Integrating formal and non-formal basic education:
A policy case-study from Uganda

By
Wim Hoppers
INTRODUCTION

This booklet aims to explore how ministries of education, with their national and international partners, attempt to integrate forms of non-formal education (NFE) into the ‘mainstream’ education system. The focus is on those NFE programmes that serve as alternative provisions for those children and young people who, for a variety of reasons, cannot access regular primary schools.

The ultimate purpose of the booklet is to offer insights into the challenges that education ministries face and directions they take when confronted with the consequences of policy decisions to provide quality basic education for all children, including those who are hardest to reach, in an equitable manner.

By discussing the experiences, dilemmas and choices as they have evolved in one country, the booklet highlights the different dimensions of such challenges and how these are being addressed. In particular these concern policy articulation, legal frameworks, institutional arrangements, partnership formations, financial support, and socio-cultural perceptions of education among different categories of stakeholders. Attention is given to critical factors that seem to influence the success of such efforts, and to the actual nature and extent of integration.

What will in particular be tested is the nature and extent of ‘system integration’, i.e. how far a country is willing or able to go in accepting diversification of a basic education system when it acknowledges the relevance of responding to children’s needs and circumstances. Where is the balance between integration and diversity, and between equity and diversity?

The booklet is based on a field study in one country (Uganda) which had committed itself to the achievement of universal primary education (UPE) for all, and the utilization of formal and non-formal educational channels to make education equitably and adequately available to all citizens. More importantly, this country had also instigated a comprehensive multi-stakeholder effort to realize this right for the most disadvantaged groups. On this road, the stakeholders involved have had to confront many issues, dilemmas and limitations. It thus presents useful insights into the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats that come into play when making Education for All a reality that is accessible and acceptable to all people.

There will be special emphasis on the process of policy formation and implementation regarding NFE as an alternative to formal primary education, or – as it was officially called – the process of developing a policy framework for providing basic education to educationally disadvantaged children in Uganda.

The study

The Uganda study on integration was carried out during the month of April 2007, through co-operation between UNESCO-IIEP and the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).
The specific objectives of this study were to:

(1) collate available information on current NFE programmes for children and young people of school-going age, and to analyze recent shifts in education vision, policy frames and strategies related to enhancing the linkages between NFE and formal education (FE);

(2) trace and analyze national efforts for implementing the new visions, policy frameworks and strategies regarding NFE-FE integration and for developing appropriate support provisions, institutional arrangements and regulatory provisions; and to identify key issues and challenges related to this change process;

(3) examine NFE projects in two districts, representing different programme types, with a view of examining progress towards integration at local level, the evolution of NFE programmes, and their outcomes and possible impact for graduates;

(4) identify implications for further policy and system development, the management of change in basic education, and to construct possible methodologies for addressing key problem areas.

The implementation of the study involved primary and secondary analysis of documents, and a series of intensive one-on-one interviews with policy-makers in education and senior staff of NGO’s, universities, and international technical and funding agencies. Visits were made to two districts (Masindi and Kamuli) to interact with district authorities, NFE programmes, instructors, and local education organizations.

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The booklet

The presentation of the case-study is divided into four parts. In Part I, the first chapter deals with the international and national contexts, sketching the current international state of discourse on NFE in relation to formal basic education. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the wider policy and education development context in Uganda.

Part II addresses in Chapter 4 the policy visions regarding basic education and the role of NFE as they developed in Uganda. In Chapter 5 it also introduces the major
NFE programmes as they were conceived and initially implemented for the benefit of hard-to-reach children and young people.

Part III traces the actual practice of policy regarding NFE in Uganda, i.e. the process of policy formulation, its interpretations, the steps towards implementation, and its interactions with related processes, such as review of the legal framework, funding mechanisms, institutional changes, and the role that different stakeholders play in these developments. While Chapter 6 focuses largely on national processes, Chapter 7 looks at the processes of policy development and implementation at the decentralized level, from the perspective of the districts and local actors.

In Part IV the Ugandan experiences will be looked at within a wider international perspective, with reflections on the nature and direction of ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’ of NFE against the backdrop of systems’ development in education (Chapter 8). This Chapter will also look at criteria for the success of such efforts. The critical factors that appear to influence the direction of such efforts and their possible success are discussed in Chapter 9. Here an attempt is made to identify some implications for a ‘best practice’ of a ‘methodology’ for the management of a change process regarding the status of NFE. In the last Chapter (10), the implications of the study will be considered in relation to Uganda itself, and for NFE development in general.
PART I – BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Chapter 1 – Policy discourse on non-formal education

1. The case for non-formal education

Non-formal education (NFE) is under the spotlight. In many developing countries there is a growing realization that in the effort to improve access and quality in education and training it is essential to look closely at forms of learning outside the mainstream of formal education and training. Presently, there is greater recognition among African governments that Education for All (EFA) – children and young people – is unlikely to be achieved through expansion of the conventional school system only, with its residential and day-time provision, its age-graded enrolments, its teacher-delivered standard national curricula, its six- to seven-year cycle, and its almost exclusive focus on urban- and future-oriented knowledge and cognitive competencies.

Forms of NFE, ranging from community schools and informal sector training, through mobile schools and forms of open and distance learning, to Islamic schools and life-skills programmes, have often been in existence for many years. But they tend to remain in the margins of education systems; have generally not been recognized or subsidized by the state; and have usually served as second-chance and second-rate options for those who failed to get access to formal schooling or were forced to leave it prematurely. They tend to have a poor reputation, and indeed have often contributed to consolidating poverty more than serving as a vehicle to escape from it. This could, in part, be because such learning was largely supported by communities, churches, or private sector organizations.

In the context of EFA, however, there is recognition that the greater freedom of NFE has produced organizational forms and approaches to teaching and learning which are often more adapted to needs and conditions of the learners. Consequently, such recognition is often followed by efforts to incorporate alternative provisions within basic education policy frames, and to set up procedures for administrative recognition and professional support and for access to some form of subsidization.

But ministries of education and their partners also face many complex political, economic and socio-cultural issues in relation to expansion and diversification of educational opportunities. Many of these come in the form of dilemmas to be addressed: such as overall costs of education in relation to those of other socio-economic priorities, diversity of provision in relation to pressures for equity and pursuance of human rights, maintenance of privilege in relation to affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged groups and minorities, promotion of quality standards in relation to contextual relevance, demands of globalization in relation to recognition of indigenous values and perspectives, and state control in relation to devolution and local autonomy.
The above issues and dilemmas have led to much hesitation among education policy-makers, and to widely diverging and often contradictory views among professionals, scholars, practitioners and – not in the least – communities. Policy-makers, even those who are willing to recognize the principle of diversity in education delivery, have a hard time in making up their mind on how to deal with this plethora of learning arrangements and defend their proposals against rival claims for funds.

This situation has not been helped by the scarcity of ‘hard’ data on the actual operations and processes in NFE programmes, and on the value of specific approaches and strategies and their outcomes. It has been extremely difficult to document the actual ‘success’ of forms of NFE and the specific factors that account for this. Data are particularly scarce in relation to NFE programmes for children and young people, i.e. the age-group 6-18 years, for whom, under international conventions (such as the Convention for the Rights of the Child) and the agreements of Jomtien and Dakar, access to quality basic education has the highest priority. While detailed descriptions of individual programmes often exist, their value has not been analyzed within the larger environment of educational development in the country concerned.

In this context, countries have often seen fit to undertake their own investigations, using criteria and indicators that serve their own policy and development purposes. On this basis they organize their own policy dialogues and take decisions on how to address the NFE issue, and how and what to ‘integrate’ into the system. The Ugandan case shows a particular version of this.

2. The wider international debate

At the same time at the international level, the discourse on NFE has become more vibrant and also more precise. There is a much greater interest among education ministries, civil society and scholars, not only in NFE as such, but also to ‘unpack’ this phenomenon and understand its multiple expressions, its weaknesses and its strengths, its record and its potential in a more objective manner as a basis for political decision-making.

NFE is no longer just a vague blanket term. There is more interest in understanding what certain approaches can do for what kind of beneficiary groups, whether they are children, youth or adults. There is also more interest in working out monitoring and evaluation procedures that look not only at internal processes, but also at external linkages with other options for education or training.

There is much more interest in identifying outcomes, both in terms of results (graduates and their competencies) and in terms of their impact on the lives of young people and their communities. There is more interest in what precisely the contribution or value added of types of NFE can be in relation to the totality of basic education. Finally, there is a greater interest in understanding the notion of ‘diversity’ in basic education, as well as that of ‘integration’ – its different meanings and possibilities.
Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07

The pressure towards clarity about ‘integration’ has increasingly come from two other discourses: that of human rights and that of social inclusion. These perspectives argue that participation in basic education applies equally to all children and adolescents of school-going age, even if the teaching and learning is adapted to the needs and circumstances of specific clienteles (Hoppers, 2006).

Within the ‘rights’ perspective, the right of access to basic education of good quality applies to all children, whatever their social and/or economic and/or health conditions. Though it initially concerned the ‘right to access’ as such, there is increased recognition among governments that there should be a minimum level quality in terms of process and that there has to be a right to a basic minimum or core standards of education to be achieved by all. Core knowledge and competencies can be acquired even when curriculum implementation is adapted to the local environment. There is also space for other curricular components related to children’s or communities’ needs and interests.

