and differences in income between individuals will be the product of people's effort or choices ( 1978 in Kymlicka 2002).

Imbalance in education still divides population, and while the resourceful may do well in a competitive market, the low educated can be severely disadvantaged, generating a strong income effect among them (Esping-Andersen, 2009). In the “character and resilience manifesto” (Paterson et al., 2014, p. 4), its authors question why some talented children grow up to fulfil their ambitions and become leaders in any number of fields, while others never realize their full potential. Similar to Rawls ideas (in Kymlicka, 2002) they conclude that a person’s life chances should be determined by their talent, not the circumstances of their birth.

Paterson et al. (2014), explore the link between social mobility and social and emotional skills - from empathy and the ability to make and maintain relationships, to application, mental toughness, delayed gratification and self-control. These authors also assume that those traits can be thought of as a belief in one’s ability to achieve; an understanding of the relationship between effort and reward; the patience to pursue long-term goals; the perseverance to stick with the task at hand, and the ability to bounce back from life’s inevitable setbacks. The increasing recognition of the relationship between these character-based skills and desirable life outcomes has been hailed by Cameron (2010 in Paterson et al., 2014, p. 11) as a “new law for social mobility” and “one of the most important findings in a generation for those who care about fairness and inequality”.

In summary, directing the attention towards education systems and non-traditional models, is perceived not only as a preventive, but also as a specific action that can imply personal benefits, social and educative competences and abilities; and the possibility to interact and impact on direct and indirect systems to challenge actual structures and promote changes that lead students to have the possibility of creativity, innovation and social mobility.

## 2.9 Gaps in the literature

The studies and information presented above clarify the importance that non-traditional methods of education and alternative approaches represent for academic performance and personal development. In the same way, the advantages embedded in these models are presented indicating one’s future position in the labour market, entrepreneurs and abilities to face challenges with resilient attitudes. Many researchers have focused on explaining those phenomena and to propose intervention to enhance those capacities. However, more studies have been conducted in developed countries with a different culture, economy, welfare and education perspective than it is the case with developing countries like Uganda. One of gaps that is worth bridging in the literature is the few studies that focus on non-traditional methods of education in developing countries, as well as possible interventions for these methods, particularly on primary school level and among children in vulnerable conditions. Relatedly, there is a dearth of literature on how to adapt strategies that have proved their efficiency in other countries to a different one, and the factors that should be considered when attempting to promote those changes. It is these gaps that this study set out to bridge. In the next section, I show how I

approached this study on a theoretical level.

## 2.10 Theoretical framework

### 2.10.1 Ecological perspective

The systems perspective postulates that individuals exist in symbiosis, and the effective function of one part of the system is inevitably influenced by the functioning of another part. Therefore, in a socio-ecological model, children development is influenced not only by the more proximal and relatively stronger influences, but also by the distal factors of the broader social context. In other words, the process operating in different settings are not independent of each other, events at home can affect the child's progress in school and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the life course between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives. [This] process is affected by the relations between these settings and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1986 p.188 in Johnson, 2008).

In his original theory, Bronfenbrenner (1979 in Berk, 2000) explained four different interconnected systems, later on, he added a fifth one. The first of those systems is the *microsystem*, which refers to the relationships and interactions with the immediate surroundings, or the pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing person in a particular setting: “the person influences and is influenced by the microsystem”. Secondly, the *mesosystem* which speaks of connections between the structures of the microsystem and comprises of the linkages between them. Thirdly, is the *exosystem*. This is formed by a larger social system that encompasses events, contingencies, decisions, and policies in which the child has no direct influence but is affected by them. Fourthly, is the *macrosystem* which refers to the “values, customs, and laws” of a given culture, or broad social context, and consists of belief systems, lifestyles, opportunities, customs, and resources embedded in them. This system exerts a higher influence on the person and subsequent systems, but is also reinforced by the actions and beliefs promoted in the other systems. Finally, is the *chronosystem*, represents a time-based dimension that influences the operation of all levels of the ecological systems. It can refer to both short- and long-term dimensions of the individual over the course of a lifespan, as well as the socio-historical time dimension of the macrosystem in which the individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, in Berk, 2000; Johnson, 2008).

According to Johnson (2008 p.1-3),

In the school setting, student achievement can be best understood as a developmental outcome that emerges as a result of interactions among layers within a complex system. School's microsystem would include students, parents and family members, administration, teachers, and the surrounding community. Similarly, the mesosystem will involve the bidirectional influences between structures on the microsystem, where parental expectations can often create a dynamic that directly and indirectly impacts the atmosphere and climate of the school. In the case of the school's exosystem, it might be

comprised of structures like state regulations, local economics, federal mandates, or local disasters. The macrosystem of a school will be embodied not only in the cultural, political, social, and economic climate of the local community, but that of the nation as a whole. Finally, the chronosystem may be represented by both the day-to-day and year-to-year developmental changes that occur in its student body, teaching staff, curricular choices, etc., as well as the overall number of years in operation.

This explanation presents how different systems are interconnected and influence the environment, practices and paradigms in school, which at the same time, impact individuals' beliefs, perspectives and behaviours related to it.

## 2.10.2 Social Constructivism

Constructivist ideas have their origins on authors like Piaget, Vygotsky or Dewey (1930, 1978, and 1938), mainly assuming that people actively construct new knowledge by combining their experiences with what they already know, and that knowledge is not delivered to the learner but constructed inside the learner's head.

Piaget and Vygotsky's theories were mainly used to explain how children acquire knowledge and the process of learning about the world. Later, their ideas as well as the ones from Dewey and other authors were put in practice in education settings, explaining the processes in which children "built" new knowledge by interacting, exploring and constructing on previous experiences. Some years later, Berger and Luckman (1966 in Teater, 2010), explored how individuals create knowledge, make sense of the world and construct reality and view of themselves. Their book "the social construction reality" was the base for what is now formally known as social constructivism, a paradigm that attempts to explain individuals' reality and how these realities are constructed based on the social context, interaction with other individuals and perceptions of the world (Teater, 2010).

Aspects of social constructivism are present in approaches like strengths perspective, solution focused, narrative therapy and person-centred approach. On the other hand, the ecological perspective assumes that "individual's interactions with their social environment and changes in one of the systems can cause a change in another system", is addressed by social constructivism when acknowledging the influence that individual and environment play on reality construction.

Social constructivism addresses the impact of environment and interpretations on human behaviour. Individuals will view their experiences based on their interpretations of previous experiences, determining how they understand the world. In Dewey's words "from the experiences of the individual, a reality is created and the individual then views future experiences through this reality" (Middelman & Wood 1993, & Dewees 1999 both in Teater 2010). Then, some of the basic premises in this theory are that humans construct or make knowledge based in their experiences –which differ from person to person-, which are influenced by social and/or cultural values (Greene and Lee 2002 in Teater 2010).

Social constructivism has five basic premises: individuals have their own reality and their own way of viewing the world; people are active participants in developing the knowledge of the

world, rather than passive recipients of stimulus-response interaction with their environment; the reality is developed through social interactions within these historical and cultural contexts; language is used to express an individual's reality; and there is no objective reality because there is no one truth(Laird, 1993; Middelman and Wood, 1993; Gergen, 2003; Dean, 1993; all in Teater (2010).

Related to the above, one of the main ideas is that social constructivism assumes that culture and context will influence individual's perceptions, interpretation and reality construction. However, these realities are in a continuous process of changing and adaptation, according to the different experiences that an individual faces during life. In other words, individuals construct their own reality based on their experiences, but these experiences take place within a historical and social context, which influence the interpretation of their experiences (Teather, 2010). Similarly, values and beliefs shaped by the historical and cultural environment tend to be determined by the dominant members of society and knowledge and meaning are created, influenced and sustained by the various institutions within that culture (Dean, 1993 & Witkin, 1995, both in Teater 2010). Additionally, individual's functions and behaviours and reactions depend on how they interpret the world based on their beliefs and value systems which have also been influenced by environment, culture and social relations.

Social constructivism offers a broader vision of reality interpretation and knowledge construction. When assuming school and classroom as a system in itself, this theory is suitable not only to understand the teaching-learning process, but the repercussions of social relations at school, dominant voices in each context, vision and interpretation of children's reality, their abilities and activities at school, as well as expectancies towards the future. Assuming school as system within specific context, values, social interactions philosophy, and teaching-learning models promoted in each school, will shape children's interpretation and construction of reality. In addition, if a school runs under a system which reflects societal interactions, and values and beliefs are usually determined by dominant members of society, teachers and principles will have a dominant voice on which aspects of school reality construction are well accepted and promoted.



# CHAPTER III

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the overall methodology for the study and the different methods and strategies adopted to execute it. It presents a description of the three participating schools and details the procedures to collect and analyse data. The chapter ends by detailing the ethical considerations for the study, based on the new sociology of childhood and its vision of children as being rather than becoming.

### 3.2 Study Design and Justification

The present study adopted a cross-sectional and exploratory research design, using qualitative methods of inquiry -to some extent informed by grounded theory principles-, in a comparative-case oriented research.

The study was cross-sectional because data was collected and analysed on more than one case at a single point in time (between February and March 2015). A constructivist perspective in which social reality is shaped by human experiences and social contexts as espoused by Teater (2004) was also used.

A case study according to Yin (1994 p.13) is understood as “a comprehensive research strategy that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. It copes with the situation in which there will be more variables of interest of data points; relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis”. In other words, it comprises an all-encompassing method-with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis). Similarly, case study assumes that social and/or educational reality is created through social interactions situated in specific contexts and histories; therefore, concepts are constructed during the course of the research, based on their sociological meaning. It seeks to identify and describe, analyse and theorize reality through a close collaboration between the researcher and participants, within a variety of participant perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Thomas, 2010). Its advantages and usefulness are associated with the discovery of social mechanisms, and findings can be employed in a positivist manner for the purpose of theory testing or in an interpretive manner for theory building (Bhattacharjee, 2012; della Porta, 2008, p. 211; Vennesson, 2008). According to Mertens (1998 in Thomas, 2010, p. 309), case studies can contribute in the fields of education and psychology, especially when testing “specific instructional strategies”.

## 3.3 Study sites and sampling

### 3.3.1 Study sites

#### i) Public school

**Queen of Peace** is a government sponsored primary school in the division of Rubaga, Kampala. It was founded by catholic missionaries and is now run by Catholic Nuns. Its population is 1020 students, from which 310 correspond to students in boarding modality; classrooms can accommodate more than 60 students under the responsibility of the teacher in charge. Even if the school is public, there is a fee of 60,000 UGX per school term, which represent 180,000 UGX per year (approximately USD 60) for each student in regular modality. According to the school's staff, this fee is used to buy some of the school materials, as well as to provide breakfast and lunch for students. Also, school workers mentioned that there can be exceptions and reductions on the school fees amounts if family economic situation does not allow them to complete the required amount.

The School vision is “to produce literate, morally upright, environmentally sensitive and responsible citizens”. Its mission reads “to produce a responsible citizen”, and the school motto is “Tangaaza”, interpreted as “enlighten”. The school operates under the Uganda National Curriculum. Its activities start at 7:00 hrs and continue until 17:00 hrs. Children are also supposed to attend morning catholic service every Saturday and then continue with their lessons.

#### ii) Private School

**City Parents School** is located in Rubaga division, Kampala. It is both a Nursery and Primary school with an estimated pupil population of 3400 and classrooms with 30 to 75 students under the responsibility of one teacher per class. According to the school's description, it “accommodates a multi-cultural combination of pupils from various countries, religious and ethnic backgrounds”. With its motto as “Education is light”, it describes its goal as “to set up a well-developed institution for shaping children into future responsible citizens”. Its vision corresponds to “a result oriented educational institution” and its objectives are to “provide quality education at an affordable cost and to promote improvement of academic standards, development and welfare of the school; provide excellent and maximum discipline for the pupil; and to pass out children who are capable and able to pursue education to the next stages of education” (Official website).

For the upper primary, the education provided is based on the Uganda National Curriculum Subjects including English, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Religious Education, Creative Arts and Physical Education (CAPE): CAPE 1 (Music, Dance and Drama); CAPE 2 (Physical Education); CAPE 3 (Art and Technology); Luganda and French. Even if official lessons begin at 8:00 hrs, most pupils arrive and start activities by 7:00 hrs. Lessons finish at 16:45 hrs.

### iii) International School

**Ambrosoli International School**, is located in Bugolobi suburb, Nakawa Division, it has about 283 children from over 42 different countries. Class sizes are no more than 20 children under the responsibility of a main teacher and an assistant Teacher. Its mission is to “strive for excellence in education in an environment that treasures and challenges each individual”, while its philosophy reads “*to believe in empowering individuals with knowledge, skills, values and self-belief so that they can succeed now and in the future. The best education is achieved in a caring, supportive family environment, in which children participate in a community which values diversity and prepares them for responsible behaviour in a global society*”. Some of their aims are related with being a family orientated school; having a friendly, exciting and safe environment that values and nurtures each individual, enabling them to reach their full potential; recognizing, respecting and celebrating the International diversity; enable each individual to meet creative, intellectual and physical challenges with confidence and belief in themselves; encourage children to develop skills to enable them to solve problems and find solutions; inspire creative, active, independent life-long learners; and to value and foster personal qualities of honesty, integrity and respect (official website).

Their curriculum is based on the English and Wales Curriculum with the required adaptations to match International children, staff and setting. Curriculum includes Numeracy, Literacy, Science, Humanities (History and Geography), Art and Design, Music, Physical Education (PE), Swimming, French, Information Computer Technology (ICT), Personal and Social Health Education (PSHE). Since August 2013, the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) has been used as a support to ensure that themes are well linked, relevant and internationally aligned. Numeracy and literacy is taught largely outside the IPC themes following the English curriculum. School activities start at 8:00 hrs and end at 14:00 hrs; after that many of the students stay for the after school clubs for one or two hours.

#### 3.3.2 Sampling and sample justification

##### i) Study population

Participants in this study included 18 children and 3 teachers. Six children from each of the above schools were randomly selected to represent the institution. Students were either in primary 6 (P6) or grade 6, equal numbers among female and male participants was assured. In the case of public school, students enrolled in boarding system were excluded as potential candidates for the research, in order to maintain similar characteristics among participant students, one teacher per school responsible for P6 or grade 6 were also considered as participants for the study.

##### ii) Sample size and Sample selection procedures

The total number of participants was 18 children (9 male and 9 female), and 3 teachers each representing one of the three participating schools.