In the context of a social inclusion agenda, a minimal interpretation has been that it is sufficient for children and adolescents to receive some basic (non-formal) education that is relevant to their lives, enabling them to participate in social, economic and political affairs. This situation is often used to declare formal and non-formal education to be at par. But while by so doing some inclusion occurs because of additional NFE opportunities, exclusion often follows as a result of the unequal terms under which participation takes places and which, in turn, may perpetuate the disadvantage in the future (Sayed, 2002). Thus, a case must be made for a more integrated and enhanced approach whereby young people have access to learning opportunities that are socially, culturally and politically acceptable, and help to overcome disadvantage and marginalization (Hoppers, 2006).

Though there is no international consensus on these issues, and no generic criteria have thus far been developed, many international organizations and governments profess to adhere to the principles of equity and social justice. Essentially it compels all stakeholders to contemplate on what grounds a bifurcation in basic education provisions for children and adolescents can still be justified, and what prevents a strategy for integrating all forms into one diversified but equitable system from being developed and implemented.

3. Variations in terminology

An issue that makes discussions on NFE in relation to education in general rather difficult concerns the different terms that are used, as well as different interpretations of the same terms. Here several key terms will be highlighted which are often used in Uganda and which are relevant in this text:

Basic education – Internationally, this term tends to be used in two ways: (a) as a generic term for the learning of “literacy, numeracy and other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity” – showing emphasis on learning outcomes (Jomtien World Declaration, goal 5, and Dakar Framework for Action, art. 3); and (b) the number of years of school education required by all children of school-going age. The latter is commonly set at 4 years, 6/7 years or
8/9 years – showing emphasis on years of schooling. Significantly, basic education is not defined in terms of age, though for our purposes here it will be useful to distinguish between children (aged 6-12) and adolescents (12-18), as education for these groups can have very different meanings.

- **Non-formal education** – Often used in a very generic way to refer to all structured learning programmes that are not part of formal education. Here we refer to NFE provisions that serve as an alternative form of basic or primary education for those children and young people who do not have access to regular schools or have dropped out prematurely. This may or may not amount to ‘equivalency schooling’.

- **Alternative vs. complementary education** – ‘Alternative education’ refers to those education initiatives “offering something that is regarded as significantly different from what is available in the mainstream of formal education provision” (Hoppers, 2006: 95). While this term does not indicate what relationship is meant to exist between the ‘alternative’ and the mainstream ‘complementary education’, it does suggest that the NFE form has a clear and recognizable relationship with formal schools in a manner that enables both to contribute to the same purpose, for example an extra-curricular learning activity, or a school that provides the same or similar curricula but by other means.

- **Integration** – This term only indicates that two or more elements are parts of a wider structure or system, within which the location together with the mutual relationships are defined. Neither the nature of such relationships, nor the extent of integration can be assumed and would therefore have to be contextually defined.

- **Out-of-school children / young people** – Different agencies (such as UNESCO and UNICEF) have utilized different measurements for this category (and thus for exclusion from school). In 2004 both agencies agreed to combine their instruments (using administrative data, i.e. school returns, and household survey data respectively) so as to arrive at a more precise measurement. ‘Out-of-school’ now refers to those children who were not in school for the whole past school-year. There is no general standard definition for ‘not-attending’; thus, depending on household surveys, the in-school category may include large numbers of children who have not been attending for most of the year. Children in NFE are counted as out-of-school, except when they are enrolled in programmes that are recognized as fully equivalent to formal primary education (UIS and UNICEF, 2005).

Clearly, while the above definitions are relevant in relation to international comparisons, it is essential to start with the terms and definitions related to education and its different forms that are current in individual countries.
Chapter 2 – General context of Uganda

1. Environment and historical background

Uganda is a land-locked country in East Africa, with a population of about 26 million (2004), which is well endowed with a favourable climate and abundant natural resources. However, the rainfall diminishes towards the north and northeast. Vegetation ranges from tropical rainforest in the Southern and parts of the Western region, through savannah woodlands in the Central, Eastern and Northern region, to semi-arid vegetation in extreme northeast of the country. As a result, agricultural potential and population density have been higher in the Central and Western regions.

The country has four main tribal groupings: Bantu, Nilotics, Nilo-Hamites, and those of Sudanic origin. Together they speak a total of 56 languages, of which Luganda is the most widely spoken. Because of its past colonial link with Britain, English is still the official language, and also the dominant language of instruction in education.

Uganda gained its independence in 1962 and has had a turbulent post-colonial history. After a relatively stable early post-independence period with a flourishing economy and rapid growth, Amin took power in 1971, initiating a period of severe civil and military unrest. Under this regime productive capacity was destroyed and the provision of social services like health and education seriously undermined. As a result the current GNI of US$ 270 (2004) is still well below the Africa (SSA) average of US$ 600 (World Bank, 2005).

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986, a period of national reconstruction started which is still ongoing at present. It has been marked by far-reaching efforts to reform all areas of social and economic policy, a process in which donor influence has been strong. This was based on a general commitment to democratization and economic reconstruction, the latter to be spurned by liberalization, privatization, and the consolidation of private property rights (Brett, 1995: 212).

Although the reform led to an upsurge in economic growth and substantial increases in national revenue, the government has also been facing major constraints. The most important of these has been the financial drain on the national budget, especially caused by the continued political instability in the north and the inability of government to make peace with the insurgents, as a result of which development in the region had virtually come to a halt. The participation in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo will also have absorbed large amounts from public revenue. Debt service is high, in view of the large external debt (amounting to 4.8 billion in 2004, most of which are funds from the International Development Association) (World Bank, 2005).

The other constraint has been the scourge of HIV/AIDS, which had become the leading cause of mortality in the country, seriously affecting national life in ways ranging from productive capacity to quality of education. Although much has been done to control this epidemic, it has left the country with very large numbers of orphans to take care of.
In its Vision 2025, government has acknowledged that in terms of human development, Uganda’s population was “characterised by high levels of illiteracy; high infant, maternal and adult mortality and morbidity rates; poor nutritional levels; poor sanitation and hygiene; high levels of unemployment and poverty” (Republic of Uganda, 1999: 16).

2. **Macro socio-economic policies**

According to Wa Irumba, who studied the policy process in Uganda in the early 1990s for the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the initial policies of the NRM Government in 1986 favoured self-reliance and avoidance of the World Bank and IMF. But in 1987-1988 this policy began to shift, mainly as a result of the politics of realism and reasoned dialogue between government leaders, including the President, and top officials of the Bretton Woods institutions and western donor agencies. Yet government maintained the essence of its economic vision and accepted donor conditionalities only when convinced that they were necessary and their negative impact on society would be limited (Wa Irumba, 1996: 142).

Nevertheless, the Stuctural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which began in 1988 and aimed at improving productive sectors, caused public concern about its negative effects on education, health, water and sanitation, and child care and protection programmes. For instance, people protested that, under the SAP, government regarded education as a non-priority sector (Wa Irumba, 1996). This initial reluctance to give a high priority to education was confirmed in interviews with some NGO representatives.

Due to its own principles and vision, as well as to public outcry, government shifted policy again in 1992-1993, placing more budgetary emphasis on the social sectors, which it deemed a priority for manpower development, national unity, peace and development (Wa Irumba, 1996). Presently, however, education policy-makers also recognize that the world conferences on education at Jomtien, and later in Dakar, have also contributed a lot to greater acknowledgement that both democracy and economic growth were preconditioned by higher education and skills levels among the entire population (Interviews with MoES officials).

The 1993-1994 national budget included for the first time what was known as a Core Development Budget Programme, which gave 60 per cent of the recurrent budget to selected social sectors. Education received 20 per cent of that. Government was able to persuade donors to revise their own policies in return for its agreement to conditionalities in the social sectors. As a result, external revenues continued to pour into the national treasury.

At the same time government’s establishment and vigorous utilization of the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) began to increase local revenue collection. Thus local revenues rose from 4 per cent of GDP in 1986-1988 to 10 per cent in 1993. In that same year, economic growth rose to 7 per cent and inflation fell below 30 per cent (Wa Irumba, 1996: 142).
There are indications, however, that in recent years there has been a slowdown in the growth process, even though figures are still above the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Also, the process of structural transformation of the economy towards services and industry has slowed down. Currently both the industrial and the agricultural sectors (which by themselves employ the vast majority of the labour force) show a decreasing share of GDP and weak growth performance (GTZ/PEVOT, 2006: 3).

Uganda also appears to be losing ground in terms of overall productivity as compared to Kenya, Tanzania and Asian economies. In a country like Uganda, with its low capital intensity, economic and employment growth is directly affected by the education, knowledge, capabilities and experience of entrepreneurs or company managers. Hence, enhanced public and private investment in education and training is considered to be highly imperative, especially at the level of technical and vocational education and training. Knowledge and skills are reported to be particularly lacking in off-farm rural and small enterprises, and urban enterprises, causing entrepreneurship and innovation to be low (GTZ/PEVOT, 2006: 4-6). The above puts a high premium on quality and relevance of basic education and skills development, both school-based and work-based.

3. Institutional developments

It has been argued that “it is the success or failures in human organisation that account for the progression or retrogression of societies” (North, in Brett, 1995: 200). Adequate institutional arrangements need to ensure whether or not the public interest is served by human actions and to what extent opportunism is curtailed. It is acknowledged that – particularly in post-colonial Africa, with its inheritance of inappropriate and exploitative structures – institutional transformation is vital in order to create conditions for democratic participation, national prosperity, and equitable sharing of benefits (Brett, 1995).

In Uganda the NRM, with its commitment to democratization and economic reconstruction, appears to have set in motion various processes of institutional reform considered necessary to achieve: participatory and democratic governance, a vibrant and competitive economy, eradication of poverty, sustainable external debt, rural transformation, and significant improvement in human development, including the promotion of women and disadvantaged groups – the ‘Flying Crane’ scenario (Republic of Uganda, 1999).