To reach the participants at each institution, the following steps were employed:

- General meeting with the school head teacher to explain the aim of the study and obtain authorization and support for the research. For public and Private schools, the heads of administration selected the P6 classroom from which participants were selected, while in the International school, only one class from grade 6 was available and hence participants were selected from this very class.
- Meeting with the main teacher at the selected classroom to explain the aim of the study and obtain support for the research.
- Selection of study participants:
  - Within a general presentation for the entire classroom, general information about the research as well as ethical considerations were presented to students. After this, students had the opportunity to raise questions related to the research. It was explained that participation was voluntary; therefore children could choose to withdraw the potential list of participants<sup>3</sup>.
  - Each student was given a consent form in which the aim of the study and ethical considerations were explained. This form was supposed to be signed by their parents or caregivers in order to consider the child as a possible candidate for the study.
  - Signed consent letters were put on a box and using a lottery method of simple random sampling, six letters were randomly selected, and these meant that the corresponding children were the eligible participants<sup>4</sup>.

The above strategy allowed to select students within a random and democratic procedure, particularly because majority of students expressed their desire to participate in the research. Therefore, by explaining the procedure and conditions, requiring the parental consent to participate in the research, and –using the lottery strategy- randomly selecting the participants in front of the class, it was intended that children did not feel excluded or selected for particular reasons.

### 3.4 Data collection

Data was collected through semi structured interviews. There was a guide as a base for specific topics, but allowing participants to flow freely around them, in order to explore and understand participants' experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The discussions were held in a private room inside each school and they lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes. The discussions were audio-recorded after obtaining participants' permission. Before the start of each interview, the purpose of the study and ethical consideration like privacy, confidentiality or right to withdraw from the interview were repeated to participants. During interviews, students had access to paper, colours and markers, and had the option to draw images related to their answers. However, drawings were assumed as a strategy to facilitate expression and to obtain complementary and

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3 In the case of public school, students from boarding modality were automatically removed from the student's list.

4 Participants must be three males and three females in each school. when a fourth person of the same gender was selected, that person was dismissed and the procedure continued until an equal number of male and female participants was obtained.

supportive information, but they were not specifically analysed. At the end of each interview, children were asked to describe the interview with three words and they were asked about their feelings during and towards the interview. Their answers confirmed the relevance of considering children as active agents in their social and educative process, as well as the importance for children to be heard and considered in situations they formed part.

During the data collection process, recommendations and principles by ESOMAR (2009) and McNamarra (2009 in Turner, 2010) were followed, particularly the ones related to the location as a “protected environment”, consent form from parents or guardians (giving sufficient information to make a conscious decision), explanation of the interview’s purpose and structure; and confidentiality. Since narratives give children the opportunity to be the “expert”, children were allowed and encouraged to freely construct their answers, facilitating rapport and elaboration of ideas (Brubacher, Powell, & Roberts, 2014; Vasquez, 2000).

Besides open-ended questions, McNamarra’s (2009 in Turner, 2010) suggestions such as the transition between major topics, neutrality, and clarity were also considered. Similarly, when topics that could “disturb” or “worry” children (ESOMAR, 2009) emerged, the researcher was sensitive to participants’ answers and necessities, offering the possibility to skip the questions or take some minutes before continuing.

### 3.5 Data processing and analysis

After data collection, interviews were transcript and analysed using thematic and content analysis. Themes and codes based on the objectives of the study were developed from the data. As mentioned before, drawings were used as a support technique to facilitate expression, but without analysis them.

Content analysis as a research technique, allows to make replicable and valid inferences from the data to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2013). Similarly, thematic analysis was selected because of its utility when capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data. It requires involvement and interpretation from the researcher, and focus on identifying and describing implicit and explicit ideas instead of quantifying words or repeated phrases. This analysis allowed to extract core themes and identify patterns while analysing the data and focused on “what” was said and its “theme significance” (Bryman, 2012; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Riessman, 2008).

Interviews as *person-centered data techniques* allow researchers to characterise participants based on the nature of the social transactions they had within multiple developmental contexts (Burrell, 2008). For this study, data interpretation was done within an indirect phenomenological approach “interpretation through dialogue with texts [transcripts] (Titchen and Hobson 2005: 121 in Rivera Cárdenas, 2013).

In order to analyse the collected data, a review of the existing literature was the first step conducted. It allowed identifying not only the available information related to the topic, but also techniques and instruments used in previous related studies. Codes were created to identify and separate information around the main objectives and questions of this study. This resulted in the

creation of four main themes and subsequent subthemes (Table 1). Within these themes in mind interview transcripts were read and theme relevant information highlighted with different colours in respect to the different themes. Subsequently, separate documents were created per theme. These documents were read again and each of them was newly coded to generate sub-themes within each theme. Finally, significant comments were grouped according to their codes and analysed in reference to the research questions. These findings were compared and contrasted with the information previously gathered during the literature-review process.

Table 1 \_Themes and sub themes used in the analysis process

Theme	Subtheme
Children’s beliefs and perceptions about education and academic performance	Class structure and organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Class organization in traditional and non-traditional schools.</i></li> <li>- <i>Children’s perception of participation and group work on traditional and non-traditional educational models</i></li> <li>- <i>Corporal punishment in the traditional environment</i></li> </ul>
	Children’s perceptions about teachers
	Children’s perceptions towards academic competences
	Children’s beliefs about effort to achieve personal goals
	Children’s desired educational models
	Mindset & resilience
Children’s Future expectations	Desired status of well being
	Children’s expectations about completion of school
	Academic performance and future achievement
	Children’s certainty about future
Children’s present life perceptions	Present life satisfaction
	Children’s perceptions of economic and financial stability
	Children’s perceptions of direct support from family and teachers

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

The aim of this research was to explore the possible effects of traditional and non-traditional educational models on children’s beliefs towards education, future and resilient attitudes. In order to achieve that, semi structured interviews were conducted in the three different schools. However, since this research involved children, it was important to consider the potential emotional, social and psychological risks that their participation could entail. During this process, five main ethical issues were considered: children’s risk to participate, informed consent, verbally recorded assent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

Children and young adults' participation implies their recognition as active social agents and their recognition as co-constructors of their everyday life by recognizing the importance of their situation's perspective (Rivera Cárdenas, 2013). New sociology of childhood, policies and International documents like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), promote perceptions and behaviours towards children as current citizens with social, political and legal rights who produce a collective benefit. Therefore, it has been emphasized how important it is to assume children as active participant instead of "researching" on them only from adult's perspectives and point of views. Children can be assumed with resources to contribute and improve situations and build solutions by being heard. By giving voice and listening to those who have not had the opportunity, positive and future changes can be promoted.

Participation in any kind of research must be voluntary, and the researcher must inform participants regarding all aspects of research studies. During this study, informed consent process was designed and monitored to empower participants to allow them to make appropriate decisions about continuing or withdrawing from the study (UNAIDS, 2007). Additionally, participants were informed about the right to terminate the interview or withdraw from the study if they feel the necessity to do so (Khan, 2014). According to Greig and Taylor (1999 in Rivera Cárdenas, 2013), informed consent is about facilitating the child knowledge in three basic points regarding the research: first, that he or she decides if he or she wants to participate in the research or not; second, that he or she knows he or she can withdraw from the research at any point he or she decides so; and third, he or she knows exactly what is expected from him or her if he or she decides to participate in the research.

For this research, anonymity was assured for all participants. Before the start of the interview, each participant was asked if they wanted their real name to be used during the interview. Almost everyone agreed, and when the answer was different, the reasons were not questioned. Nevertheless real names were changed during the use of quotes to guarantee anonymity. Regarding confidentiality, participants were informed that the information obtained during the interviews would only be used for research purposes, and that only people related to this study will have access to records or translations. Nevertheless, they were also informed that results and findings derived from the analysis of their interviews would be available for people interested in the subject.

### 3.7 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the research are related to the little attention on familiar dynamics and its influence on children's cognitions. Also, when the data collection took place, a new school term had just begun. This could be a limitation for the first participants when asked to describe and reflect about school activities –even though, during the interviews participants were encouraged to think about school during the present and past terms. Finally, language was not a significant limitation, except for one student in the public school who seemed to have difficulties to express himself in English. Nevertheless, for him and the rest of the participants, questions were rephrased when they seemed not to understand them. Similarly, children were allowed to freely speak when elaborating their answers. In other instances, the interviewer paraphrased and asked learners to confirm whether in fact that is what they had just said

# CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main study findings and their analysis. It is based on the possible influence of traditional and non-traditional educational models towards education and its potential relation with resilient attitudes. The chapter is divided in three main themes drawn from the general and specific objectives of the study and they include: children's beliefs and perceptions about education and academic performance; children's future expectations; and children's present life perceptions.

### 4.2 Children's beliefs and perceptions about education and academic performance

*The question is not "what is happening during our teaching?"  
But "what is happening during their learning?"*  
John Pelley

The first specific objective in this research was related to explore children's beliefs about education and academic performance. In order to achieve that, interviews with teachers explored methods, strategies and organization during classes. Nevertheless, pupils' views on those methods and activities, as well as their perception about participation in class were necessary to understand how these strategies impact on children's and their beliefs towards education. In the present section, children's perceptions towards school and teachers are explored. Similarly, the section describes the perceptions that pupils have about their academic competences and the beliefs they held about their efforts to achieve personal goals. The section concludes by analysing children's answers on which educational model they would prefer and by discussing how different models of education might influence the development of specific types of mindset and their relation with resilient attitudes.



#### 4.2.1 Class structure and organization

*“Is not really nice learning if you are not having fun. Because if you are not having fun in learning then you will be really sad, and grumpy and moody”*

Lukas, International school<sup>5</sup>.

To complement the analysis on children’s perceptions towards education, interviews also explored the main pedagogical strategies used in class during presentation of new topics, current themes and pupils’ behaviour and participation. According to literature, non-traditional educational models have been related with resilient outcomes, creativity, engagement in school activities and development of critical thinking and team-work skills (Dweck, 2009; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Mitra, 2005; NACCC, 1999; Robinson, 2010). Therefore, the importance to describe and analyse the way in which classes are structured and organized in traditional and non-traditional environments within the Ugandan context, and how it may influence the perceptions and beliefs that children hold about education. The present section explores class organization and perception of participation and group work on traditional and non-traditional educational models. It also addresses the issue of corporal punishment in the traditional system, and concludes by describing which educational model the children prefer for their academic formation.

##### *i) Class organization in traditional and non-traditional schools*

Children in the International school following non-traditional educational strategies were familiarized with activities involving participation, presentations, group work and cooperation. Individual work was mainly used to allow students reflecting on their ideas before or after sharing them with the group. According to teachers and students, children’s opinion was considered during presentation of new topics and planning of the activities, and the organization of the class allowed students who completed the main tasks, to use their time in activities of their interest, like reading, educative games or school exercises. Physical structure of the classroom tables grouped as small islands where children sit around to study and work together, as well as classroom elements –interactive board, computer and classroom library, and responsible staff one teacher and one auxiliary facilitated the implementation of interactive and self-organized learning activities. Nevertheless, the expertise of teacher to engage students in the class and promote meaningful learning is also considered as a key element for the success of this.

*“At the start of the topic we always have lesson of topic on what we know, what we want to know and what we’ve learned. We discuss about the topic whether we like it or not and see if we are enthusiastic about it, but most of us really like it. (...) if we’re in a group we have time to talk about the answer and discuss it so, like everybody really discusses the answer (...) and it’s really fun because we don’t always learn by just writing in our books”* Matthias, International school

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<sup>5</sup> To assure privacy to participants, all names were changed and no information that could lead to their identification is presented. Similarly, the use of a “name” and indication of school during quotations, indicate that the quote correspond to a student. When the comment was said by a teacher, the word “Teacher” will appear at the end of the quote.

*“I think is teachers’ job to try to make learning as exciting and fun as possible and I think children should be encouraged not to be scared of failure and enjoy challenges and not be afraid of getting things wrong (...). I think (it is important to develop) the ability to take ownership over their learning, decide (what they) want to learn themselves, and be able to work independently ... but I think in order to get a good student to such, is teachers job to motivate students to enjoy learning. At the starting of a new topic, (we) discuss what the topic is going to be and (I) almost let them decide what they want to learn and then (we) plan around that. Because (if) they (students) feel like they’ve planned and decided what they want to learn, they are more enthusiastic and motivated”.*  
Teacher, International school

Students from the International school mentioned present and future examples on how they put in practice what they learn at school. They reflected on the relation and applicability academic subjects in real life situations, and commented on how they were encouraged by their teachers to think about the practical application of class subjects.

*“Whenever we are doing math and we’re starting new subject, teacher asked as where, what would this be useful for”.* Julia, International school

*“Education is important because it will help you do anything. Like art we think it’s just drawing stuffs and it doesn’t teach you anything, but I’ve noticed like creating an app it needs art. Like you need to design the screens and that uses art”.* Isabella, International school.

It is discussed how children from the non-traditional context learn and apply the connection among different subjects, implementing principles of metacognition, and taking control of their own learning (Pelley, 2014). A child reflection about symbiosis of two different subjects *“but I’ve noticed like creating an app it needs art...”*, corresponds to what the NACCC report (1999) and different authors (Mittra, Leat, Dolan, & Crawley, 2010; Robinson, 2010) assume as the essence of creativity, and the opportunity to explore it, versus a model that propose rigid divisions in subject teaching (Boumavá, 2008).

Learning based on real-life problems and students’ reflections on applicability of the things they learn, suppose an advantage for children in the non-traditional model, which promotes the development of abilities related not only to a resilient attitude and successful outcomes (Dweck, 2009; Laursen, 2015; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012), but also to the skills and abilities needed for the actual economic market and community participation (Laursen, 2015; NACCC, 1999; Salborn, 2014), which, in turn, might imply possible future disadvantages for children studying in the public and private sector.

In the private and public setting, the idea of working individually, sitting and memorizing what the teacher says was the dominant discourse among participants. Classrooms were arranged in a way that all children face the board, and chorus repetition and signalization of “correct” and “incorrect” answers were part of the implemented strategies. Even when some participants

mentioned the excessive amount of work they have to realize, memorizing was assumed as one of the main and most important activities since it would allow them to retain what might be asked during exams. Nevertheless, when children in these schools were asked about the application in real life of things they learn at school, their only argument pointed to the utility to get better marks in the exams and without giving any other applicable avenues beyond examinations. Refer to the following excerpts.