Major components of institutional reform were considered to be: (1) liberalization of the economy; (2) decentralization and accountability; (3) the promotion of development partnerships; (4) a free press; and (5) the widening of the education and training base.

- **Liberalization of the economy** – The NRM Government deviated significantly from the previous administrations by significantly reducing the role of the state in the economy and creating an enabling environment for local entrepreneurship. As noted above, it also consolidated private property rights, restored Asian assets, deregulated the foreign exchange market, sold off most para-statal companies and removed the monopoly powers of those that remained (Brett, 1995).
Decentralization and accountability – According to Wa Irumba, among the most important socio-political innovations introduced by the NRM were the Resistance Councils/Committees (RC) system, which operated at every level of local government – from the parish to sub-county, country and to the district level. Public organizations and large work places also had their committees. The system ascended to the National Resistance Council (NRC). RC members were popularly elected and the RC’s brought unity and participation by large numbers of people in governance and development activities. This political structure was supported by a vigorous process of raising the awareness of citizens. (Wa Irumba, 1996: 143). This system had become part of a ‘broad-based’ government, to be based on principles of popular participation, consultation, rational and contextualized decision-making, and accountability.

The system of local government was consolidated in the Local Government Act of 1997. Through this Act the levels of Local Government (LG) became streamlined in districts and sub-counties (villages and parishes becoming administrative units); District Councils became the highest political and administrative authority in the district, with legislative and executive powers; councils became responsible for all service provision, including primary, secondary and non-formal education, and thus for all integrated planning of district development. The District Education Office reports to the Council rather than to the national Ministry of Education (Republic of Uganda, 1997).

Thus in Uganda decentralization has taken the form of devolution, meaning that the Council and its structures are fully accountable for their decisions. They remain tied to the national government to the extent that no district policy can be inconsistent with national policies or the constitution, and that they are obliged to implement government policy, for which conditional grants are made available on submission of plans and reports. On the other hand, central government cannot force district to implement national programmes (for each programme a memorandum of understanding (MoU) has to be concluded with all districts), and districts have discretionary powers to the extent they can raise local revenue (Republic of Uganda, 1997).

The present tendency is for central government to reassert itself by re-centralizing certain appointments (such as that of Chief Administrative Officer as head of the District Public Service) and reducing districts’ access to discretionary funds. This has strengthened the powers of the Centre, of which the Resident District Commissioner, as Presidential appointee, was already the main representative (Interviews with MoES staff and district staff, Kamuli).

The promotion of development partnerships – Government has adopted a practice of encouraging local and international NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to get involved in developmental activities, and to engage with government in dialogue on policy and practice development. This dialogue takes place in a structured form at national level, through the formation of NGO coalitions (such as FENU and UGAADEN), and the participation of selected NGOs in the annual education sector reviews (ESR) under the sector-wide approach (SWAp). At decentralized level many NGOs have offices in some or
more districts, and to a greater or lesser extent collaborate with district service offices and the district councils.

- **A free press** – According to Wa Irumba, Uganda had never enjoyed such a vibrant media environment as that of the period since the NRM took power. Government control of media is minimal, while there are many private television channels, radio stations, and national and regional newspapers, journals and other print media publications. There are several drama, theatre and music groups, and other information media that compete for attention and use. Not all media organs support government, thus creating ample opportunities for national debate on educational or other issues.

- **The widening of the education and training base** – There is general recognition in MoES and among NGOs that much has been done to ‘turn the education pyramid’ on its head, in an effort to shift attention away from post-primary education and training (PPET) to primary education, and to democratize access to education and training. This has been achieved partly through initiating major reform in the public formal education and training system, partly by opening the doors wide for private involvement in education provision, and also partly by encouraging NFE. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

It should be noted that in the above institutional restructuring efforts, major risk factors have come to play a role. These risk factors include: the heavy costs associated with the civil war, heavy donor dependence, limited capital and skills in the economy, deficient state management services, a poorly motivated civil service (except where there has been generous donor support), HIV/AIDS, the politicization of public decision-making, and insufficient legal and management capability to steer local development.
Chapter 3 – Basic education policy development

1. New starting points

The inauguration of a new dispensation in Uganda, along with its intentions to make a new beginning through democratization and national reconstruction, created a favourable environment for a fundamental review of education and its role in national development.

The guiding principle of education reform became the need to improve on the productivity of the masses of the population so as to eradicate poverty at micro level and increase income at macro level (Ocheng, 2004: 118). This focus on a ‘democratic mass education model’ was not new, but had already been proposed at independence by the then Castle Commission (1963). Recognizing the need to heal the divisions created by the colonial experience, the Commission recommended a change from elite- to mass-education and the promotion of a liberal-progressive ideology, leading to an emphasis on equity and relevance, and a learner-centred curriculum model (Ocheng, 2004). Although this was in accordance with the political philosophy of the government (Milton Obote, in Ocheng, 2004), this approach was soon overtaken by a de facto emphasis on the production of manpower for the new state, with some effort to promote gender and regional equity (Ocheng, 2004).

Thus the post-1987 emphasis on mass education appeared to represent a new attempt to change the education pyramid and give effective attention to the education needs of the mass of the population in relation to the conditions under which they were living. But, although this aim came to be buttressed by the spirit of Jomtien and by adjustments in human capital theory towards stressing the economic dividends of primary education, there was also an older national aspiration at work.

2. The education policy process

In 1987 the government appointed an Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC), as one of the many review commissions that were established at the time. It received a mandate to review the entire system; its policies, structures and funding; the role of the private sector; and to formulate new policy and propose changes for both short- and long-term implementation. The commission engaged in widespread internal and international consultations over a lengthy period (Wa Irumba, 1996: 148/9).

Although the review was hailed as the widest consultation on education ever conducted in Uganda, it was also critiqued, for example, for its failure to involve some of the most important stakeholders, such as rural communities and marginalized groups in urban areas (as the system of Resistance Councils was not utilized). Other criticisms were that the commission did not go far enough to raise fundamental questions about the status quo of an education system inherited from colonial times, and that donor agencies put pressure on government to speed up the process so that ongoing implementation of programmes could be supported (Wa Irumba, 1996: 150).
Following the Review Report, the government appointed a White Paper Committee, whose composition became much more socially and institutionally diverse than the EPRC had been. Given the need for consensus on controversial issues, and for relating proposals to the changing economic situation, the committee took well over two years to hold further public consultations and produce several drafts before a Cabinet approved version was available in 1992 (Wa Irumba, 1996: 152-4).

The issue that attracted the greatest popular interest was that of universal primary education (UPE), in particular the extent to which such education should be free. In fact, there appeared to be widespread agreement that most citizens could pay for their children’s primary education, but needed to be mobilized by their political leaders. Related to this was the new policy of making primary school attendance compulsory for all children of school-going age. There was also the issue of local district authorities providing bursaries and grants to needy and deserving children so as to help achieve UPE speedily (Wa Irumba, 1996: 156/7).

The accounts of the policy debates show that the essential proposals in the White Paper were not substantively contested, save in terms of the extent of cost-sharing. Thus, in relation to the focus of this paper, the following observations can be made about the Government White Paper in Education (GWPE):

- In terms of structure of education, the GWPE has left the existing structure of formal education, with its different levels and components, its age-graded learning organization, and its selection/progression arrangements largely intact. It only proposed adjustments in the relative length of the cycles (which were not implemented), and in the relations between academic and vocational education (which have only been implemented to a small extent).

- The greatest interest has been in expanding access to education and training at different levels, transition rates, and efficiency. Various measures, such as income-related fee paying, double-shifts and maximum use of teachers, were proposed. Wastage was to be addressed through automatic promotion and by setting up NFE centres in schools and other facilities to cater for dropouts (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 43-46).

- It also had a strong concern about the relevance of education, especially at primary level, in terms of preparation for life and work. It proposed a practical bias (referred to as ‘vocationalization’), and turning the academic segment of secondary education into comprehensive schools (this has largely not been implemented).

- The White Paper does not reflect a strong concern with quality issues in relation to access. Much appears to have been expected from the reform of the curriculum, and of the training and further development of teachers (Republic of Uganda, 1992).

- While the WGP refers to basic education (defined as the “minimum package of learning which should be made available to every individual to enable him/her live as a good and useful citizen in society”), it also observes that
government “cannot, at present, provide every Ugandan with adequate basic education,[but that] it accords such education high priority and agrees to provide it in a phased manner, through the proposed avenues of formal primary education as well as the non-formal education system”. In programmatic terms, basic education is interpreted as literacy and post-literacy/functional literacy programmes, livelihood skills and apprenticeship education for youth, continuing education at post-secondary level, and primary health care (and similar) programmes, and distance education (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 37/8; 176-185).

- The main emphasis of the GWPE has been on formal primary education, referred to as ‘universal primary education’, which would be free and become compulsory for all children of relevant age (i.e. 6-13 year age-group) and to be achieved at the latest by 2001 (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 42/3). Because of this emphasis, in practice, MoES officials have substituted basic education with primary education, and thus with UPE (Interviews with MoES staff; Okuni, 2003).

From the above it can be concluded that (a) in the GWPE, basic education through primary education has been given much stronger attention than basic education through NFE; (b) there has been an explicit decision for universal primary education, i.e. providing full primary education for all children by a certain date, leaving the acquisition of a ‘minimum package’ of basic education for the remainder of the population to be provided at an unspecified time in the future; and c) there has thus been a decision against universal basic education, in terms of providing a (to be determined) basic amount of education concurrently to the entire population (Interviews with NGO staff).

3. Policy implementation

A characteristic of education policy in Uganda has been that during the last decade policy formulation has come to run parallel to policy implementation, to the extent that they have become parts of the same multi-dimensional process. Essentially the White Paper has served as the source document for all policy pronouncements until present, many of which started being implemented after Cabinet endorsement) but before the Parliamentary approval of the specific policy concerned; indeed, even before the White Paper itself had been approved.

At the same time, these policy processes have taken place under the legal framework of the Education Act of 1970. The preparation of a new Education Bill, which is meant to replace the old Act and to cover the White Paper, and specifically to give legal backing to the policy of free and compulsory primary education, was taken up in 1995 (Wa Irumba, 1996: 153). It led to a first draft in 2003 and a second one in 2006; but it has yet to be submitted to Parliament (Interview, with member of Parliament).

The above kind of disjunctures and long delays imply that subsequent policy processes could be vulnerable to changing economic and financial frames, changing political preferences and priorities, changing donor policies, as well as implementation restrictions following from legal gaps. Moreover, piecemeal and
unsynchronized implementation runs the risk of losing contact with popular interest and opinion.

Major milestones of education reform have been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Proclamation of UPE to be initiated as from Primary One in 1997; primary education free for four children per household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Initiation of work on Uganda Qualifications Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Establishment of Task Force on Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Draft policy for the expansion of Post-Primary Education and Training (PPET).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>First draft – Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Second draft - Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Proclamation of Universal Secondary Education (USE), to be implemented as from Secondary One in 2007.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation has been greatly enhanced and support by international donor and technical agencies, as well as by national and international NGOs and CBOs operating in Uganda. A SWAp was initiated soon after the announcement of UPE, within which most external support agencies started to operate, many of them through the provision of budget support.

Out of this a co-ordinated and shared policy dialogue with the government gradually ensued, which expressed itself in annual Education Sector Review (ESR) meetings, during which all current developments on implementation were discussed and ‘critical undertakings’ for priority action – linked to trigger mechanisms for release of funds – as well as ‘process undertakings’ – policy processes to be monitored – were agreed upon. This process was supported by the formation of an Education Funding Agencies Group, which conducts monthly meetings to agree on common donor issues, as inputs into meetings of an Education Sector Consultative Committee.

Both the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) came to be linked directly to a multi-sectoral Poverty Eradication and Action Plan (PEAP, 2004), in which education goals were directly link with macro social and economic goals (Joint Evaluation, 2003: 39/40).

It is also clear that external financing has been responsible for a large share of the total funding for UPE. Not only was donor support to basic education (i.e. primary education) rapidly increased after 1997 (from 6 per cent of total ODA for Uganda to 14-16 per cent of ODA), during the period 1998-2002 external assistance funded between 54 per cent and 61 per cent of the recurrent costs of basic education (Joint Evaluation, 2003: 42/3). Although the contribution from the government budget was relatively low, education’s sectoral share of the overall discretionary government
budget was about 26 per cent for the same period, out of which eventually 65 per cent came to be allocated to primary education.

It was also confirmed that most agencies, especially those providing budget support, were keen to give the highest priority to primary education (interviews with key agencies). Only some agencies had a priority in basic education that focused on alternative basic education, early childhood education and adult basic education. These included UNICEF, UNESCO, Danida, and GTZ (Joint Evaluation, 2003: 47).

In terms of institutional capacity for implementation, the MoES has reorganized itself to cater effectively for the elaboration, dissemination and co-ordination of the new policies, working with the local government districts to promote implementation in accordance with government priorities and programmes. Most central are the roles of the Education Planning Department (EPD), the Department for Pre-Primary and Primary Education (D-PPE), the Department for Secondary Education (D-SE) and the department for Special Needs Education and Career Guidance (D-SNECG).

In the case of NFE, while D-PPE provides administrative support in working with the districts, D-SNECG is largely responsible for policy co-ordination and thus drives the policy process related to the policy on Basic Education for Educationally Disadvantaged Children.

The main need for capacity is actually at the district level where the responsibility lies for policy implementation. This capacity varies greatly between one district and another, depending in part on the strength of the District Council in its planning and leadership, and in part on the quality of the District Administration and its management of the relations with the national government and of the implementation of the programmes.

4. The current state of education participation

Enrolments

The implementation of the White Paper, and in particular the rapid move to introduce free primary education, has had a major impact on the education system. The abolition of school fees led to a dramatic increase in primary enrolments: from a total of 2.9 million in 1996, they increased rapidly to over 5.2 million in 1997 and to 7.3 million in 2002. This included children enrolled in private and community schools (Joint Evaluation, 2003: 44). In Uganda a significant number of children (almost 3 per cent) attend community schools, a total of 210,286 (49.3 per cent girls) in 2006 (MoES-EMIS data). It appears that the increase in enrolment at present shows a tendency to reverse: the total figure for 2004 still stood at 7.3 million, while that for 2006 was down to 7.2 million.

Enrolment has, however, been rather unstable, as attendance appeared to fluctuate and drop overall in the course of the school year. For 2002 the net attendance rate (as reported by parents through the household survey) was reported to be 81.8 per cent for the 6-9 age group and 90.9 per cent for the 10-12 age group (UBOS, 2006a). Earlier surveys (2002) had already shown high percentages for both male and female pupils, with only a slight variation between urban and rural areas, thus indicating
significant reduction in urban rural disparity, especially between urban and rural girls (Joint Evaluation, 2003: 45). The latest EMIS data for 2004 show a national enrolment rate of 90.01 per cent (87.6 per cent girls) (MoES-EMIS data).

By 2004 the gross enrolment rate stood nationwide at 104.42 per cent, while the NER came to 90.01 per cent – with a female NER of 87.6 per cent. In 2006 gender parity at P1 level was 0.99, dropping to 0.88 at P7 level. Participation has also been varying across regions, with Central and Northern regions having lower percentages than the other regions (MoES-EMIS data, 2004-06; UBOS, 2006a).

**Survival**

By all accounts – documentary and through interviews with top officials – the main concern is with the very low survival rates in primary education, and hence the high rate of drop-out and repetition. When the first (1997) UPE intake reached P7 in 2003, the then enrolment in this class was only 24.9 per cent of the original intake (of whom 23.2 per cent girls). The latest figures show that in 2006 the enrolment in P7 was only 28.2 per cent (26.9 per cent girls) of the original 2000 intake (MoES-EMIS data, 1997-2006). This give an indication that (a) the number of those leaving at the end of P7 has not significantly increased (it has actually decreased since 2003) and (b) there are ever larger numbers of dropouts (according the official figures of the school census on average about 300,000 per year of UPE) and repeaters. As one agency staff observed, “There was no bulge of UPE pupils going through the system”; there was only a ‘normal’ enrolment in spite of all investments made (Interview with agency staff and Parliament). Survival rates diminish as pupils move to higher classes, and they seem to increase over the years.

It is also evident that over-age enrolment is still a significant phenomenon. In 2004 only 62.9 per cent of the new entrants in P1 had the ‘correct’ age of 6-7 years. A total of 6.2 per cent of the new entrants were between 10 and 12 years old. Boys appear to be more likely to enrol at a higher age than girls. The 2002 census showed that over 80 per cent of persons aged 13 years were still attending primary school; the percentage of those aged 15 and over was still 7 per cent (UBOS, 2006a). At the same time there has also been a significant under-age enrolment: 14.5 per cent in 2004 (MoES-EMIS data, 2004). MoES, from its side, has accepted continued over-age enrolment in primary schools, to the extent that many 12 year olds are still admitted into P1. Though there are no data, it is very likely that a larger percentage of a P1 cohort eventually completes primary school than official completion rates suggest.

**Out-of-school children**

The out-of-school category of children and young people also incorporates those who have never attended school. The 2002 census data indicated that out of the 6-15-year-old population a total of 80.8 per cent were in school at anyone time during 2002, leaving an out-of-school population of 14.8 per cent (UBOS, 2006a). This is equal to approximately 1 million children, including both the children who had never attended and those who had dropped out or left after Primary 7. UIS estimated that the ‘core’ of children that never attended between 6 and 12 years of age to be approximately 9 per cent (about 0.5 million), and that the majority of dropout occurred after the recommended school-age period (UIS and UNICEF, 2005: 28-32).
The draft Policy on Basic Education for Disadvantaged Children estimated the total out-of-school percentage to be 13-18 per cent of the 6-12-year-old population (MoES, 2006a).

Given the Uganda context, in which many children start school late and may remain there until far into their adolescent years, it is fair to conclude that eventually the vast majority of children enter school and remain there for some more years. But they may often not be attending. The majority never completes the full cycle, and thus is left with insufficient basic competencies and skills.

It is also clear that vulnerability is not only associated with age, but also with gender (more girls than boys are out-of-school), family status (there are presently about 1.5 million orphans in primary education), geographical location (rural versus urban) and poverty (UIS and UNICEF, 2005: 42).

With the continued use of cost-sharing arrangements, whereby parents are still responsible for contributing to cost of instructional materials, uniforms, construction and other sundries, poverty is widely regarded as a major factor in children not going to school or dropping out (Interviews with MoES staff and NGO staff).

Quality

The above trends have only been exacerbated by the slow rate of implementation of quality- and relevance-improving measures, such as teacher development, curriculum reform, controlling for class-size, inspection and supervision. Quality had dropped to the point that in 2000 only 46 per cent of the boys and 51 per cent of the girls had reached basic literacy by the end of primary school (ESA, 2004). The National Assessment for Primary Education (NAPE) reports show decreasing achievements in key learning areas at different levels in the early years following the introduction of UPE, but gradually improving again between 1999 and 2006. It appears that at present the younger learners in the lower grades are the best performers in national achievement tests (UNEB, 2000 and 2006).