*“You have to sit and memorize what teachers says, that way you can get it in your head because there will be exams”*. Daniel, Private school

*“No, not really (have time to talk and explore about things I’m interested in), most of the time we spend it doing work”*. Sara, Private school

*“We should discuss only the work that the teachers (have) given us, so that we can revise, and when the teachers come in to ask us other questions, we will know them, because we have revised”*. Miriam, Public school

For the private schools, the teacher emphasizes the pressure that children and staff face to obtain excellent grades to continue performing as one of the best schools in Uganda. This requirement affects the implementation of non-traditional strategies, particularly considering the large amount of students in a classroom and the pressure that teachers will face to follow the “traditional” method –which has proven academic, high academic results on national exams. Similarly, teachers from public school explained how lack of resources, number of students per class and the curriculum structure are factors that push teachers to promote memorization among their students.

*“The school has big numbers, so as a teacher is very hard for you (...) and the demands of the school are so far too much. They (school board members) want grades and they base so much on excelling academics - neglecting others (areas)-, just because they want to pass the exams. (...) There is too much pressure put on the child at the same time it is also put on the teacher. So children are not enjoying (and) generally education becomes a burden. (...) International schools are not so much in examinations, (...) they don’t pump too much and children who are average performance (here) will excel in the other one (...) but If you (use songs, games and other activities), at the end of the day (children) might not pass with those grades and then you’ll be blamed. They (school board members) want results and the entire results are not going to come from the songs or the place or the games, so you end up teaching”*. Teacher, Private school

*“They (children) have to memorize, the curriculum promoted (it) because most of the work is not practical is theory, (so) you have to memorize, (even when) you get confuse because things become too many and you fail to sort which one goes where, which one was supposed to be and you end up messing up everything. (...)the curriculum should be change to practical, it is better because you do what you know, what you’ve been doing, once you keep practicing it’s hard to forget; but when the work is too much, and you see time is limited you encourage individual (work) because group work takes time, a lot of time”*. Teacher, public school

The children and teachers' comments above exemplify the importance of active learning and educational activities that can promote knowledge application, development and innovation (Bonwell and Eison 1991, in Michel et al., 2009). However, it is also evident that many factors, for example education policies, curriculum or perceptions towards education are interrelated in the model of education that children received and in their perceptions about it. Children are affected by many of these factors even when they belong to systems in which pupils do not interfere (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Creating awareness towards educational practices and their implications for children and adult's mindset and attitudes became important and necessary. This research shows that even when teachers acknowledge the importance of non-traditional strategies, they tend to reproduce the elements of the traditional system in which they were taught and that the curriculum promotes. Therefore, the relevance on education policy changes and teacher training, particularly since it becomes difficult to promote something people are not aware of or do not believe in.

***ii) Children's perception of participation and group work on traditional and non-traditional education models***

In the public and private schools, the term "group work" was mainly associated to self-organized activities during free time, since the amount of work impede the realization of other activities and "*it is not allowed to work with classmates during class time*". For some students, participation opportunities were mainly available for those who have a position: prefects and group leaders in the classroom, or for those who are friends with them. Similarly, in the public school, participation in class was related to signal people who speak during teacher's absence, be responsible for cleaning, or providing items for the class, instead of an active participation or discussion towards academic topics.

*"It's allowed to work with classmates during our free time. They (teachers) do not allow it) to work with classmates) during class time. Because the teacher may be teaching and then you start discussing and the teacher may feel bad and decide to beat you".* Anna, Private school

*"Sometimes I can be the leader. Since I'm a friend to most leaders I can give ideas"* Anthony, Private school.

*"They (teachers) can give me some opportunity to write those who are talking in class (...) sometimes I can be responsible on those who are sweeping the class. (I can propose some activities during the class) because sometimes they can send me for chinks in the staffroom".* Benjamin, public school.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of team work and environments that stimulate curiosity to promote children's interest, motivation, and effective education (Mitra et al., 2010). Evidence suggests that the paradigm promoted in the public and Private school is more related with approving exams rather than obtaining substantial learning and be able to apply it. Similarly, it is also true that parents, teachers and students experiences, as well as social and cultural values influence the "construction" of specific paradigms around education (Greene and Lee 2002, in Teater 2010). For instances, the concept of "group work" was usually not associated

with academic activities, and memorization became the desired way of working because it allows to “learn” what the teacher says and to succeed in exams. These results support Salborn's (2014) thesis in which he describes how Ugandan students learn that memorizing is the right thing to do and thinking freely is not welcomed.

### *iii) Corporal punishment in the traditional environment*

Corporal punishment was one of the strategies currently used among teachers in public and Private schools, and even if participants expressed their disagreement with this practice, some of them also justified it, arguing that teachers do it to them in order for them “to become perfect and do the right thing”.

*“God says that love your enemies, so that (beating) is bad, but teachers are doing that so we can become perfect, so they are doing the right thing”.* Daniel, Private school

*“They (teachers) beat for you to get a good future (...) if you have done a mistake, they show you a, a good thing you must do (and) don't do it (the mistake) again, ... If the teacher doesn't beat you, you will still do (mistakes) again”.* Oscar, public school.

*“There's beating for a reason, some people can think (it) is bad, but it can help you to move on, to tell you what's good and bad”.* Rose, public school

The fact that corporal punishment is considered as a normal practice in schools corroborates the idea that Ugandan education system is still reproducing the status from the colonial history (Salborn, 2014; Vermeulen, 2013). These results are consistent with Meinert's findings (2009, in Sallbon 2014 p.48) who reported that in some Ugandan schools, disciplinary measures can consume more than half of the school day. There are also disadvantages of the traditional model when autonomy of one's own future is neglected, critical thoughts and analytical skills, while conditioning its students towards competition, development and economic growth (Kuhn, 1970 in Salborn, 2014 p.58), and the possible negative implications if the children tend to repeat an act according to this paradigm in the future.

### 4.2.2 Children's perceptions about teachers

Learning is a complex and integrative process with the interaction of personal, social and environmental factors (Michel et al., 2009; Pelley, 2014). Teachers' behaviours, praising and pedagogical strategies might enhance children's personal and academic perceptions and attitudes, impacting on the student's learning process (Dweck, 2009; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Wissink & Haan, 2013). In this section, children describe the characteristics they appreciate in their current teachers and express their opinion about how teachers should be.

When exploring children's perceptions regarding teachers' strategies and characteristics, pupils appreciated teachers who could promote participation, create an agreeable ambiance in the classroom and care about students' learning and well-being. For students in the International school, encouragement, challenges and the way in which teachers handle disruptive situations were also important.

*“I think she (teacher) is trying to encouraging me just not to help me straight away, she just explain it to me more deeply and then she lets me doing myself (...)”* Isabella, International school

*“They (teachers) don’t really give up to me; they don’t really give up to anybody so everybody in our class is a good student.”*Matthias, International school

*“Mr (-- ) is not that tough, he just makes people laugh so that you go through a normal day very well”.* Sara, Private school

*“I like that woman (teacher) because she’s loved to children. She can make you understand what she’s teaching; she can take a lot of time when she’s explaining. I like that teacher”.* Rose, Public school

Children expressed the characteristics that teachers should have. For children in the private institution, teachers should *offer guidance, be good examples, be honest, interested in their students and focused on children’s happiness*. Nevertheless, for other students, teachers *“should always tell children to keep quiet”*. In the case of the international school, teachers should *believe in their students, be nice and smile, and balance classes with funny and interesting activities*; as well, they should *let children some free time for activities*.

*“The perfect teacher should be a good example, that’s what I know. He should be able like to show good morals in front of the children”.* Sara, Private school

*“The perfect teacher always does the right thing... like always telling children to keep quiet, giving them time to think about things, giving them time to draw things”.* Daniel, Private school

*“A perfect teacher really likes you and believes in what you can be. At the same time she is really funny and like is very nice to everybody. She doesn’t teach you the same thing over and over and over again; it is not just worksheet, worksheet, worksheet.”*Matthias, International school

*“A perfect teacher has a smile, prepare ... ask them (children) what they want to do (...) lets kids do stuff but not over the top, but like let’s them talk”.* Lukas, International school

These student’s comments agree with Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012), findings. These authors stated that caring teachers were integral to their academic success. Children revealed that empathy and support should be part of the necessary characteristics for people working with children, particularly since the importance that teacher’s attitudes and expectations acquire for student’s outcomes, expectations and motivation to succeed (Muller, Katz and Dance 2004 in Zhang, 2012; Crawford, 2006).

When children in the three schools were asked about their visions of a “perfect teacher” they mostly described the attitudes and behaviours of their actual teacher. This can be discussed under the social constructivist perspective in which people “construct their reality through their daily

interactions”. Therefore, students who had been in contact with a participatory model, assumed those characteristics in teachers as positive. However, for children who have been through a traditional and disciplinary environment, having a teacher who gives instructions and “always” do the right thing, represent their assumptions of desired behaviours.

#### 4.2.3 Children’s perceptions towards academic competences

*Everyone is a genius.  
But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree,  
it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.  
Albert Einstein*

This study sought to examine learners’ perceptions about academic competences. Findings from interviews and discussions indicate that even when all children were able to identify at least one activity in which they assume themselves as good, there were some differences in the content of their answers. At the international school, students found easy to identify capacities and abilities in which they assume themselves as capable, but with the idea of develop them further. Compared to the other schools, these children seemed aware of their positive characteristics and mentioned them to justify their answers without bragging about them. Some of the expressed opinions were “*I try my best*”, “*I’m good in the subjects in classroom*”, “*I study quite hard*” or “*I am usually quite good*”.

*“I would like to get better at my writing, and getting higher levels (...) I’m really good at swimming but (I would like) just to get better.”* Matthias, International school.

It is discussed that a model that allows more freedom, team work and critical thinking will have a positive effect on children’s perceptions of their self-competences, particularly because of the opportunity that they have to experience it, contrary to a more rigid system in which self-evaluation and perception is more related to a single achievement in separated areas of knowledge. (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris 2004 in Zhang, 2012).

On the private school side, the phrase “I would like to perform better” was constantly repeated, when children mainly referred to academic abilities. In this school, only one of the students mentioned things at which he was already good, and that he would like to improve. The other student expressed her insecurity to participate due to possible teasing from her classmates or teachers.

*“I would like to perform better at school. I would like to help people better and I would like to help people get what they want”.* Vincent, Private school

*“I would like to perform better. I’m still a young child, I’m in P6, I want to... I really don’t know (...) some of my classmates (can talk about the things they are interested in), but I do not get a chance because I am so scared, because I think teachers and sometimes of the classmates will laugh at me; sometimes, most of the class”.* Anna, Private school

Positive perceptions in one's ability to succeed can facilitate healthy adaptation, while negative self-perceptions can have emotional and behavioural consequences in children (Marino, 2014). Consequently, it is an assumed fact that some students are aware of their capacities and willing to develop them further, which might represent an element for positive adaptation. However children who find difficulty to evaluate their competences in a positive way, or who lack confidence to express their point of view may find their adaptation more difficult in a traditional system, which value competition and "correct" answers.

Teachers' interviews also explored characteristics of "good students"; enthusiasm, interest and willingness to learn were mentioned elements by the practitioners in the international and private school. Teachers from the public institution emphasized that listening, following what the teacher says and be discipline were also important characteristics. In the case of children, private and public school's pointed out that students should be hard working, read their books, pay attention, listen, obey and respect teachers and parents, and have faith in God. Children also mentioned that it was important for a learner not to behave in a way that stresses or disturbs teachers. Students from the international school shared visions with their peers about positive characteristics in students, particularly those referring to respecting their teachers, work in class and follow their objectives, but they did not mention faith in God. The following extracts represent learners' insights.

*"To be a good student you need to work hard, don't make mistakes, always be serious with your work and never disturb the teachers". Daniel, Private school*

*"To be a good student, it is necessary to obey your parents, to listen to your teachers, to put your head where they are telling you, to construct everything they want. You have to afford to do that". Rose, Public school*

*"To be a good student, it is necessary to never (argue with) a teacher, (...). And if they tell you to do something just do it straight away and follow the personal learning goals". Elias, International school*

When asking children if they considered themselves as "good students", most of them expressed a positive answer even when not all of them believed that teachers shared that opinion. It was interesting that students from the international school reflected on their individual and group behaviour during those questions, while children from private and public schools only considered their individual performance in responding to questions. For example, see the excerpts below.

*"Yes I think so (I'm a good student). Well nobody in the school is really a bad student, everybody listens". Matthias, International school*

*"Yeah, I think so (I'm a good student). Because I do pay attention in class, but as a whole class sometimes (we) are not that good, as a whole class" Julia, International school*

In the case of the private school, these answers were related to their abilities and behaviour



during class –*pays attention, works hard, improvements or participation*. Other students were ambivalent towards their position as “good student”, they mainly mentioned that they needed to “level up” or “perform better”. They expressed their anxiety about being able to “upgrade themselves” or their worries of “not being clever enough”.

*“Yes, I think I’m a good student but I need to level up (...) People are nice but I’m a bit scared. (...) I’m very scared if I’m going to upgrade myself (...) and the bad thing about me is that I am not really cleaver. Ok yes, I am clever, I can perform well but sometimes I cannot (...) I wish I become very cleaver (...)”* Anthony, Private school.

According to Dweck (2006 in Laursen 2015) people achieve what they believe about themselves, therefore the importance of promoting activities that encourage positive beliefs. In the last student’s remark, some characteristics of a “fixed mindset” as pointed out by Dweck (2009) can be identified. For example, when students have learned that success means they are smart, and they conclude that difficulty means they are not. In the previous extract, a child is anxious about his future performance and has difficulties to define if he *is* or not “cleaver”. This anxiety increases when he believes future grades will be more difficult than the actual one. Once again, it is discussed the importance of non-traditional models of education. These models promote a growing mindset, are focused on the process, and can offer activities and circumstances to identify anxious believes and work on them.

Students in the public school related their performance as “good students” with the accomplishment of task required by the teacher, their dedication, concentration when studying, participation in the classroom, cleaning and being respectful.