Reports and interviews indicate that by and large the traditional teacher-centred and memory-oriented pedagogical approaches have persisted and that attempts to introduce more child-friendly practices in school organization and classroom interactions have only had limited success in a context of high pupil-teacher ratio’s and poor teacher development, school management and support supervision (ESA, 2006; Webley, 2006).

The government’s approach to the above conditions has been to continue with improvements of the quality inputs and prepare teachers for dealing with multi-age and multi-ability classes; to introduce the new thematic curriculum with emphasis on mother-tongue as the medium of instruction and on themes relevant to the environment of the learners ; to extend the powers of the national inspectorate; to build more classrooms so as to reduce the size of classes; and, moreover, to try and speed up the approval of the new Education Bill so as to be able to enforce compulsory education.
PART II – NON-FORMAL EDUCATION: THE BASIS FOR POLICY-MAKING

This second part discusses how, against the backdrop of the new thinking on education and training and the wider policy process in educational development, the basis was created for policies and changing practices of NFE. The next two chapters will focus on the perceptions of need, and the evolving articulation of the nature and purpose of NFE in relation to the education system in general (Chapter 4); and the development of actual NFE programmes on the ground (Chapter 5). In Uganda there has been a clear cross-fertilization between perspectives and programmes, the outcome of which came to be reflected in the NFE policy as implemented.

Chapter 4 – The evolution of policy perspectives

1. The need for complementary initiatives

The previous chapter highlighted the strengths of the effort to make a ‘new beginning’ in education and to reform key dimensions of the system. It also highlighted some of the weaknesses of this effort, notably the issues of resources, capacity, and the need for time to get all the pieces in place and to produce an acceptable outcome.

There was also a current of thinking about formal education – represented by some of the NGOs, international agencies like UNICEF, and some personnel within MoES – that questioned the ability of formal primary education to absorb all eligible children, even if sufficient resources would be available.

The crux of this argument was that there were significant groups of children around the country who would not have access to regular primary schools, not just for reasons of distance, but more for reasons of personal and community circumstances – especially associated with poverty, cultural practices, ecological and economic imperatives, and the consequences of conflict and its aftermath. The stakeholders pointed to Uganda’s fishing and pastoral communities, in which children could not be freed from their social responsibilities; children affected by HIV/AIDS, by civil war, and by the poverty of their households. They also pointed at the large numbers of children who could not enter school at the recommended age and hoped to go to school in their adolescent years. All of these constituted a diverse category of children that never entered school (Chapter 3).

The need for action in this respect prompted some NGOs and agencies like Save the Children (SCF) Norway and UNICEF, with MoES support, to initiate experimental programmes such as Adult Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) and Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE) before UPE was announced (each starting around 1995).

Apart from this felt need to provide an adjusted form of education for special categories of children and for ‘over-aged’ young people, there was a large number of dropouts recorded each year before and after the declaration of UPE.
A full overview would give the following estimates of categories and numbers of children/young people below the age of 18 years (who constitute the official ‘child’ category and are entitled to access to education \(^1\) under the responsibility of MoES), for whom special education initiatives could be relevant:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of children/young people for special education initiatives</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The ‘un-reached’ children: including those of rural and urban communities in disadvantaged conditions, and those not in easy reach of schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) The early dropouts: leaving school before reaching the end of primary school, for reasons of age, motivation, socio-economic circumstances, HIV/AIDS, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) The over-aged young people: especially those above 12 years of age who are still in need of basic education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) The orphans and vulnerable children: these may go to school, but may drop out early or have difficulties attending or not benefit from learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) The unsuccessful primary leavers: those who reach P7 and leave without passing the Primary Leaving Examination and have no opportunity to continue learning.</td>
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</table>

Considering the data discussed in Chapter 3, the above gives a potential demand of approximately 0.5 million un-reached children, around 300,000 dropouts at primary level, and about 1 million non-schooling young people in the 13-18 age-group (Census 2002 - UBOS, 2006a), making an overall total of up to 1.8 million (or 21 per cent of the 6-18 age-group as counted in 2002) potential learners for NFE at anyone time. In all categories, female learners constitute a majority.

Out of the above, categories 1, 2 and 5 may change as more school places become available, both at primary and secondary level. Over time, actual age of entry may also go down and thus reduce category 3, while categories 1 and 4 are likely to benefit if socio-economic conditions improve. But it is clear that change proceeds very slowly and that the above categories will remain substantive for many years to come. It is also evident that such ‘special initiatives’ would have to be promoted both within and outside the formal education system.

2. Proposals in the Government White Paper

As noted in Chapter 3 the GWPE did not accord basic education for those outside primary education the same priority as those inside. It assumed what MoES officials and political leaders have been emphasizing since: that UPE would sooner rather than later absorb all children of primary school age (by 2001 – Republic of Uganda, 1992: 43), and that thus the notions of ‘un-reached’, ‘dropouts’ and ‘over-aged’ would cease to be valid.

Thus the Paper had only a limited perspective on NFE in the following ways:

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\(^1\) As laid down in the Uganda ‘Children Statute’, 1996 – Sections 3 and 6.
Strategies for NFE as foreseen by the Government White Paper in Education

(a) NFE as a *strategy to absorb wastage*, by progressively developing NFE centres to “cater for the needs of children who may continue dropping out of primary schools, and adults who have missed primary education”. Such centres would utilize available school and other facilities. Special attention in this regard would be given to female dropouts (Republic of Uganda, 1992).

(b) NFE (along with formal avenues) as a *strategy for providing lifelong education*, especially in order to ensure that women, the disabled, and other groups that have been disadvantaged by socio-cultural-economic environments, will have better access to education. This refers to ‘basic non-formal education’, such as literacy and post-literacy programmes, extension services, and health and social development programmes (Basic Education for National Development/BEND (Republic of Uganda: 162, 176-81).

(c) NFE as *strategy for skills development* (as ‘apprenticeship education for the youth’), in particular for primary dropouts. The institutional forms proposed were Community Polytechnics and other Vocational Training Centres (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 181/2).

(d) NFE as *strategy for open and distance learning* (‘open schools’) to cater for the needs of continuing education at secondary and higher levels (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 183).

Thus the GWPE appeared to cater for three (complementary) perspectives on addressing the needs of the un-reached and the over-aged: (1) solving the problem through expansion and reform of the mainstream; (2) providing access to (non-equivalent) basic non-formal education, especially adult education; or (3) providing access through opening up skills-development opportunities.

It is significant that government, in its GWPE, as a response to the work of the EPRC, had gone to great lengths to emphasize the intention to address the ills of education and its negative outcomes foremost through reform of the mainstream of the system – whether these were problems of access for specific categories of people, the negligence of women’s needs in school environments and the teaching-learning process, or improving inclusivity for the poor and the disabled. Indeed, various affirmative action programmes were proposed to become effective at different levels of education, including special facilities, financial relief and other incentives (to be worked out) and a more balanced, gender-friendly and inclusive curriculum (Republic of Uganda, 1992: 162-75).

In this regard it has been remarkable that the GWPE contained a separate chapter on the ‘democratization of education’, in which all issues related to disadvantage are discussed and proposals formulated across the education system. This includes issues concerning girls’ education, special needs education for the disabled, and education for disadvantaged groups, adults and youth.

However, given that all these measures would be taken progressively and would have financial implications, to the extent that these were located in the mainstream, special programmes would also be at risk. Such items would always be among the frills in the budget that could quickly be scrapped. When hard choices would have to...
be made they would easily lose out to the basic costs of expansion per se. In such a context the NFE route to secure relief from disadvantage might be regarded by some stakeholders as a more attractive default option.

Yet, the one type of NFE initiative that was not explicitly catered for in the GWPE was the usage of some NFE provision as a *substantive alternative and equivalent provision of primary education*, particularly for the purpose of addressing the needs of those who for socio-economic and cultural reasons could not have access to mainstream schooling, as well as the needs of over-age adolescents. It has been this type that some NGOs, together with some donor agencies and MoES staff began to explore during the 1990s as a response to the perceived inadequacy of UPE. We will refer to this NFE form as the NFE for disadvantaged (un-reached) children, and they included programmes such as ‘Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja’ (ABEK) and ‘Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education’ (COPE) (see Chapter 5 below).

Significantly, this type has not followed a ‘traditional’ NFE approach, i.e. unregulated, very informal and outside the purview of government. On the contrary, over time this new approach was developed with government involvement as a full but flexible alternative to the formal system. Although this was not foreseen by the GWPE, it became subject to a special policy development process, as well as an effort to give it legal and financial recognition (see below). Because of the fact that this form of NFE has deviated from conventional models of ‘NFE’, some stakeholders in Uganda have been referring to this form of flexible schooling as ‘complementary primary education’, meaning that its provision was considered to be primary education by other means.

3. **Debating the nature and purpose of non-formal education**

Over the last decade fierce debates have taken place in Uganda about the nature and purpose of NFE, its use as alternative form of primary education and its relation with UPE and the formal system. At the same time this has also caused great uncertainty, as the term ‘non-formal education’ was poorly defined and evoked rather different, partly positive partly negative associations among stakeholder groups. Often it was not clear which type of NFE was implied in the debates.

Debates and controversies about NFE took place in various forums associated with the SWAp process, notably the Education Finance Agencies Group and the ESR meetings. But the main driving force for directing the debates came from the national Task Force for the Policy on Education for Disadvantaged Children once it was established in 2001 and reporting through the ESR to the Education Sector Coordination Committee. This Task Force incorporated MoES staff, NGOs, universities, agencies, and representatives of other ministries (Interviews with MoES staff).