*“(I am a good student), I do the neat. I do what teachers want”*. Tomas, Public school

*“I think (I’m a good student), because I do not show bad manners at school, and I so respect my teachers”*. Benjamin, Public school

Participants in this study evaluated themselves focusing on the current self and using information from the environment (Johnson & Stapel, 2010). Hence, the idea of being “a good student” is determined by standards promoted by the academic and social discourse, against which students compare themselves. This is interesting because even if the characteristics of being a good student were similar in all three schools, respect and attend teacher’s indications- the methodology in schools with traditional methods and school with non traditional methods differed. Therefore teacher instructions and “expectations” towards which children compare themselves, differed too.

#### 4.2.4 Children's beliefs about effort to achieve personal goals

*I have not failed. I have just founded 10,000 ways that won't work.*  
Thomas A Edison

Personal responsibility or effort towards achievements was an important element to understand how children relate present actions with the accomplishment of future expectations. Literature shows that assuming oneself capable of achieving things, and practicing and mastering the necessary skills for that, are related to grit on specific goals and positive future accomplishments (Laursen, 2015; Paterson, Tyler, & Lexmond, 2014; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In the present study, children from the three participating schools assumed personal effort as an important element to fulfil future goals. The ideas of “*working hard*” or “*trust in one self*” in order to achieve their dreams, were consistent among students from public and private settings, while with a similar idea students from the international school used phrases like “*believe in one self*”, “*practice*” or “*put their minds on it*”.

According to Snipes, Fancsali and Stoker (2012, in Laursen2015 p23), students are more likely to stick with challenging tasks and assignments when they believe that their effort is a determining factor in their growth. Therefore, it can be said that students from the three schools could develop attitudes that help them to pursue their goals. However, activities as the ones developed in non-traditional environments may offer bigger chances to explore and develop these attitudes, particularly because its strategies and evaluation are more focused on the process than the result.

Participants from the international school relied on an internal locus of control, with the wide spread believe that personal responsibility is the principal factor to achieving their goals. In some of their answers, children commented the possibility of things not happening in the way they expected, but they assumed that they should keep trying. In general, participants in this school provided several examples on how their effort will represent success in their goals.

*“I try really hard I can achieve the things I want (...) (I have to) work hard, believe in myself, be respectful. I'm quite good at those things and if I really try hard and be resilient and don't give up I can get it. Like for example if you're applying for a job and you don't get it, and you are like really down. Then you can try again with a different company”* Lukas, International school

*“I will need to believe in myself that I can be a cardiologist, and I will have to work really hard and studying (...) even if I don't achieve what I want it's fine with me. But I will always try to be a doctor and keep on improving with my art. (...) You should do it with your own feelings like “I can do this work” you shouldn't be forced by others.”* Isabella, International school.

Pawlina and Stanford (2011) and Yeager and Dweck (2012) explain that student's mindsets can be changed and that a resilient attitudes can be developed within specific classroom activities.

This attitude was reflected mainly among children from the non-traditional model of education. Therefore, one can say that similar strategies could be implemented in public and private classrooms to foster a growth in mindset and resilient characteristics, particularly when following Olson and Dweck premise (2008 in Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012), that efforts to change mindsets can increase resilience even without removing the adversities students encounter in school.

On the other hand, almost all participants from public and private schools relied on an internal and external locus of control, sometimes both, believing that praying and having faith in God will be one of the factors that will help them to reach their dreams. It is interesting that almost all participants who mentioned God's help, also believed the idea of "working hard", but not everyone who assumed that working hard also necessitated believing in God's intervention for them to reach their goals.

*"I can pray to God so I can reach (my goals and I can also) studying". Benjamin, Public school.*

*"I should concentrate in my books (to make my dreams real)". Oscar, Public school.*

*"I would like to learn and to work hard". Valery, Public school*

*"Maybe God will bring a blessing that I will get a sponsorship that fully help me". Miriam, Public school*

Students' commitment to "work hard", and instructional quality of the teacher, affect learning and achievement, and were assumed as to be important elements for positive future achievements and characteristics of a growing mindset (Laursen, 2015, Hattie's, 2012 in Lambert, 2014). It is deducible from this evidence that many of these children will be receptive of interventions addressed to promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes. Nevertheless, clear that there is a need for interventions to address teacher's training for non-traditional activities and academic strategies. Besides, while structural changes on education policy levels are proposed, approved and implemented, interventions could target teacher's abilities and strategies to promote a growing mindset, engagement and knowledge application during their classes.

#### 4.2.5 Children's desired educative model

When participants were asked about which strategy they would prefer for working, opinions were divided between "sit and memorize" and "work in small groups". All students in the public school stated that they would prefer to continue "sitting and memorizing"; and all students from international school –except one preferred to work in small teams. Among students from public and private schools, the idea underlining their preference for a traditional model were related to the importance of exams.

*“I would prefer) to sit and memorize what the teacher says (...) (memorizing) help me to, to get better marks in exams” Oscar, Private school.*

*“You have to sit and memorize what teacher says, that way you can get it in your head because there will be exams” Daniel, Private school*

*“If you discuss a lot you may reach in an exam and you will start coping”.* Caroline Private school

It is observable that a traditional system promotes a culture based on examinations and examinations performance acts as a proof for academic abilities and place in the classroom. The above corresponds with Kibuuka (2008, in Salborn 2014 p.22) and Robinson’s (2010) ideas of routine learning and discouragement of students from critical thinking and creativity in an exam-based education. As a result, if children take passing exams as “the” important characteristic of education, it will be more likely for them to develop a fixed mindset, valuing “looking smart” over learning (Dweck, 2009), perpetuating a culture that values memorization, and exam results instead of analysis, critical thinking and creativity.

For students in the private school, perceived advantages of group work were related to benefits from classmates’ abilities, gaining extra support when missing some important information, understanding better each step in a task, being able to explore more and have the opportunity to ask and get more friends. Students in the public school also related group work to emotional support that they would get from their peers.

*“Some students in our school prefer reading alone, but I think it is better (to work in teams) because you can get more information from people who are already ahead of you. (...) If you’re in small groups when you miss the information your friends are always there to sum it up for you”.* Sara, Private school

*”If you work in teams you explore more, and whenever you have a problem you can ask the person, and working in teams can get you friends.(...) Most of my classmates are clever, that means I can make friends with them and to also become clever”.* Anthony, Private school

*“They (classmates) ask bright things. If it’s your time to do something they tell you”.* Tomas, Public school

*“I can work with them and ask them the difficult questions which I don’t know”.* Miriam, Public school

In analysing the above answers, it is important to note that children are aware of the positive implications of collaborative learning and they reflect on its benefits during their learning practice and personal development. However, if they are immersed in an education system that values examination scores rather than process and analysis, is not surprising that their main focus and ideal learning situation corresponded to memorization and repetition. Therefore, in the public and private schools, perceived disadvantages of group work were related to missed

teacher's explanations, "stealing ideas", and possible disturbances for teachers, group influence and possibility to copy during exams.

*"If (teachers) ask a question (and you are in teams), when you want to give the answer, the other one gives (it first), then you are not learning, is only the other person who is putting up the hand, learning. That's why I want just to read by myself and I learn by myself, that's what I always do".* Daniel, Private school.

*"If I sit with my friends we (will not be able to) hear what the teacher is teaching"* Oscar, Public school.

The previous examples are in support of Ricci's (2013 in Laursen 2015) and Kohn's vision (1999 in Salbon 2014 p.43), when arguing that traditional educational practice squashes curiosity for learning since grades reduce the interest in it, and tend to spoil the human relationships among classmates. That could be represented in this study, particularly when pupils even when identifying positive characteristics of group work, express their preferences for "sit and memorize", which presupposes that they are passive receptors and repeaters of what teacher says. As espoused by Eccles and Wigfield (2002 in Zhang, 2012 p.46), expectations are closely related to achievement performance, and influenced by individual interpretations of previous achievements. It can thus be concluded that if children assume memorization as an effective method to success in school, i.e. passing exams, and if they have obtained positive results, *approve exams*, they will prefer this way of working than the "risk" of group work which demands reflection and sharing of information.

Indicators of a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2009), were present in some narratives, particularly when students rejected group work because "*someone else will give the answer*" and "*only the person who is putting up the hand (is) learning*". This means that a traditional method of education promotes competition among students. If "giving the right answer" is what is important for students, they will tend to accomplish everything that teacher says, mainly because of the academic status that it represents, and the possibility of better performance and excellence.

Regarding students from the international school who usually work in small groups, they confirmed positive characteristics referred by their peers in the public and private setting about team work, for example the opportunity to "talk with friends, compare answers and help each other and produce better work".

*"It's really fun because if you don't really know the answer or what to do, (but) the other people will help you a lot, discussing with you how to do it. So you kind of get a hand of it after they tell you"* Matthias, International school

*"It's just nicer to work together instead of sitting there just memorizing everything. (...) they are kind and they help me when I am stuck in the question or so (...) most people in my class also get my opinion and then we shared opinions".* Sofia, International school

*"It (group work) makes learning fun and you learn to work in a team with everyone giving ideas so you can produce better work."* Lukas, International school

Children's positive expressions towards their way of learning and reflections on collaboration are similar to the results presented by Lukman and Krajnc (2012) who reported that collaboration among students influences obtaining of better learning achievements during the education process, and that non-traditional learning methods make the educational process more relaxing, interesting, and less tiresome.

For the student from the international school who preferred not to always work in groups, her reasons were based on the idea that her classmates did not concentrate enough during group work. However she did not want a total shift to the opposite strategy.

*"I will rather prefer working independently rather than in groups. Because I don't really like people playing around when we have some work to do. I am just like "finishing your job and then play", (...) because I think it will help in the future and I don't think is really good to play around and get fun during lessons because I get distracted by a lot of people and I don't like it. (...) I wouldn't prefer memorizing things. I would prefer like just going through it once and then you read it, you keep on reading, you don't really memorize it".*  
Isabella, International school

When comparing the benefits of non-traditional models versus the traditional ones, the main findings in this study might seem not as positive for children in public and private school as for children in the international context; However, Pride (2014) assumes that personal characteristics and interpretations play a significant role on children's outcomes, and concludes that students who want to take ownership in their learning will find a way to appropriate meaningful learning, even in restrictive classrooms;. Nevertheless, it is discussed the importance to facilitate resources and environments that allow more children to develop a growth mindset and resilience attitudes – particularly addressed for those with less social or economical resources -due to its influence on academic effort, achievements, and social mobility (Paterson et al., 2014). In other words, to facilitate, build and promote resilient attitudes, that help to reduce the gap on access to opportunities, usually subjected to "natural lottery" because of the place or family in which each child is born (Rawls 1978 in Kymlicka, 2002).

#### 4.2.6 Mindset & resilience

*We cannot continue to tell young people that they are the future,  
If we do not provide them with the tools and resources  
They need to be successful in that future.  
Jamira Burley in Sayed, 2013*

Mindsets are understood as beliefs about oneself and ones fixed or developing qualities like intelligence (Dweck, 2009). The relationship between specific mindsets towards education and students' performance have been studied in the past years under the idea that a growing mindset fosters resilient attitudes towards school and life (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Children's perceptions about factors discussed in previous sections, for example, *participation and group work, corporal punishment, teacher's attitudes and strategies, academic competences and effort to achieve personal goals* offer a broader idea of the type of mindset that each educational model promote, particularly in regards to intelligence, effort and success in the academic environments.

According to the findings discussed earlier (see section 4.2), in the public and private schools, memorization to pass exams is supported by nearly all pupils. These children believe that listening unconditionally to teachers will represent a good performance within class. Thus, in order to pass grades, it is important to follow the activities and models implemented in the school, and assuming that teachers are the ones with knowledge, it is necessary to do whatever they are required of. Children from international schools expressed a different opinion. These students regarded school as a place to explore, cooperate, and learn from mistakes as part of the daily activities and they utterly indicated that they were happy with it.

*“I don’t like playing in class and disobeying the teachers, because when you play you cannot understand and you did not come to school to play but you come to learn (...). When they (teachers) give us free time we can play and use that free time, but when is time for class, is time for class”.* Miriam, public school

*“If we get them all wrong (the answers) we learn our mistakes and correct them so we know that topic now so we learnt a lot about that.”* Matthias, International school.

As expressed by Hall and Pearson (2003 in Pawlina & Stanford 2011 p.30) children’s perceptions of mistakes and difficult situations have an impact on their self-concept and on how to handle future situations. Therefore, perceptions of mistakes as an opportunity for growing and learning more or perception of mistakes as something to be ashamed of, will shape students’ mindset about school and affect their own abilities and opportunities in the classroom setting. Similarly, sense of agency, self-efficacy and the development of a framework for approaching problems, are characteristics mentioned by Pawlina and Stanford (2011) as necessities to build resilience in children. This implies that the use of traditional methods does not foster a high sense of self competence or self-efficacy particularly when students look forward to accomplish tasks in the way a teacher asks or when they lack freedom to propose activities and discuss their ideas. On the contrary, non-traditional methods of education with activities like group work, research and expositions foster academic and personal success and resilient attitudes by focusing on reflections towards processes and personal achievements, rather than the ability to recite facts or exam scores.

These findings indicate the necessity of interventions in promoting growing mindsets and resilient attitudes. It is assumed that even if a non-traditional model is the one that facilitates those elements, interventions could also be done in traditional educative systems, precisely addressed to minimize the consequences that this models can have towards children creativity and critical thinking (Boumavá, 2008; Dweck, 2009; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Robinson, 2010). As expressed by Pelley (2014 p.18), “If we want to produce the best learning outcomes, we must teach the student to be aware of how they learn and which of their learning skills are in need of strengthening”.

Finally, it is important to clarify that even if non-traditional methods of education implement activities more related to a growing mindset, it cannot be assumed that all students from non-traditional models will necessarily develop it, or –on the contrary- that all students from

traditional methods will manifest a fixed mindset. However, it is important to highlight that the activities implemented within non-traditional methods –like share of knowledge, critical thinking and participation- interact in a feedback process to foster a growing mindset. Therefore, it is more likely that these types of attitudes are promoted; while students from traditional models will find this more difficult due to the rigidity and structure of the activities and social and academic pressure for higher grades.

## 4.3 Children's Future expectations

The second objective for the present study was to describe future life expectations of children studying under traditional and non-traditional school contexts. As stated by Wyman, Cowen, Work, and Kerley (1993), positive future expectations are related to later adjustment and resilient attitudes. Therefore, this section explores and presents the activities and situations that children desire for their future, children's expectations about completion of school, and the relation between future job and financial situation. This section ends by exploring how certain children are about their future, including possible obstacles and facilities to reach their goals.

### 4.3.1 Children's desired status of well being

According to different authors, expectations towards the future have an impact on future achievements and might influence present attitudes in order to achieve the expected goals (Burrell, 2008; Halleröd, 2011; Wyman et al., 1993; Zhang, 2012). In the present study, envisions about future were explored through expectations on future professions, activities and socioeconomic status aspired by children and how they relate them to academic performance and parental support.

Regardless of the educational model, all children envisioned a bright future for themselves. However, the expectations, desired professions and motives for them were slightly different in each school. In the international school, all participants believed they will continue having a good and happy life in the future. Their expectations were related to becoming athletes, writers, dolphin trainers or doctors. Some of their answers were not only focused on themselves but also into helping other people by “making a change in the world”. Even when some of them mentioned the economical aspect of their desired profession, this was not a determinant factor. These children had a clearer vision about possible obstacles they will face in the future and how they thought they would overcome them.

*“I have a lot of opportunities, like good at sports, good at math, there are a lot of things I can do with those. So yeah, I think I will have a good life in the future”.* Lukas,  
International school

In the private school, all participants believed that they will have a good future and many of them pictured themselves doing positive things for society. Only one participant emphasized the fact of getting married and having children. Future expectations and desired profession were mainly related to academic subjects, their relations with future income and the possibilities to look after



their family and fulfil their needs. Children mentioned the following professions: pilot, lawyer, doctor, auditor, and fashion designer. Only one participant mentioned the idea of settling in a different country in the future. Interestingly, he was the participant with a more structured plan for the next years, including the universities in which he would like to study and the proposed career.

*“My goal is to be a lawyer (...) I will live in Uganda because is my home country, I was born here, and I will get married to a Ugandan man”.* Anna, Private school

*“I would like to study my engineering at Cambridge University. Because people from there they say is nice and there is also, if I don’t achieve Cambridge I would like to go an university in Kenia.”*Anthony, Private school

*“I would like to be a pilot. I’ve heard that they get a lot of money for just to flying an airplane. (...) I’ll be working for money (...) For me, all I just want is to finish my studies and become a good person in the future, a pilot and make money”.* Daniel, Private school

*“My real dream is to become a doctor (...) when I see doctors treating people I really feel happy because I know that people in Uganda, are getting the help they need (...) I will study hard, become a doctor and help the people back in my village, (...) I want I want to built for my parents their own house, take care of them, take care of my siblings and also take care of my grandparents”.* Sara, Private school

In the public school, comments towards the future were related to living in a happy family, achieving economic stability and staying in contact with family members. One female and male participant viewed themselves with children in their future. Except for one, all participants in this school expressed their interest to live in Uganda; the participant who did not, preferred to live in the United Kingdom (UK) where one of her relatives is currently living. Similarly, with the private school, the interest for the desired professions was largely economic, based on the opportunities they present in regard to making money and therefore to “live in a better way”, support their relatives and “pay-back” to their parents. Nevertheless, there was a female participant who based her decision on happiness and personal achievements. The desired professions included: Pilot, Engineer, Doctor, Lawyer, Mathematician, Scientist, Doctor and Musician.

*“I drew myself when I’m on the stage, singing to my people, singing for them. I am happy when I am singing for them. When I’m singing here, maybe I am thinking I am the, the best musician they have ... These people even like me, (...) they like to be with me, maybe they like my music (---). When I finish my studies I will help my parents (...) I want to be with good jobs, with a good things in my life, with everything I want. (...) to give my sister (the opportunity to) afford to do that (studying), to help her”* Rose, public school

*“I would like to be a doctor. (I know a doctor), he gets a lot of money and he treats his parents well and I would like to be like him, because he does not make his children and the wife to live worse life, he makes them live a better life and he cares for his family”.* Miriam public school

*“I would like to be a Pilot, and Engineer or a Doctor because you get money from them (professions); they are source of my own income”.* Benjamin, public school

The above information is discussed under the idea that children from the international school might be more aware and reflect more about future situations and how difficult –or not- it can be, in comparison with children from the public school, who -despite their high expectations- are also dependent on the economic situation. As discussed in chapter 2, the idea of getting a job with a high income in the future is deeply rooted in participants mainly from the public and private sector. Future expectations are usually assumed as related to school performance and previous academic success. Therefore, when relating this information with children’s beliefs and perceptions about education, it is discussed that they perceive the educative system in which they are involved, as the ideal one which will allow them to fulfil their aspirations.

In this section, it is discussed how interpretation of school achievements and childhood conditions are important elements when thinking about the future (Halleröd, 2011). For the present study it is interesting that almost all participants had positive expectations towards their futures. However, it is important to note that beliefs and hope in future are only some of the characteristics to achieve goals, develop resilient attitudes and foster a growing mindset. Therefore, the importance of interventions focused on the interaction of effort, good strategies and help from others (Paunesku, Yeager, Romero and Walton 2012, in Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Likewise, one can infer that if reforming educative policies became a colossal activity, a first step can begin with significant interventions on class setting. Teachers could be trained on classroom activities and praising strategies that can impact on the way children perceive and project their school achievements (Dweck, 2009; Johnson & Stapel, 2010; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

#### 4.3.2 Children’s expectations about completion of school

In this study, I explored pupils’ beliefs and expectations towards their permanence and completion of school. This was done with reference to their visions about their future. Answers were based on the relation of education with the achievement of future goals and with parental economic support. In the International school, children mentioned the possibility of finishing university. However, it was not an immediate answer, it came out after analyzing each level of education and their idea of completing it or not. One participant pointed out not to be that sure of going through it:

*“I think I’m going to do all grades and years because I want to study well so...I don’t know (if I will go to university) (...) yes (I want to study all and go to college)”.* Sofia, International school

*“I think so (I will attend university), I’m still thinking about that. I’m not really sure if I will do it or not. First of all they give a lot of homework, and second of all I’ll miss my old friends and my parents because they won’t be there”* Elias, International school

In the Private school, all students mentioned the idea of continuous studying up to university.

Most of them quickly gave that answer, while others assumed it when evaluating each level of education.

*"I think I may stop studying in University because I am going to do a course of either for offspring". Anthony, Private school*

*"I will continue up to university because my parents have paid my school fees on time so I know that that will continue until I finish school and I continue with my dreams". Sara, Private school*

For the public school, participants expressed that they would like to continue with their studies up to university. However, they were aware of the importance of money in terms of paying for their school fees. One female participant mentioned that she might not even finish secondary school because of lack of money in her family.

*"(...) if I get school fees I can finish all those classes (...) even university, I want (to go to university)". Benjamin, public school"*

*"I don't know really because my future (I) don't think that I'll complete my studies, because my mom can't help to give me my school fees. She has to take care of my sisters, they are still young (...) I don't think (I will finish secondary school)" Rose, public school*

The above student's insights exemplify discussions that authors like Paterson, Tyler, and Lexmond (2014), Esping-Andersen (2009) and Rawls (1979 in Kymlicka, 2002) have posed for long about people's life chances determined by their birth circumstances instead of their talents. The authors report of the necessity to raise the awareness of the importance to create educative systems that promote social mobility instead of perpetuating classes divisions and inequalities in which while the resourceful may do well in a competitive market, the low educated can be severely disadvantaged, generating a strong income difference among them.

High future expectations from students in the public schools— even when many of them reported precarious economic situations at home—, differed from Zhang's studies compilation (2014) in which he pointed out that students from disadvantaged families tend to have lower expectations connected with poor achievements and high dropout rate. For the present study, the fact of having high expectations despite the awareness of disadvantages in economic terms, highlights the importance and possibility of interventions related to resilient attitudes and growing mindset.

### 4.3.3 Academic performance and future achievement

When addressing the objective of exploring children beliefs towards education and school performance, students' responses included pupil's associations of how present performance at school could be related with future achievements. In the private school, participants believed that good performance in school will allow them to get better jobs, an idea mainly reinforced by parents -mostly mothers- and teachers. Therefore, personal effort, "*studying hard*" and believing in God will help them to get a professional degree, which will also help them to "*achieve*

*everything they want*". One participant mentioned that the fact of having an adequate performance on school might imply the possibility of a scholarship. A similar scenario was described in the public school, where future achievement and stable economic situation were related to school performance and the possibility of their desired future achievement was related to the familiar economic possibility to pay for school fees, contrary to students in the International school setting who assumed that their parents would support their education.

*"When I get school fees and I learn, I will get my job and I will work so that I can be better (...) when I study I will be with much money to provide for them (my family)".*  
Benjamin, public school

*"My mom and dad have enough money to make me go to college and university and then I can get a good job and I can get a happy life (...) My family say "you're going to have a good life if you study a lot" And I like to study."* Matthias, International school

The student's insights above are consistent to those of Meinert, and Habito (2009 and 2005, both in Salbon 2014 p.43, 51) who said that the educational system has become to focus on good grades in order to get a job that pays a high salary since that is considered a successful life, implying that parents see the education of their children as an investment. However, the NACCC report (1999) and Salborn's discussions (2014) indicate that the assumption of permanent and well paid job as a consequence of finishing school is not necessarily applicable anymore. The implication of this is then is that most children and parents held views related to the paradigm below, and if in a traditional system grades and teachers perceptions are understood as reflection of "cognitive ability", children might experience stressful situations in order to adjust themselves to what the teacher –or the system- is demanding of them.

#### 4.3.4 Children's certainty about future

The extent to which children believe that their aspirations will become real or not, has been previously studied by different scholars (e.g., Burrell, 2008; Halleröd, 2011; Wyman et al., 1993). For the present research, children's envisions about the future were also explored through pupil's comparisons about their future and their peer's future; and the certainty of desired events becoming true.

Expectancies towards future in comparison with children in the same age, differed among participant schools. For students at the International school, the future seemed comparable to the one their classmates will have. They justified their responses with the idea that they were all similar, therefore they shared similar opportunities.

*"Probably we will have similar (future)because they will all have good jobs and want to be something good when they grow up"* Matthias, International school

*"(My future will be) similar... well most of my friends will be similar because they are just like me. Well some of them have other things; some of them have less, so yeah, I will say similar. Most of them are good at sports and math, and they are really kind so yeah, I think they'll have really good opportunities."* Lukas; International school

In the private school, two of the participants assumed their future will be better than other people in the same age, the rest believed that they would share a similar future as their peers, especially because of similar abilities, access to education and fulfilment of basic needs.

*“I want mine (future) to be better than them (classmates)... and also I would like to, if they are not ok, I’ll help them (in the future) because they were my classmates”*. Daniel, Private school

*“I think I will have a similar future. I think so because all my friends have got education, all the basic needs and many others”*. Caroline, Private school

In the public school a common belief was that each participant would have a better future than their peers, and only one participant said it would be similar. The students’ responses were justified by the belief that they work harder or concentrate better than their classmates; or in the assumption that if they get school fees they will get a good job. One participant mentioned that she already had a sponsor something that would set a difference among her classmates.

*“My future will be better than them (classmates). Because they like playing, and they came to learn. I want to work hard, so I can defeat those people in my class, and then I will be the best”*. Miriam, public school

Performing better in school and self-evaluation of achievements and effort in comparison with peers have been related to higher academic expectations (Cunningham, Corprew, & Becker 2009; Smerdon, 1999 in Zhang 2012). What this means is that if students’ beliefs of “being a good student” represent what the teacher indicates, and “being hard working” in classroom represent success, they will assume a better future for themselves, in comparisons to their peers who do not act under that paradigm. Nevertheless, according to children and teacher answers, it could be discussed that in the public school, the competition that characterizes student’s performance in a traditional model might have been expanded not only to exam results, but to life expectations and results. A similar idea is mentioned by Sallborn (2014) when saying that the modern educational system produces winners and losers instead of empowering every individual in a unique way according to differing personalities.

According to Paunesku, Yeager, Romero and Walton (2012 in Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012) and Halleröd (2011), practice and training are necessary to complement beliefs in positive results. Therefore, teacher support and inclusive pedagogical strategies and the appropriate learning environment are important for children to experience and develop those abilities. In other words, although believing in a successful future can be related to grit and a growing mindset (Laursen, 2015), it is also necessary to implement activities which foster it, and that could be promoted more easily in non-traditional learning environment.

Certainty about future is also related to a locus of control towards how a situation is likely to happen and where the responsibility of that event can be put. Based on internal or external locus of control –eventually both-, participants from public and private schools assumed that they would reach their future objective. These beliefs were more present within students from public

school. In regard to possible obstacles to achieve their dreams, only a few participants in these schools elaborated their answers about it. Some children were not able to identify possible obstacles to their future. While for others, lack of money was assumed as a situation that might interfere with their goals, particularly to complete their education.

*"I think I will achieve my goals because I will pray to God so that I can be like that".*  
Benjamin, Public school

*"I want to achieve to be a lawyer, nothing will stop me, God will be on my side".* Anna,  
Private school

*"I really think I will become a doctor. Because that is my greatest dream in my life to study hard and get it ... I want to become a unique doctor from all other doctors in the world".* Sara, Private school

In the case of international schools, some students were sure that they would achieve their goals, others assumed that *"it will be hard but they might"*, and others were *"not so sure"* or *"hope so"*. Unlike their peers from the public and private schools, these students reflected on possible obstacles in terms of personal characteristics to develop, other people aspiring for the same job, or situations out of their control; for example other people's beliefs. Nevertheless, they all seemed keen to try for possible positive results.

*"Yes, I'm sure that my dream of being a cardiologist will happen but I'm not so sure if it will really happen in Switzerland."* Isabella, International school

*"It's going to be hard but I might (achieve my dreams). Not many people are football players but I might. it maybe happen, I'm not so sure".* Matthias, International school

*"(I'm not sure if my dreams will come true) because It is going to be really hard to change people's mind (...) for some people you cannot really (change their ideas). I do not think I am going to be able to achieve like to make a change in the world. But I just want to try".* Sofia, International school

The above excerpts are discussed under the idea that people's perceptions about themselves influence their responses towards life situations (Dweck, 2009). In this case, most children were aware of the importance of personal effort to succeed, accomplish goals and sort possible obstacles. However, according to narratives in the different schools, children from the international were better able to elaborate answers regarding how, when and if they would face future changes or situations, while children from the other two schools, with some exceptions, understood the idea of "working hard" but were not able to identify possible obstacles or elaborate their ideas on how to sort them out. Instead, they relied on situations associated with an external locus of control.