The Task Force provided a platform through which a wide range of issues around NFE could tabled and addressed, and for government and non-government stakeholders to push for a de facto recognition of forms of alternative primary education, which may yet lead to its formal approval in policy and in legal terms as an

*Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June ’07*
equivalent in the context of UPE. Thus, the policy on non-formal education as ‘basic education for disadvantaged children’, while taking its starting points from the GWPE, nevertheless was shaped in concrete terms through significant and persistent inputs from a wide range of stakeholders.

The debates on NFE as basic education for disadvantaged children have been characterized by several dilemmas that were regarded as problematic to different degrees and took time to be resolved. These included:

- **Was the discussion about formal or about non-formal education?**
  Interestingly, it appears that already at a very early stage there was broad consensus that: the focus needed to be on a ‘non-formal version of primary education’; that disadvantaged children had the same right to quality primary education (as per the constitution); and that learners needed to be in a position to transfer into formal education (at the end of P5 or of P7). Equivalency, therefore, was key, as a result of which the main focus was on the (flexible) format of schooling, and only thereafter on content and pedagogy.

- **Was this NFE version meant to be temporary or permanent?**
  By contrast, to date this issue has not been formally resolved and in practice is being left open. It is evident that MoES, which had largely pinned all its hopes on UPE through formal schooling, only gradually came to recognize that there was a genuine case for special programmes to cater for the needs of selected communities, and that prevailing conditions would take much time to be ‘improved’. It was acknowledged that here the influence of the NGOs was crucial.
  Non-governmental actors have seen a more long-lasting need for NFE alternatives for disadvantaged children, arguing that there will always be specific and legitimate reasons for children not to be able to participate in a conventional school. Agencies have been divided, as some saw UPE as a reason to discontinue with supporting NFE projects; others had preferred a more concerted effort to introduce flexibilisation into the formal system itself.
  The broad consensus became that NFE constitutes an essential provision to enable UPE to be achieved, the need for which is not going to end soon.

- **Are these forms of NFE for specific groups only, or open to everyone?**
  It has been significant that the experimental programmes of this NFE form for disadvantaged children have often been rather attractive in terms of providing a relevant learning experience in combination with opportunities for working. By many accounts, this has caused scores of parents to try and redirect their children from UPE schools to nearby NFE centres. MoES has felt obliged to avoid ‘competition’ between the two, and thus to lay down specific criteria for eligibility to NFE.

- **Are NFE programmes for primary education alternative or complementary provisions in relation to formal schools?**

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2 It is to MoES’s credit that cooperation with non-government actors in the Task Force appears to have been exemplary and that there is a consensus on the essential steps being undertaken.

Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07
The MoES is keen to emphasize that programmes of basic education for disadvantaged children are not ‘alternative’ in the sense of constituting a parallel system that operates independently and competes with the formal system. Rather they stress that this NFE is ‘complementary’ in that the programmes add on only where formal schools are not (yet) available or legitimate circumstance prevent children from attending. NGOs tend to concur with this position, as they regard their involvement as temporary and support MoES’s moves to set criteria for mainstreaming the centres. Indeed, presently there is a shift from experimenting with NFE approaches to a next phase of helping to create a wider conducive social and educational environment, within which both formal and NFE provisions can improve their quality and collaborate and complement each other. However, it must be noted that the complementary nature of the two provisions has to date not been operationalized.

- **What constitutes the success of the NFE centres: transition to the formal system or outcomes in family and community quality of life?**

  While it is agreed that the main aim of the new NFE alternative is to ensure access to education in a manner that is accessible and that takes cognizance of the life situation of the learners, there are variations in the appreciation of outcomes: MoES (and many parents) emphasize success as ‘continued learning in the mainstream system’, whereas NGOs (often supported by agencies) appear to see the higher value in the relevance and contribution of the experience to local development. This is commonly expressed in efforts to offer co-curricular instruction in vocational skills, and in health-related and life skills; and also in linking NFE with multi-sectoral socio-economic development programmes at district level. This appears to contrast the NGO’s emphasis on ‘learners as adolescents’ to be prepared for their role in development, with the MoES’ emphasis on ‘learners as children’ who need to be incorporated into the mainstream.

- **Are NFE projects to remain just a lose collection of individual initiatives, or should they become integral parts of a joint overall NFE programme with a recognizable identity and operating within a common framework?**

  A problem has been that NGOs and agencies, often with MoES, have established experimental projects that were negotiated directly with districts and communities, and thus developed their own identity. As a result they tend to have been autonomous parts of a wider NFE programme in which MoES is the dominant common player, having policy and financial instruments to steer developments. NFE as a separate and identifiable category of primary education is a goal desired by all players; but, apart from participation in the policy process, not much else has been done to pursue common needs and interests.

  (all based on interviews with MoES, NGO, agency and district officials)

To some extent the discussions on NFE during the last decade have been truncated as a result of the non-action by government in implementing the GWPE recommendation of transferring the portfolio for literacy and adult education from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) to the MoES. The hope had been that this could enable an integrated Directorate of Non-formal and
Adult Education to be formed in the MoES, and a National Council for Non-formal and Adult Education to be established (as recommended by the GWPE and accepted by government).

Since the above transfer never took place and no effective operational relationships between the two ministries have emerged, all debates under the leadership of MoES-SNEGC have focused on NFE for children (under 18) only. One implication has been that the debates have not appeared to benefit from major international debates in adult education focussing on ‘lifelong learning’, and thus that the vertical links between NFE learning routes for young people and those for youth and adults (over 18), which were suggested in the GWPE, have not been explored.

Another implication is that MoES is trying to move away from the term ‘non-formal education’ (leaving this as a policy and legal term to MoGLSD) and would rather refer to ‘basic education for disadvantaged children’. The present formal MoES term is ‘NFE programmes under MoES’ (Interview with MoES-SNEGC staff).

Chapter 5 – NFE programmes and developments

1. Forms of non-formal education in Uganda

In terms of actual programmes of NFE on the ground, not all types foreseen by the GWPE have materialized. In particular the proposals regarding the development of open schools have not been taken up. Others, such as community polytechnics, were taken up only in a very limited way (Interviews with MoES-DSE and MoES-BTEVT staff). At the same time, NFE has become of critical importance for educational development in the Northern region.

The forms that have come to fruition are the following:

(1) Community schools – In Uganda, government allows the establishment of schools by communities where a local need is felt. While all initial responsibilities and costs are carried by the communities, district authorities can provide extra teachers and initiate a process of recognition under UPE and the provision of government grants (interviews with district staff). In 2004, 262,922 children (49.6 per cent female) countrywide were enrolled in 937 community schools, i.e. 3.5 per cent of total school enrolment (EMIS data, 2004). However, community schools are not regarded as NFE and have their own status as ordinary ‘formal’ schools established by the communities themselves, in anticipation of government take-over. Commonly, under UPE, community schools at some point become government-aided or are completely taken over by government.

(2) Non-formal education for dropouts – This form of NFE, in spite of GWPE endorsement, has not become a common phenomenon in Uganda, though there is a great need for programmes to offer remedial work and a chance to re-enter the formal school system. Instead, though there is no consensus about its permissibility, dropouts have found their way into the NFE programmes for un-reached children.
There is, however, a new SCF-in-Uganda programme for ‘accelerated learning’ in the Western region (2006), which experiments with methods to assist dropouts in a nearby school with re-integration into the system. It provides three levels: P1-3, P4-7, and a programme for those above school-age, which is more vocationally oriented. The curriculum is a compressed primary one, and children can transfer to a regular school at any time (Interview with Save the Children Fund staff).

(3) Skills training for primary leavers – MoES had high hopes for implementing post-primary programmes with a high (pre-) vocational skills content, particularly through comprehensive secondary schools and the establishment of a nation-wide non-formal skills programme through ‘community polytechnics’ in all sub-counties for non-selected primary leavers. These latter would prepare for work and/or further training. In the period 2000-2002 much work was done to operationalize the concept so as to prepare for the expected bulge of UPE leavers, and it became a key component of the draft policy for PPET (MoES, 2001; 2002a and 2002b).

In the event, the proposals had to be drastically curtailed for financial reasons (in 2002 only 19.3 per cent of the budget was allocated to secondary education and TVET together – as against 66.7 per cent to UPE [MoES, 2002b: 13]), and were later overtaken by the launching of universal secondary education (USE). Presently, 16 government-aided community polytechnics are functioning, as against 850 foreseen by ESIP (2003: 10). Apart from serving the needs of the ‘forgotten majority’ of primary leavers, the polytechnics would also cater for young people coming from NFE programmes who are too old to integrate formal primary schools (interview with MoES-BTEVT staff).

(4) NFE in the Northern region – As a result of the widespread damage to the educational infrastructure in the North caused by the civil war, as well as the special needs of children and young people affected psychologically, socially and economically, there is a shared conviction among stakeholders that non-formal approaches to education have to play an essential role in reconstruction and rehabilitation. There is recognition that education would have to offer part-time options; cater for many ‘over-age’ young people – often orphans, with responsibilities for young children and income generation; provide programmes with very diverse skills and enough relevance to counteract drop-out and early marriages, thus combining the best of formal and non-formal elements, and direct linkages with other psycho-social and economic development programmes. Since the late 1990s, various initiatives have been developed and implemented. Presently, there is an emphasis on using an accelerated mode, combined with vocational skills, life skills, psycho-social support and the use of performing arts (interviews with UNICEF, Save the Children Fund (SCF), ActionAid, and the Coordinator of the Northern Region Education Forum, Masindi).