Kauai, Werner and Smith (1992 in Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993) concluded that a central component for resilient individuals is confidence that the odds can be surmounted. This

fact is interesting because, even if all students from public and private schools had high future aspirations and certainty that they will achieve them, many of them found it difficult to think of possible obstacles or express a way to sort them. On the contrary, students from the international school, also with high expectations for themselves, were more objective regarding possible circumstances that will pose difficulty in reaching their goals, but expressed that despite it, they would like to try it and seemed confident to sort those or to find an alternative.

With this data, it is discussed that in spite of children from public and private school having high expectations and beliefs in personal effort, activities developed within non-traditional methods of education might help to foster resilient behaviours and cognition, particularly when understanding resilience not only as the capacity to overcome risky circumstances or adversity, but also as the capacity to face failures, overcome them and use the experiences as a source of personal growth (Dweck, 2009; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Halleröd (2011, p. 80) concludes his research by saying “*high expectations for the future are not enough. Expectations do not help much when reality kicks in. Some children know that, and the rest will eventually learn*”. That idea might seem applicable to this study. However, the above statement is also related to a fixed mindset and passive interaction with the environment. Thus, the importance to promote activities and situations that help to develop a growing mindset and solution focus oriented perspective. Even though it is true that life situations differ from one child to another –significantly in the case of money if we compare the three schools of the study– it is also true that the way in which children perceive their realities, the grit and the effort a child puts in may also make the difference versus someone who passively “accepts his or her destiny” (Johnson & Stapel, 2010; Laursen, 2015). The proof of that are the successful stories from people in risk environments and with almost no development opportunities. If success was not an option, studies and intervention on resilience will be obsolete.

## 4.4 Children’s present life perceptions

The last specific objective for the present study attempted to examine present life perceptions of children studying under non-traditional and traditional educational models. In this section, children’s expressions on their present life satisfaction, and perceptions on emotional and economical support from parents and teachers are described.

### 4.4.1 Present life satisfaction

Children’s understanding of their present situation might impact their aspirations and beliefs towards the future (Halleröd, 2011). Similarly, the extent to which children feel comfortable or not in their present reality, and the interaction of social, personal, emotional and economic factors, might influence their attitudes and expectations towards life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Paterson et al., 2014; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Wyman et al., 1993). In the present section, pupils’ current experiences and levels of satisfaction are described.

In the private and international schools, majority of students referred to have a good life and being happy with it. Similarly, in the private school all participants except one expressed positive feelings about their life and their actual situations. Some of the repeated arguments were related to having access to education, care and covered needs. They also mention the fact of being with their parents and the relationship with them. The figure of God was also mentioned for some participants in the private institution.

*“I think I have a happy life because I have got education and needs”*. Caroline, Private school

*“I think I have a good life, I always get a lot of presents and have a nice house, I play a lot, my mom and dad are always with me, we do a lot of activities together”*. Sofia, International school

Few students expressed not to be happy with their life, or had up and down moments. Their reasons were more related to situations that did not happen in a desired way, economic circumstances or academic and family pressure. One participant mentioned that they had suicidal thoughts.

*“I do not really think I have a good life. There are times when I say “yes I have a good life”; the times in which I get to say “I’m worried”, and there are times that I just wish...sometimes I feel like killing myself... Because sometimes I just become sad, most of my days... I go home very tired. I have been having a lot of work to do, so by the times my parents are home, I have not) finished, and that is not good. Sometimes my parents can complain, “. Anthony, private school*

*“I don’t think I have a good life because we sometimes we don’t eat at home. At home I can be hungry because of food. Sometimes they (teachers) can chase us at school for school fees (...) my dad is a single and sometimes they can chase us when he does not have any money. And sometimes we cannot eat because of money” Benjamin, Public school*

*“On a good day I just feel happy (...) but sometimes things just don’t go my way and.... mmm... so then I feel like... like my life is not that easy and my mom says that “life is unfair”*. Julia, International school

Looking at the above responses, it is important to take a school as an integral environment where the emotional component of children’s lives can be addressed. As stated by Mayr and Ulich (2009, in Pawlina & Stanford, 2011p.32), connecting to the emotional component of learning can make a difference in shifting mindsets. In other words it can make students address life situations in a different way or from a different perspective, as well as to face daily situations and find social support with peers and teachers. Therefore, the importance to offer spaces where students develop not only their academic and personal abilities, but where they can also feel confident to express their feelings, as well as to reinforce activities that make them feel comfortable and capable of their abilities and strategies.



When children were asked about things they wish were different in their life, answers varied among schools. Children from public schools were the ones with clearer situations that they would desired to change, mostly related to becoming rich, wiser at school and living with their biological parents or get a sponsor for their education.

*“My father has many children, but I live with my step mom, she has one child. But my master mother has four children. I do not know where she lives (my mom) but she took me with her to live with master mom. (...) By now I do not know where my father is (...) I cannot concentrate at home, but at school I can just think about what is going on at home (...) I want to change my life, live with my real mom”.* Rose, public school.

*“I would like to change the life which I’m living in and live a better life.* Miriam, public school

*“I want education, I want to be hardworking (...) I want to study better”.* Tomas, public school

The above students’ responses can be looked at with the idea that children from public schools—the ones with more economic vulnerability- are the main participants who desired to make a change in their lives. Interpretation of present circumstances and its impact on present perceptions about one self and the environment, as well as future expectations (Halleröd, 2011), are discussed mainly because of economic and emotional situations. Therefore, the above factors can enhance school performance on children from public schools, particularly on a traditional system based on quantifiable results and which rarely promote the development of resilient attitudes; perception of economic stability and its implication on children’s performance and future expectations are discussed in the section below.

#### 4.4.2 Children’s perception of economic and financial stability

Economic situation has been studied as a factor related to access to opportunities and with a direct impact on social mobility (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Kymlicka, 2002; Paterson et al., 2014). In the following section, children’s perceptions about their family’ financial stability and its relation to future achievements is described. Also, the importance of economical means to access different models and levels of education in Ugandan context is discussed through teacher’s opinions on this topic.

The perception of having enough money decreased from the international to public school. In the international school, all students believe that their families had a stable economy. Most of students in the private school referred to their families as able to provide for their needs, while in the public school only two respondents assumed a similar situation. The student’s answers were based on the “money” they perceived as to be in possession of their parents, the activities they realized and potential purchasing power of it, the provisions of their needs and the fact that they

had both their parents earning a salary. Similarly, answers in public school were based on the activities they were not able to realize because of lack of money at home. It is also worth pointing out that it was observed that one female participant expressed a need of counselling and guidance. However, this kind of hope for dependency can be dangerous for children, especially for those in vulnerable conditions

*“I think my family has enough money, because I go to a good school, we have enough food supplies, enough water, we do take care of electricity but not because of money, just for the world”*. Isabella, International school

*“I think my family has enough money, because dad always leaves money before he goes, then our mom works, get her salary and then she provides”* Sara, Private school

*“Sometimes I do not think that family has enough money”* Caroline, Private school

*“We do not have enough money. They (my parents) do not have better jobs”*. Tomas, Public school

*“I want someone who can just make me to do this, someone who be the leader to me, who can tell me what I want I don’t know, to him or my future to be”*. Rose, public school

Similarly, teachers in the three schools assumed family economic situation as an important factor to pursue higher education on the side of students. Teachers in the public and private school mentioned that when parents have the economical means to support children’s education, it would be more likely continue their formation up to third level, –even if it is not completed in a prestigious university, but at least one that the family can afford-. On the contrary, they mentioned that children whose parents have limited economic resources have to rely on government scholarships, which are not enough and hard to come by. Therefore, these children tend to remain with lower levels of education and low salaries.

From this data, we can see how the economic situation might impact on children’s chances to move up the social ladder (Paterson et al., 2014), and how some children might be more likely to experience *hopelessness and depression* (Bolland, 2003; Durant, Getts, Cadenhead, Emans, & Woods, 1995 in Burrell, 2008 p.12) especially because of their economic situation, and which can have an impact on their motivation to thrive (Maier & Seligman 1976 in Marino 2014 p.11).

#### 4.4.3 Children’s perceptions of direct support from family and teachers

Network support, caring environment and involvement of significant figures in children’s life have been studied as important factors related to resilient outcomes (Condly, 2006; Eggum, Sallquist, & Eisenberg, 2011; Goldstein & Brooks, 2013; Paterson et al., 2014). Therefore, important elements for the research question were related to children’s awareness of received support from family and teachers, and possible differences according to the educative model.

In general, participants assumed their families' support for a happy life. In the public school, this support is mainly perceived by the payment of school fees or emotional reassurance. In the other two schools it is mostly perceived through encouraging conversations. With regards to teachers in the international and private school, students assume that their professors perceive them as good students.

*“My family think I can achieve everything I want and I will have a happy life) because they trust in me and they give me education. (...) they have cared for me”.* Caroline, Private school

*“Teachers think I can achieve the things I want, because the teachers are the ones and your parents to motivate you to do the, to do the things and they push you harder to do this things”.* Julia, International school

Narratives from public school revealed more certainty about teachers' opinions than parental opinions towards their future. Students assumed that their teachers had a positive opinion towards them, mainly because of how they teach, give feedback or advices. However, they also assume that student's image is affected by the way they perform in class and their parent's ability to pay for their school fees. In the same context, there were no many answers to justify the emotional support that they referred to receive from family members regarding a good and happy life in the future. Some students were aware of this support mainly through parental expressions about their effort, but others expressed that their families did not know what they wanted.

*“Teachers think I can achieve what I want, they care about me and then they can check my books and see the work that I've done, when it was good they can tell me “ok it is better” when it was worse they can tell me I can improve (...) they see me as a wise person, they don't make me the foolish one, they can also help me”.* Miriam Public school

Beside family, the importance of teacher's opinions on student's achievements should also be observed. As described by (Muller, Katz and Dance 2004 in Zhang, 2012), teacher expectations may affect school outcomes through their influence on student educational expectations, their self-concept of abilities and attainment values. However, it is also discussed that the self-perception that children, especially the ones from a traditional model can have might be influenced by parents or teachers' perceptions and expectations. Once again, the social constructed reality where culturally and historically traditional methods and its effectiveness has been seen as the appropriate way of teaching, is reinforced by parents and teachers who also thought in the same way.

Finally, the perception that children had of a “happy student” was explored during the interviews and related to the expectations that family and teachers can have towards students. It was interesting to realize how, in the international school, children mentioned elements like fun, friends support, kindness teachers and interesting activities as necessary elements to be happy in school. However, in public and private contexts, children's answers were related to being disciplined, follow teacher's instructions, study hard and get good marks. According to participant's voices, this last one was related with happiness from important family members and

the child.

*“When you always get good marks, then you can always be happy, (your) teachers and parents (are) always liking you”*. Daniel, Private school

*“To be a happy student one should really study hard, that’s how I see. You make good grades; you make everyone happy, even inside yourself you feel happy”*. Sara, Private school

*“To be a happy student is... When you do everything your teacher tells you, you will be a happy student....I am a happy student”*. Oscar, Public school

This data suggests that the beliefs that children have about how education should be carried and what is expected from them as students, might be influenced by the interaction with significant others and children’s interpretation of these experiences (Teater, 2010). For instance, when students mentioned that “doing all the teacher wants” in order to get good grades will make “everyone else and even them” happy, might be discussed as characteristics of a fixed mindset, particularly because children value looking smart rather than learning (Dweck, 2009).

Similarly, effort, beliefs and good performance were reinforced in the international and private school by parents and teachers while having casual conversations or while praising students for their performance. As mentioned by one participant from the private school *“Our teachers admire everyone; as long as you perform very well (you) will be admirable”*. The above quote represents an example of praising results instead of effort, which according to Dweck (2009) could lead students to developing a fixed mindset. In the public school, emotional reinforcement from relatives or teachers was mentioned less than it was the case in the private or international school.

*“Most of the things our teacher tells us, is that we should perform well and we will get anything we want and we’ll have a happy life”*. Anthony, Private school

*“The way I compare myself and the love that my parents show me, is the way that I think to be. (My parents) tell me every day that I should study and help them. (...) because they told me that they will pay for my school fees forever and they will leave the good things they would do (so) I should learn”*. Miriam, Public school

#### 4.5 Applying the ecological perspective in the discussion of key findings

When analysing results from an Ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), interactions among different factors became evident. This study set out to explore children’s perceptions towards educational models, beliefs about students and education, and their expectations towards the future. The above factors mainly correspond to cognitive process and interpretations from different situations. However, those interpretations are usually shaped by the environment in which individuals develop social interactions, framed in a certain culture with specific values.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory (1979 in Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Johnson, 2008) situates individuals inside interconnected systems which are embedded in each other. For children in this study, perception of their economic situation was an important factor that seemed to affect their life's satisfaction, as well as their expectations towards the future –particularly for those from public and private schools-. The economic situation of a family belongs to the microsystem of a child. However, it is also influenced by elements in the exosystem, in which the child cannot interfere but he or she is affected by those, for example parents' job and their income (E. S. Johnson, 2008).

When analyzing students perceptions towards educative models and teaching learning strategies, the interaction of meso and exosystem are considered; students interact and live their educational process in schools with traditional or non-traditional methods of education, and as discussed in previous sections, this implies a significant difference in the activities and class structure. However, these differences in curriculum are influenced by educational policies on a national context –again in the exosystem where children are affected by it but without direct intervention-; and also by the paradigms and educational models of each culture. In this case, curriculum in public and private school is influenced by a Ugandan culture macrosystem while in the international school, macrosystem is conformed by Ugandan and British culture and perspectives on education.

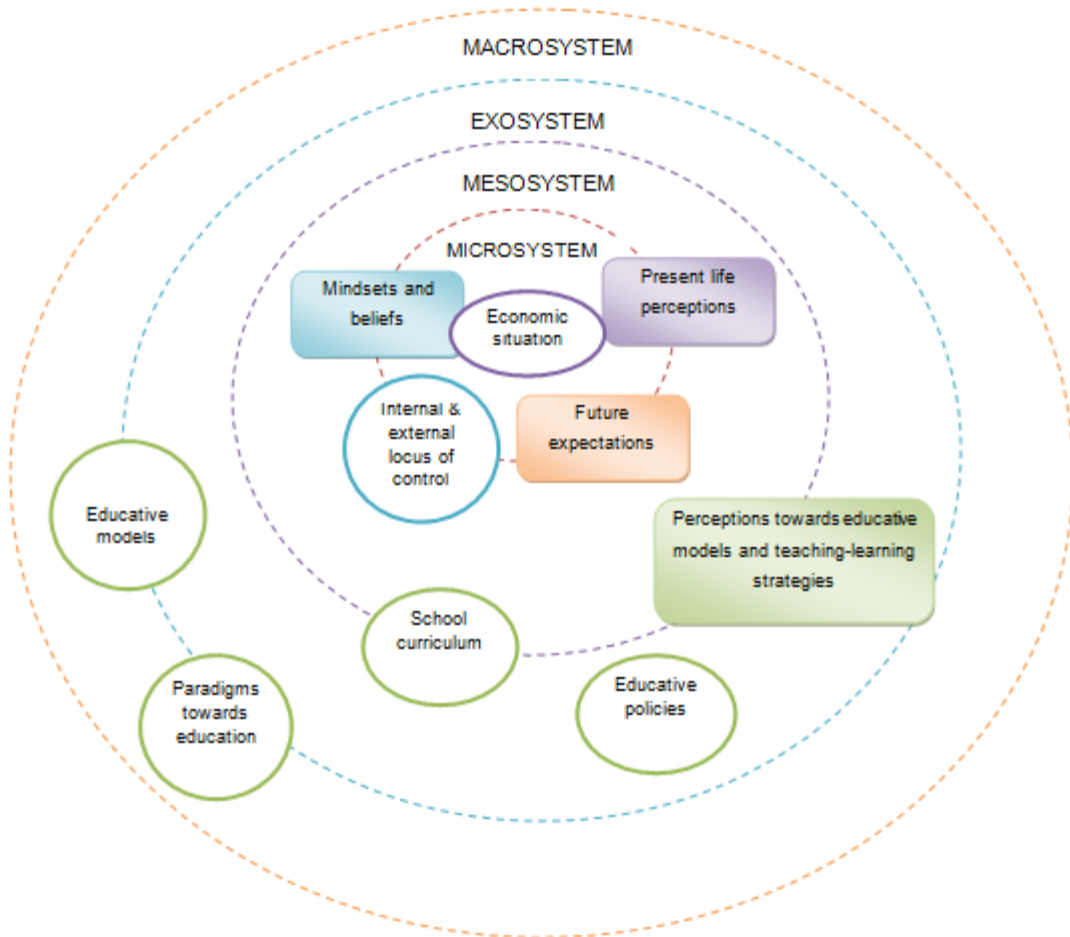
Related to the last point, this study showed that children use to favour the educational model in which they are immersed, and that their beliefs towards education, students and future achievements are usually shaped by that educational model. In other words, macro, meso and micro system interact in a feedback process in which educative models influence on children's beliefs and perceptions, and in turn, children's and teacher's attitudes reinforce the educative model.

When children from traditional educative models acknowledged the advantages of non-traditional strategies, but still expressed their preferences for activities related to repetition and memorizing; ecological theory might propose an explanation: Children's perceptions are influenced by cultural values and beliefs –“*completing education with high marks will represent a well-paid job in the future*”, those values –part of the macrosystem- are usually reinforced by significant others like parents and teachers within their micro and mesosystem. In other words, if the economic situation plays a significant role in the present and future life of participants, and if the existing belief in a traditional model assumes that success in school is a result of high marks; students will internalise those concepts and put them in practice during their school interactions – mesosystem-, reinforcing a specific paradigm in education, and, children's behaviours will shape their beliefs. Proof of this is when students assume that group work might represent some advantages to understand better, but they would not like to try it because the teacher's role is not that evident, and therefore “no learning” would take place. In sum, children act according to the beliefs that have been reinforced by significant others and the system in which they interact. They act based on high future expectations and perceive their educational model –despite the school- as the appropriate to succeed in school and achieve their future goals.

Finally the reliability on an external or internal locus of control to achieve aspirations is usually reinforced by significant others and by a specific cultural value as religion. Interesting is that

almost all participants were conscious about the importance of personal effort as a means to achieving their dreams. It is evident then the influence of macrosystem, particularly for the external locus of control; as well as the micro and meso system when promoting internal locus of control to achieve personal goals. In figure 1, an interaction of factors related to the study within an ecological perspective is presented.

**Figure \_ Interaction of factors within an ecological perspective**



Source: Author's Illustration

# CHAPTER V

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of major findings

Based on the objectives and research questions, a summary of the major findings and discussions are presented below. Similarly, a schema representing principal findings interactions and their discussion, can be seen in figure 2.

#### 5.1.1 Children's beliefs and perceptions about education and academic performance

- The educational model in which children have been immersed influence their perceptions towards school, teachers, and student's characteristics; impacting on their beliefs and behaviours. Children have positive perceptions of their school settings and the educational model. However, perceptions differed in content; for pupils in the traditional settings, they looked at the school as a place to perform individual academic work, memorize and repeat what teachers indicates. Children in the non-traditional model assumed school viewed the school as a place to explore, cooperate and learn from mistakes.
- Traditional systems of education promote a culture based on examination and exam's performance as a proof of academic abilities, which risk the sense of self competence or self-efficacy, neglects critical thoughts and analytical skills, and promotes competition. This competition seems to be present not only on exams results, but also on future expectations.
- The paradigm on schools with traditional methods is more related to approving exams, do what the teacher indicates and "being hard working". Therefore, children's self-perceptions about their efficacy and intelligence are usually based on comparisons against those ideals, with an aim to fit in it by following the activities and models implemented in the school.
- Non-traditional models imply present and future academic and personal advantages. However, its implementation might seem limited by the lack of resources in public schools and the pressure over teachers and students in private schools to achieve high academic results.
- For children in the public and private schools, the term "group work" was principally associated with self-organized activities during free time. In the private school, participation opportunities were mainly assumed for those with a hierarchical position in the classroom. In the public school, this concept was not related to the involvement or discussions towards academic activities, but mainly with actions to ensure

- discipline in class or helping teachers with the necessary materials.
- Corporal punishment was a common practice in public and private schools, and even when children expressed their desire for it not to happen. Most of them justified it by assuming that it will help them to become better and that teachers did it because they cared about students.
  - Respect, obedience and hard work were described as characteristics of “good students” by the interviewed children. Participants from public and private schools also mentioned faith in God as an important characteristic. These characteristics are influenced by standards promoted in the academic and social discourse. Similarly, the way in which students interpret their academic situations may influence the expectations they have for their future, and furthermore, the perception of how likely is it to actually occur.
  - Perception of mistakes as an opportunity for growing and learn more, or as something to be ashamed about will shape students self-perceptions and mindset about school, affecting their abilities and opportunities in the classroom setting.
  - Personal effort was considered by students in both educational models as a necessary element to achieve future goals. This belief can favour the development of a growing mindset and resilient attitudes. However, activities implemented on the non-traditional environments may offer a bigger opportunity to foster and develop these beliefs and attitudes.
  - For children in a non-traditional context, success in future achievements was to rely on an internal locus of control, while for participants in the traditional model, internal and external locus were necessary to accomplish their expectations.
  - Children from the three schools assumed the work in small teams as a mean to share information, get support, benefit from other’s abilities and produce better results. In the public school it was also associated with emotional support. However, in the public and private school students perceived as disadvantages to this strategy the idea of missing teacher’s explanation, disturbance for teachers and “ideas stealing” from other classmates. All of them related to the negative connotation of not performing well in future exams.
  - Children mainly preferred the educational model they have been experiencing. The ones who had been instructed under a traditional model were able to reflect and identify positive implications of activities corresponding to non-traditional models – mainly the ones related to working in teams. However, they still preferred and demand the strategy of sitting and memorizing. On the contrary, students who had been working under a non-traditional model reflected on the positive outcomes of it and expressed their will to continue working that way.
  - Children preferences towards non-traditional educational models were based on the advantages of collaborative work as well as the perceived support from teachers and classmates to improve their abilities. Non-traditional models seem to improve collaboration among students, interest and participation towards class subject. Students from this model described school as fun and attractive.
  - Children preferences towards the traditional educational model were based on the cultural paradigm in which the teacher possesses all knowledge and must transmit it to students. Also, it was influenced by the idea that high marks would represent a job with a high income in the future. Therefore, for the participating children,



- memorization represented a strategy to succeed in exams and be assured of a wealthy future.
- Activities and strategies implemented in a non-traditional model were more likely to promote a growth mindset while the structure and pedagogy in a traditional model were more likely to promote a fixed mindset.

### 5.1.3 Children's Future expectations

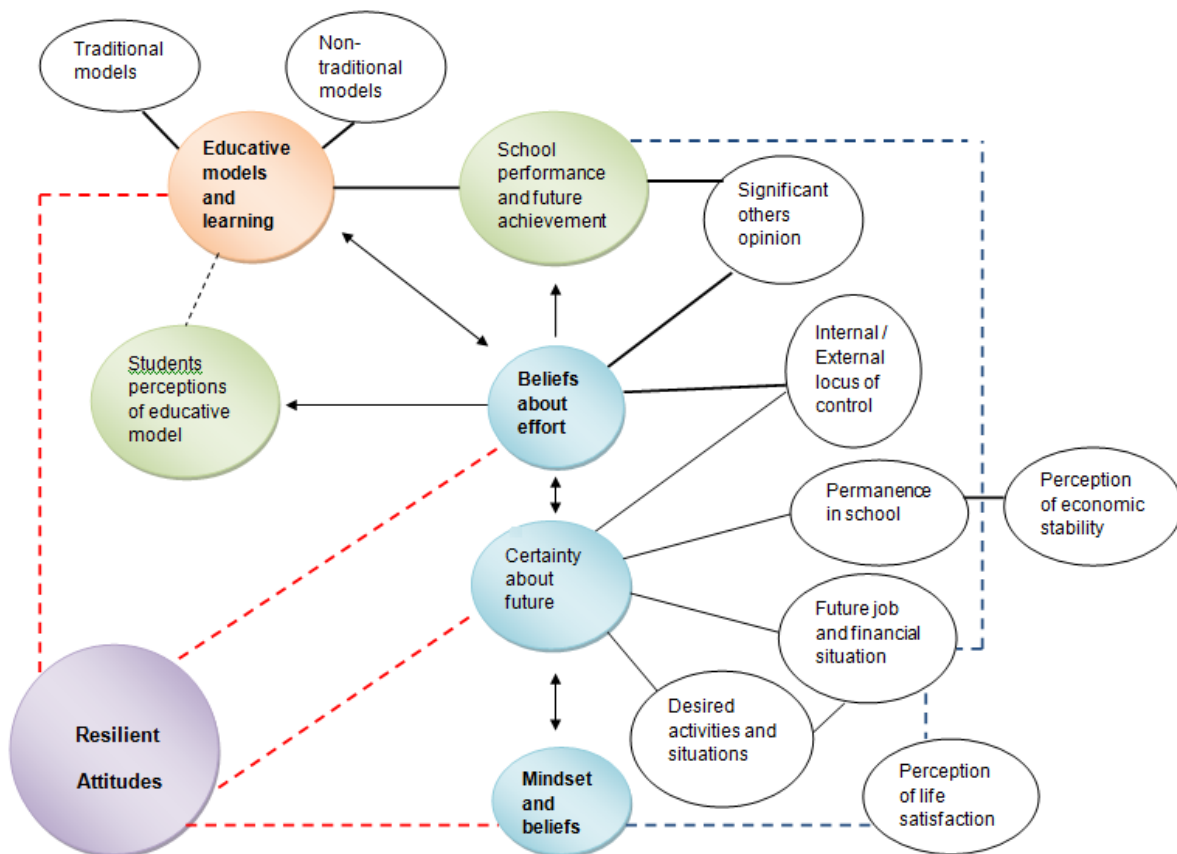
- Despite the educational model, all children pictured a good and happy future for themselves. Students from the private school expressed their will to continue their studies up to tertiary education. This opinion was shared by many participants from international and public school. However, their answer came after analysing each level of education and their idea of finishing it or not. In the case of the public school, students were aware of how economic stability might have a significant impact on their achievement.
- Children and teachers acknowledged the impact of economic means to achieve higher levels of education.
- In the traditional mode, desired professions were more related to the amount of money it could provide.
- Children from the traditional model seemed to have more certainty on the accomplishment of their future expectations than students from the non-traditional model. However, many from the first group did not seem to have reflected on possible obstacles or strategies to accomplish those goals while children in the second group seemed more aware of possible difficulties but expressed their desire to grit and persevere to achieve their goals.

### 5.1.4 Children's present life perceptions

- In general, children voiced their views to have a good life and be happy with it. Those who did not or who were hesitating about their response, based their answer on situations that would hamper their expectations and thereby alter their will; academic and family pressure or familiar situations related to lack of money or to not living with the biological parents.
- The perception of economic stability decreased from the international to the public school.
- Lack of money was associated with children from the public school with a possible negative image in the classroom especially when they miss class work or exams for not having paid school fees. Similarly, lack of money was assumed as one of the biggest obstacles to achieve their dreams.
- Children related and assumed that family support with the cover of school fees on the public school, the provision of basic needs in the private one, and emotional and economical support in the international one. Good grades were related as a motive of personal and familiar happiness among participants from public and private school.

- Teachers appeared as a significant figure for emotional and academic support for children in all schools. However, in the public school, their image as a significant figure was more mentioned than parental figures. Also, teacher’s personal characteristics like kindness, ability to create an agreeable and a relaxed classroom ambience were appreciated by participants in the three different schools.
- Interventions to promote growing mindsets and resilient attitudes are not only important but necessary factors, and could be also implemented on traditional environments, precisely to minimize its consequences, offer spaces to develop academic and personal abilities, and promote similar opportunities to access the required abilities on a globalized era. Similarly, it is important that interventions included teacher’s training on how to promote a growth mindset and the effective way to praise children

Figure 2\_Educative models, beliefs and resilient attitudes\_ factors interaction



Source: author’s illustration

## 5.2 Conclusions

This study aimed to examine how children from different educational models held beliefs about education and future that might influence the development of resilient attitudes. Questions and objectives corresponded to identifying children perceptions about education, future expectations and present life perceptions within pupils in traditional and non-traditional educational models, as well as to explore the influence of those educational models to foster resilience.