(6) The functional adult literacy (FAL) programme – Although this major NFE programme comes under the MoGLSD, it still needs to be mentioned here, especially as the FAL has served as a major access point to basic education for youth and adults. The 1999 World Bank evaluation of the FAL had indicated that a significant percentage of participants had previously attended primary education for some years. This percentage would be higher as the age of the participants was lower – especially below 30 (Carr-Hill et al., 2001: 20). The last enrolment data for the FAL (2005/06)
show a total number of 164,060 participants (28.7 per cent female). It is likely that the FAL is still a significant option for over-age primary leavers without access to mainstream opportunities for continued education or training (MoGLSD-EMIS data; MoES, 2003c: 56).

(7) **NFE programmes for disadvantaged (un-reached) children** – This is the main programme for NFE in the MoES catering officially for un-reached and school disadvantaged children, i.e. those who have never had a chance to go to school. This is the programme on which policy formulation has focussed and that will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

2. **NFE programmes for disadvantaged children**

**Overview**

The totality of NFE initiatives for disadvantaged children unable to access primary schooling, as an alternative provision for primary education, constitutes a substantive component of basic education in Uganda. Although one speaks of separate programmes, they share common starting points and perspectives on targeting children not able to participate in regular schools, and on pedagogical approaches and benefits to be expected. For this reason they have come to be regarded by MoES as parts of a common category of NFE. As such have been placed under the new Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children and stand to benefit from its provisions for mainstreaming.

Enrolments in NFE programmes have been as follows (2006/7 and 2002/3):  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>N° of LCs</th>
<th>N° of instructors</th>
<th>Total 2006/7</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>% girls</th>
<th>Total 2002/3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>151–17</td>
<td>9,313</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(11,918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABEK</td>
<td>(208 –3)</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>36,712</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(31,470)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEUPA</td>
<td>72 –1</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>5,872</td>
<td>2,511</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(4,903)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFE Mubende</td>
<td>(131 -1)</td>
<td>(260)</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>3,361</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(19,918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELSE</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2,861)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANCE</td>
<td>57 -4</td>
<td>(58)</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>1,625</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>(2,300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>(73,370)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(73,370)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MoES-EMIS data; SCF/Action-Aid/BEUPA-EMIS data; Chelimo, 2006; Interviews. The 2003 data are from JRB Associates, 2004b.*

*Note: there are variations between MoES, programme and third-party data.*

Programmes have been in existence since 1995, starting with COPE, ABEK and BEUPA, all initiated in the ‘pre-UPE’ period, followed later by NFE Mubende, ELSE and CHANCE. The latter came to be developed as a direct consequence of UPE and its failure to reach all children. All have been initiated by an international NGO

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3 Figures between parentheses apply to data for the year 2002/2003; some data are only available for that year.
(SCF-Norway, now SCF-in-Uganda, ActionAid) or technical agency (UNICEF, GTZ), with financial support from various bi-lateral agencies.

Their scope has varied from coverage of one or a few districts, responding to communities in very specific circumstances (ABEK in the pastoralist communities of the Karamoja region; BEUPA in the urban environment of Kampala) to a larger number of districts across the country (notably COPE, with a more general approach). Centres tend to be small and generally operate in two classrooms, which are often temporary shelters. Some classrooms are multi-grade.

The stipulated age-range for admission has generally been between 8 and 18 years old, the former in a bid to stem the influx of ‘under-age’ children. In reality, many children below 8 have also gained access. There has also been an internal policy to maintain a gender balance in enrolment.

The data in the table above demonstrate that at no time did the total enrolment in NFE learning centres rise beyond 100,000. This is not a large number, given the total enrolment in primary education. But it is very adequate for experimental purposes, as the programmes have generally been initiated with the explicit goal of exploring new approaches in organizational, pedagogical and resource terms to enable education to respond more appropriately and effectively to the needs and circumstances of children in the 6-18 age range. As a result, the initial scope tends to have been kept small, in preparation for eventual transfer of all administrative and financial responsibility to the MoES and the districts as a basis for further expansion.

The programmes

The nature, orientation and approaches of the different NFE programmes is summarized below:

### Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education (COPE)

This programme was initiated in 1995 by UNICEF-Kampala as a cost-effective way to meet the educational needs of children (10-16 age group) whose life circumstances preclude them from entering and completing a basic education via the formal primary school. This included over-age children. As the programme was not aimed at a particular type of community, it can be used as a template to design a programme that caters for the needs of various categories of disadvantaged children.

Its design provides for an accelerated primary education (up to P5 in three years) through the use of adequate quantities of high quality materials, an abbreviated school day (3-4 hours versus the ‘normal’ seven-hour school day, and para-professional teachers supported by ongoing training and supervision. While UNICEF co-ordinates financial and technical support, MoES has taken responsibility for the management of COPE through the use of ‘focal point officers’ at national and district level, and special supervisors. In 1999, instructors’ salaries shifted from local resources to an MoES grant administered by the districts.

COPE follows the national curriculum, but through a condensed version. Learner and instructor support materials have been devised that are age-appropriate and give hands-on guidance. This includes the use of the local language and the adaptation of materials to the local situation, while life skills are an integral part of all instruction. Assessment and approval of transfers follows MoES practices, but there has also been a growing demand for the life and livelihoods skills component of the programme.
Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK)
ABEK was conceived as early as 1995, but started operating in 1998 as a programme explicitly designed for the three districts of the Karamoja region in North-East Uganda. ABEK was a response to the unique socio-economic dynamics of pastoral childhood among the Karimojong’s (semi-) nomadic communities, which had always barred children from attending formal schools. Initially conceived by SCF-Norway and MoES, the programme was carefully worked out with community participation, after consultative meetings and a needs assessment. From the beginning it was implemented by district local government, with MoES, Save the Children Fund, UNICEF and World Food Programme support.

ABEK targets 6-18-year-old children and adolescents, and also attracts adults above 18 years and children under the age of 6 who follow their elder siblings to the learning centres. The primary programme presents a contextual curriculum from the community’s perspective, and thus gives central place to the stock keeping economy and takes cognizance of the local culture, traditional knowledge and the need for life skills associated with the harsh economic environment. Support materials have been developed by professionals with direct inputs from the community.

Though ABEK is now regarded as the major education provision in the area, and as a stepping stone to continued formal schooling, the curriculum does not have direct continuity in the school. As a result there is a strong interest in the region to continue with ABEK secondary education. Nevertheless, there has also been a steady increase in children joining formal schools (about 10 per cent).

Source: Owiny, 1997; Carr-Hill, 2001; JRB Associates, 2004b; Chelimo, 2006; Interviews with UNICEF and SCF staff.

Basic Education for Urban Poverty Areas (BEUPA)
BEUPA is a programme with an urban bias, located in Kampala District only. It targets urban out-of-school children aged 8-17. The programme was initiated by GTZ in 1997, in collaboration with MoES (NCDC), and is carried out under the authority of the Kampala City Council.

Due to GTZ conditionalities, no donor funds could be spent on salaries or buildings, as a result of which instructor payments came through a grant from MoES, and learning centres were established after communities agreed on identifying a suitable location, found the persons willing to be instructors and mobilized the children.

BEUPA used the national primary curriculum, but compressed the programme into 3 years up to the end of P5, allowing for transfers to formal schools at any time. Its modification lay in the thematic approach to teaching and learning, the introduction of local languages (following an additive bi-lingual approach), and the addition of life skills and vocational training, which became popular, but suffered because of poor training of the instructors.

An effort to spread the programmes to other urban centres did not materialize, as initially MoES did not pay much attention to the programme due to its preoccupation with UPE. Recognition of the value of BEUPA only came as from 2000.

Source: BEUPA materials; Interviews with GTZ and Kampala City Council staff.

Mubende NFE (MNFE)
This was a NFE programme established in 1997 in one district (Mubende, Central Region). It was initiated by ActionAid with financial support from DfID and the National Lottery Charities Board of the UK. The programme targeted out-of-school children aged 8-16.

The Mubende programme also offered a condensed version of the national curriculum over a period of 3 years, a flexible delivery approach using community-appointed instructors and specially developed support materials, similar to COPE. It also followed a participatory child-centred approach to teaching and learning. The 131 ACCESS Centres included 6 that had a vocational training component, involving bee-keeping, tailoring, construction and other rural skills, using specially trained instructors.

When funding was coming to end towards 2002, the majority of the centres were transferred to government for purposes of being integrated into the formal system under UPE. However, a total of 20 centres were transferred to the COPE programme, while a further 41 became grant-aided formal schools. It appears, however that in the centres that were transferred to government, the special NFE features did not survive, reportedly because the burden to the district, without adequate preparation and guidance, was too great.

Source: COPE, 2001; Wrightson, 2001; Interviews with ActionAid staff.

Empowering Life-long Skills Education (ELSE)

This programme was also an initiative by ActionAid, implemented specifically in Masindi District, Western Region. ELSE was proposed to the District Education (EFA) Taskforce in 2001 as a response to a district survey demonstrating that large numbers of children remained outside UPE due to specific social, economic and cultural conditions, including many refugee children running from the war-torn North. The district counted 28,000 children out-of-school, not including dropouts.

The ELSE basic education programme follows the national curriculum, but also in a condensed form, for a three-year period up to the end of P5, with a flexible delivery approach. The curriculum includes a practical skills component related to the environment. Learners are graded according to capability, while older ones are kept separate from younger ones. Presently ELSE is moving from a three-year enrolment to an annual enrolment.

Also in this project ActionAid has wished to transfer the centres to government as soon as possible. In 2002, after a one-year pilot with 25 centres, these were handed-over to government. But also here the district had difficulties in handling the pedagogical and financial implications. In 2003, the next batch of centres was only partially handed over, but with continued support from ActionAid trough teachers and materials.