After analysing the main findings, this study answers the original research questions as below:

- I. Educational models influence learners' perceptions and beliefs towards education. Children from non-traditional educational models believe that school and education should imply a place to have fun, explore and work with others, while for children in traditional models, school is associated with memorization in order to succeed in exams. Similarly, children hold positive perceptions about the educational model in which they are immersed and prefer to continue under the pedagogy of its actual model –even when acknowledging advantages from non-traditional systems. They also assumed that the education strategies implemented by their teachers –including corporal punishment in the traditional model- were appropriate and benefited their present and future development.
- II. Despite the educational model, children envisioned high expectations for their future. However, pupils from a non-traditional model reflected more in the process than in the final result, and seemed to be more aware of their capacities, possible obstacles and strategies to achieve their goals than their peers from the traditional model. Furthermore, children from traditional models based their selection of future careers with the income that those professions suppose, and constantly aim to a higher economic situation in order to fulfil their necessities, support their relatives and “pay back” to their family.
- III. Perceptions about present life differ among participants in the different schools, however, perception of having a good life or being happy with it seemed more related with the perceived economic situation and its advantages or disadvantages, and parental support than with the educative model. Parental support was related with payment of school fees in the private school and with economical and emotional support in the international one. Teachers appear as an important figure for all participants, but their influence is more expressed from children in the public school.
- IV. There is a difference in how educational models can foster resilient attitudes among children. Even when results do not excluded resilient outcomes from one model - particularly because of the importance of children's personal characteristics and interpretations-, they highlight the importance of environment and significant others, altogether with personal factors and conclude that non-traditional models, due to their pedagogy, class structure and paradigms on education and its process, will more likely promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes among students. On the contrary, traditional models might be more likely to develop a fixed mindset and will offer fewer opportunities to develop and enhance resilient attitudes.

The main conclusions in this research point to the importance of collaborative, exciting and challenging educational environments, as well as the organization and strategies implemented by teachers in the class. The findings highlight the importance of these two factors: classroom environment and teaching models, as these directly affect student's beliefs and development towards education and themselves, which in return tend to shape students interpretations of situations and their reaction towards them.

This study concludes that children's perception towards education is shaped by cultural and social values and by the educational model in which children interact. Similarly, these models tend to influence children's preferences towards learning strategies: individual work based on repetition and memorization or group work based on analysis, applicability and cooperation. It is also concluded that the educational environment seems not to affect future expectations among children, but that traditional models encourage competition among its members without fostering some of the necessary abilities required by employers in a globalized society. Economic situations instead of educational models seem to be the factors related to present life perceptions of satisfaction and to future aspirations. However, the abilities promoted in the non-traditional model will facilitate children's beliefs and behaviours to face academic and life situations with a resilient attitude. Finally, the findings focus on the importance of changes in educational policies and interventions addressed to promote growing mindset and resilient attitudes, preferably through non-traditional activities and strategies. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that those programs could be also implemented in traditional settings if targeting teacher training on effective praising for growing mindset and promoting children critical thinking and reflection on information and learning.

This study adds on the existing information towards the importance of education as a basic right and its relation to children's expectations, the formation of creative, practical, academic and personal skills, and its influence on social mobility. Also, it considers and increases research on educational models and their relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, assuming non-traditional models as the system that allows students to acquire and develop the necessary abilities and skills for a global and technological society. These findings also point out something to the few investigations done in Uganda with regard to alternative methods of education. Furthermore, it adds on the actual knowledge about education as a protective factor for resilience and assumes a position towards it not only as a way of overcoming difficult circumstances, but also as an attitude towards life that can be taught, practiced and developed within non-traditional educative strategies. Finally, this study is a contribution to the fund of social constructivist and ecological theories by assuming reality as a process that is co-constructed and interpreted by each person, according to his or her social interactions, personal characteristics and the values and ideas promoted in a specific context or culture.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Recommendations from this study are divided in two parts. The first ones are addressed to future studies on similar areas and the second part focuses on the suggestions for practitioners and policymakers, based on the main findings of this research.

### 5.3.1 Recommendation for future research

The recommendations for future studies in similar areas or comparable situations are listed below:

- To include non-participant observation about class strategies and interactions among teachers and students.
- To conduct studies aimed to identify the type of mindset among different schools, and the factors associated with them in developing countries.
- To conduct studies based on teachers perspectives. Factors related to the possibility of applying non-traditional methods within the class, and the will to implement such changes. In addition, studies with teachers from public schools who have adopted a non-traditional approach to express their suggestions and perspectives on how to shift a paradigm in which traditional methods are the most accepted ones.
- To develop research about grit on students at risk and development of programs to promote it.

### 5.3.2 Recommendations for classroom pedagogy

The data from this research points to the importance of short and long term benefits of non-traditional educational methods. Subsequently, suggestions in this area aim to offer possibilities for teachers and policymakers on the implementations of this educational model. It is mainly proposed that the implementation of preventive interventions and research to foster proactive characteristics and assuming a solution focus approach and/or strengths perspective. It is proposed then:

- Intervention programs based on growing mindset development..
- Intervention programs based on strategies to foster grit among students
- Interventions programs on self-esteem and self-worth, to impact on children's beliefs about themselves and their participation for future situations.
- Teacher training on non-traditional education models and its applications in class, as well as training on how to promote mindset and grit among students.
- Teacher training on the effective way of praising students in order to develop a growing mindset. This strategy can be highly effective, particularly if classroom characteristics –like number of students or time to cover the curriculum- does not facilitate the implementation of non-traditional activities.

Also, in order to promote a growing mindset and foster resilient attitudes among children, and based on Dweck and Laursen research and interventions (2009; 2015), it is recommended for

teachers and parents or guardians to:

- Promote opportunities for children to develop and work on long-term goals as a strategy to develop and strengthen grit.
- Offer students opportunities for development and for having high expectations of themselves.
- Model the type of social and emotional skills desired for children
- Praise students based on their effort and process rather than intelligence.
- Include interactive activities in their lessons, favouring group work, research, sharing of information, interaction and reflection on the taught subjects and their real life application.

Finally, a list of resources for teachers and parents to identify characteristics and advantages of non-traditional models of education, and promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes in children are listed below:

- i. Robinson's "changing paradigms in education" TED Talks
  - a. [http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_changing\\_education\\_paradigms?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms?language=en)
- ii. Sugata Mitra Self Organized Learning Environments kit
  - a. [http://www.ted.com/prize/sole\\_toolkit](http://www.ted.com/prize/sole_toolkit)
- iii. Dweck's mindset TED Talks
  - a. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGvR\\_0mNpWM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGvR_0mNpWM)
  - b. [https://www.ted.com/talks/carol\\_dweck\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_believing\\_that\\_you\\_can\\_improve?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en)
- iv. Brainology.\_ online activities for students to learn about the brain and its plasticity<http://www.mindsetworks.com>
- v. Amy Lyon strategies on how to teach and promote long-term goals on students
  - a. <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/grit-help-students-overcome-inner-obstacles-vicki-zakrzewski>
- vi. Angela Duckworth's Grit Survey:  
[https://sasupenn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9H6iT93yv4rozeB](https://sasupenn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9H6iT93yv4rozeB)
- vii. Book "Mindsets in the Classroom: Building a Culture of Success and Student Achievement in Schools" by Mari Cay Ricci (2013), which offers comprehensive practical strategies for both teachers and parents in teaching mindsets.

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# Annex

## Children's interview guide

### **Influence of traditional and non- traditional educative models on beliefs towards education, future expectations and resilient attitudes**

#### **Sections**

- A. Present life perceptions
- B.\_ Future life expectations
- C.\_ Educative models and its relation to foster resilience
- D.\_ Perceptions towards school activities and academic competences

#### **Introduction**

- Read again purpose of the study and ethical considerations.
- Establish rapport with the participant
- Allow participant to use a pseudonymous or keep her real name

#### **Present life perceptions**

- Who do you live with?
- Which are the activities you do on a normal day?
  - o When? With who? Is it an obligation?
- In general, do you think your family has enough money to cover the things that you and your family need?
- Who are the people in which you can trust?
  - o Why?
- Who are the people who care about you?
- Do you think you have a good life?
  - o Why?
- Are you happy with your life? Why?
- Which are some of the things you like about your life?
- If you could change something about your life, what would it be?
- In your life, which are three things you are very good at?
- In your life, which are three things you would like to do better?

#### **Future expectations**

- Who is someone that you admire?
- Until which grade do you think you will go to school?
- Do you think you will have a happy life?
- If you compare your future with people of your age, do you think your future will be worse, similar or better?
- Do you think you can achieve the things you want?
- Does your family think you can achieve the things you want?
- Does your family think you will have a happy life?

- If you could do whatever you want, what would you like to do when you grow up?
- Do you think that will actually happen?
- Are there some obstacles to achieve the things you want?
- Which will be the things/situations that will help you to achieve what you want?
- What do you have to do to achieve what you want?
- What do you think you will be doing when you are 30 years old?
  - o Place of living, activities, work
- When you reach 30 years old, do you think you will have enough money to cover the things that you and your family need?
- If you could be granted any 3 wishes, what would they be?

### **Perception on academic competences**

- Do you think you are a good student?
- At school, which are three things you are very good at?
- At school, which are three things you would like to do better?
- What is necessary to be a good student?
- What is necessary to be a happy student?

### **Perception of school activities and support**

- How many years have you been at this school? Please answer the following questions according to your experience in this school.
- Nowadays, how do you feel at school? Why?
- Does your teacher think you are a good student?
- Does your teacher think you can achieve anything you want?
- Does your teacher think you will have a happy life?
- Do your teachers admire you?
- Which are some of the things you like/ dislike about your teacher?
- Which are some of the things you like/dislike about your classmates?
- During your classes, do you have the opportunity to participate and work in teams or mainly you have to sit and memorize what the teacher says?
- During classes, do you have the opportunity to explore and talk about things you are interested in?
  - o Which are the things you are interested in?
- Are the things you learn at school useful for your life?
  - o How do you put them in practice?
- Do you work in teams a lot?
  - o Who organizes it? What do you do? Do you like it?
- Do you share with your classmates information that you find?
- Do you have the opportunity to organize or propose some of the class activities?
- Do you ever get bored at school?
- Which are the activities you enjoy more during school?
- Which are the activities you don't like when you are at school?
- Which activities would you like to do at school so you could enjoy more your time there?
- In your opinion, what are some things teachers can do to help students be more successful in school? / To promote all children success
- If you were the teacher, what would you do so students could be happy/interested in the

class?

- In your opinion, what's the purpose of the school
- How should be the perfect teacher/school?

### **Closing**

- If you could describe with 3 words what this interview was about, which words will those be?
- Is there something I haven't ask you and you think is important to say?

## **Teachers interview guide**

Self efficacy, perceptions towards school activities, and future expectations among children involved in traditional and non-traditional schools in Kampala\_ educational models as a factor to foster resilience

Teacher's interview guide

### **Background**

- How many students do you have in your class?
  - o Which ages?
- In your opinion, which are some of the challenges that education face in this time of the history?
- Is the level among students different?
- Are you familiarized with the "Life skills curriculum for primary" How do you implement it during your classes?
- In your opinion, what is necessary to be "a good student"?

### **Perceptions towards students**

- Until which year do you think your students will continue with their education? Why?
- How do you see your students in comparison with other classes? And other schools?
- In general, what do you think your students think about their life?
- Do you think your students will have a happy life?
- If you compare your students with other children in the same age, do you think they will have a worse, similar or better future? Why
- In general, what do you think your students think about their future? Which do you think are their aspirations?
- Do you show your admiration to your students? How? Why?
  
- Do you think your students get bored at classes? Why?
- Do you think your students are motivated to learn? Why?
- Which are some of the activities that your students don't like?
- Which are some of the favourite activities from your students?

### **Teaching-learning activities during class**

- Which attitudes/values are you trying to promote?
  - o Are those attitudes/values personal, from the curriculum or from school?
- How do you promote discipline in your class?
- How do you promote motivation in class?
- Which activities do you use to engage and involve students during class?

- How do you promote participation within your class?
  - o How do you promote participation in all students?
- Do you promote students to share knowledge among each others? How?
- Do you promote collaboration among your students? How?
- How do you promote creativity within your class?
- How do you promote leadership?
  
- How often do you use activities that imply memorization? Purpose? Will these activities be useful in real life?
- How often do children have the opportunity to explore and talk about things they are interested in?
- Which things are your students interested in?
- How often do children work in teams?
  - o How is this work organized? What do they do? Do they share information with other groups?
- Do children have opportunity to self organize some of the class activities? Which ones? How does it work?
- Do students have opportunity to select some of the class activities or assignments in class?
- Do students have opportunity to work together in small groups?
- Do students participate in class discussions?
  - o How do you promote this?
- Do you use songs, games or role playing during class? Which other activities?

### **Educational models**

- Do you consider your school as a traditional or non-traditional?
- Do you consider your way of teaching as a traditional or non-traditional?
- How do you promote cooperative learning among your class?
- Is your class structured around resolutions of real problems? (real life situations)
- Do you think schools should promote non-traditional methods of education / different strategies for education? Why? how?
- Which will be your suggestion for better education?
- In your opinion, what could be done for students to be more successful at school and life?
- In your opinion, what could be done for students to be happier during their time at school?
- How would be the perfect teacher?
- How would be the perfect school?

## Example of consent letter

**24<sup>rd</sup> February, 2015**

Dear parent/Guardian,

**RE: RESEARCH ON EDUCATIONAL MODELS**

*(Name of the school)* (P6) will participate in the above mentioned and its relation to school perception and future expectations. This research is part of a master thesis project conducted by Paulina Santos Alatorre, student of the European Master in Social Work with Families and Children (MFamily). MFamily is a joint International program with cooperation of Universities in Portugal, Norway, Sweden and Uganda.

For the purpose of this study, six students from P6 (3 boys and 3 girls) will be randomly selected for individual interviews. Interviews will length for 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in a Private area within the school premises.

Interviews intent to explore children's perceptions about their present life, activities at school and future expectations. Interviews will be audio-recorded and participants may be asked to draw something related to their answers. Recorded interviews will be accessed by the researcher and her supervisor, only for the purpose of this study.

Confidentiality and informed consent are important elements for this research. Each participant will be informed –before the interview- of the research purpose and his/her right to withdraw from the interview. Participants will decide either to use their names or remain anonymous.

If you agree with your child to be considered as a potential participant for this research, please sign this form and send it back tomorrow **25<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Name of child: .....

.....

Name of Parent/Guardian:.....

.....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Yours sincerely,

**Headmaster**

Drawings