The programme has an important supplement aiming at a wider community impact, through social-legal education and capacity development for community institutions.

Source: Masindi District, 2001; JRB Associates, 2004b; ActionAid, 2005; Interviews with ActionAid staff.
Figure 1.1: Map of main alternative basic education/NFE programmes in Uganda
**Child-centred alternative, non-formal community-based education (CHANCE)**

CHANCE is a programme supported by SCF-USA and is operational in four districts in the Central Region. Its development started in 1998 in collaboration with MoES, following reports on significant percentages of children not accessing UPE schools (13-18 per cent in Nakasongola). The programme aims to address barriers to enrolment, thus focussing on children’s needs, the learning environment, delivery mechanisms, and community conditions. It has targeted children with no access and those who had access but were not enrolling.

CHANCE was developed and implemented with communities, and became complemented by a family/community support programme implemented by a multi-sectoral Community Care Coalition supported by USAID. The programme takes different forms across districts, depending on local consultations.

While the national curriculum was adopted, this was adjusted to the learning needs of children, in terms of delivery, content and presentation. Learners have been kept for the full length of the normal cycle and were guided towards transition to the formal system.

SCF developed approaches towards mainstreaming the learning centres. After an initial handover of 13 pilot centres was only partially successful, a strategy was developed to agree with communities and districts on how to accommodate centres without affecting the entire profile of the schools. They also continue to receive SCF guidance.

*Source: JRB Associates, 2004b; Interviews with SCF-USA staff.*

3. **The dynamics of NFE provision for disadvantaged children**

**Significant features**

The above overview demonstrates the following significant core features of NFE programmes:

- To a greater or lesser extent, all programmes were initiated and developed in collaboration with MoES, the district authorities and local communities. MoES units, such as the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), the Education Standards Agency (ESA) and the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) have been involved at different points. ESA includes NFE in its national inspection schedule, and learners register for national examinations with UNEB.

- Commonly, the design has been a product of close local co-operation, with emphasis on extensive consultations, use of surveys and needs assessments, and the approval of the client communities.

- While all programmes followed the national curriculum, they have excelled by adapting the delivery arrangements, the adjustment of content to local conditions and needs, the use of local ‘language-to-English’ as the medium of instruction, production of materials for close guidance, and the maintenance of close relations with the communities (through management, resource inputs, and curriculum implementation).

- Programmes have been under the administrative control of (national and local) government, either from the beginning (ABEK, COPE, BEUPA), or have focussed on piloting with a view to hand over control as soon as possible. Lessons have been learned from this, and the practice has become to make the transfer a ‘guided process’ by which the status of the centres would change (to become ‘grant-aided formal schools’) and NGO guidance would continue and be shared with the district.
Most programmes have come to be complemented by separate multi-sectoral initiatives in the social-economic sphere, focusing on community capacity building and various types of support related to enabling conditions for learning across entire school communities, such as safe schools policies, child protection and guidance, care for orphans, psycho-social support, and youth development work. This involves other sector departments, CBOs and local NGOs.

It has been acknowledged that unit costs for NFE programmes are substantially higher than those for regular primary schools. This is mainly attributed to inefficiencies in having small and dispersed NFE centres and the relatively small number of centres in relation to overall costs. The cost per P5 completer in COPE was at one point calculated to be just over twice that of a completer in an ordinary school (DeWees, 2000). This has been considered acceptable since the population of disadvantaged and excluded children is more difficult to reach and to retain. It was also calculated that such unit costs could be reduced by efficiency measures like annual enrolment of new learners, more supervision and professional support, and avoidance of centre failures. Moreover, it was estimated that there would be significant efficiency gains for both formal and non-formal provisions if they were to be treated as one ‘complementary’ programme, enabling formal schools and non-formal centres to share physical, administrative and support provisions (DeWees, 2000).

NFE programmes have received support from donors, government and communities. While MoES sometimes covered instructors’ salaries (COPE and ABEK), donors provided much of the developmental and running costs of centres, with communities generally making their contribution in kind (such as labour and materials for constructing shelters). The majority of donor funding has followed a ‘project-based’ approach, with direct funding to the programmes themselves (e.g. SCF-USA), or through sub-contracting (such as through ActionAid). Some donor support, however, has found its way through the government budget as ‘partnership’ funding, with the districts being responsible for implementation (ABEK, COPE and BEUPA). Most external funding came from bi-lateral donor agencies, including USAID, CIDA, RNE, DCI, and DFID (JRB Associates, 2004b: 44-49).

In the course of the last five years, all programmes became affected by the formulation and gradual implementation of the ‘Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children’, a process by which full integration into the education system as well as the government budget is being realized. This has caused hardships for most instructors and centres due to delays in government grants and salaries becoming available resulting from complex administrative procedures (see Chapter 6).

Results in quality

There are no systematic data available as regards success in transfer to the formal system. However, some figures available from BEUPA (Kampala District) show that over the period 1999-2006 the transfer rate has varied between 4.5 per cent and 12 per cent of total enrolment on an annual basis (BEUPA-EMIS data). Mubende NFE data indicate that, after four years of existence, a total of 2,856 learners had crossed to the formal system, which is about 16 per cent of the total enrolment (JRB Associates, 2004b: Annex 5.2).
Moreover, in relation to Mubende, it was reported that while the transfer learners still faced financial difficulties, in academic terms they tended to achieve very good to excellent results in the formal system. There were also very positive opinions about the maturity, focus and behaviour of the transfer learners despite their initial problems with the more rigid approach and extended hours of delivery, and the less friendly and child-centred atmosphere (Wrightson, 2001: 14).

Overall, in evaluations regarding the organization, approaches taken, learning outcomes, and impact on the communities, the programmes have been considered highly successful (Wrightson, 2001; JRB Associates, 2004b; Joint Evaluation, 2003). For example, ABEK has been very successful in reaching children and impacting on parents – to the extent that they have increased demand for adult literacy. COPE and BEUPA have also been seen as successful in reaching children, as well as in delivering effective programmes in terms of both transfer to formal schools and transition to work (DeWees, 2000; Joint Evaluation, 2003: 49). Where support from political leaders and communities was low and supervision was poor, performance suffered (Kajula, n.d.).

The national inspectorate, however, in its 2006 report for NFE was more critical. It noted that in many centres (except those of CHANCE) learners were not achieving appropriate levels and were scoring below average in the end of year exams. It was also found that often teachers did not cater for individual differences or use pupils’ prior knowledge – features which are core to the NFE approach. The inspectorate concluded that "quality of education is still lacking [...] because teachers still require formal teacher training", and that centres still lacked appropriate learning environments and support supervision (ESA, 2006). It must be acknowledged, though, that this has also been the period in which most centres were negatively affected by the transition from NGO to government control.

Results should, however, be looked at first and foremost in terms of the policy goals set by the sponsoring agencies as well as by government. Apart from immediate outcomes as ‘successful pilots’ (demonstrated in terms of learning outcomes, transfers to the formal system, reaching the target groups and general community impact – which were largely positive), there have also been other expected outcomes in relation to (1) influencing quality improvement of the system as a whole, and (2) meeting the needs of all children and young people not able to access regular primary education.

In terms of influencing quality improvement, the programmes appear to have succeeded in sending strong signals to the wider system concerning strategies by which un-reached children can gain access to UPE in a manner that suits their needs and provides a meaningful learning experience. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that "non-formal initiatives have successfully highlighted the basic needs for an education geared towards the needs of the masses who do not have any intention (or means) of ever entering the secondary school level..." (MoES, 2003c: 56). Indeed, the thematic and child-friendly pedagogical approaches spearheaded by the NFE programmes have been adopted in the curriculum reform process for the formal system (Interviews with MoES staff, NGOs and UNICEF).

At the same time, it is evident that the programmes have been struggling with sustainability of the pilots themselves (given the competition among NGOs for donor
funds) and with the issue of how to mainstream their centres in a manner that would keep the NFE features in tact. It has become clear that the latter is both a function of negotiation with all stakeholders and of attention given to a more conducive social and institutional environment for regular schools. This requires an interest in the manner in which the programmes become part of the ‘primary education system’ as a whole and interact with schools in their local environment – the ‘parallel versus the complementary’ issue, which shall be discussed later.

**Results in quantity**

As regards the scope of the NFE programmes, it was anticipated by the NGOs that, as part of the mainstream, such centres would be extended to cover those communities in circumstances that warranted this special arrangement. Thus, the issue of up-scaling would have to become paramount – to the extent that the total need can be identified and agreed upon.

In 2002, a study by Creative Associates made demand projects for the NFE programmes, based on a more expansive set of criteria (Ilon and Kyeyune, 2002). It calculated that the programmes should cover three categories of children: the urban poor (BEUPA type), rural poor communities that live and work in consolidated geographic communities (CHANCE, COPE and Mubende NFE types), and rural poor communities where the workplace is often distant from the settled community (i.e. nomadic and semi-nomadic communities – ABEK type). The study assumed that all children in those communities of school-going age would be out-of-school. Demand projections were then based on five reasons why children could not be in school:

- Poverty or unstable home environment
- Inaccessible UPE schools
- Need to generate income
- Inability to afford the costs of private schooling
- Few perceived benefits to links with formal sector (Ilon and Kyeyune, 2002:6)

On the basis of these criteria it was calculated that by 2007 there would be a target number of children to be served of about 110,000, increasing to around 850,000 by 2015 (end of the ESSP plan period in 2015 (Ilon and Kyeyune, 2002: 8)). This would amount to approximately 11 per cent of the expected total enrolment in primary education. It implied a more than ten-fold expansion of the current NFE programmes and their collective transformation into a full-fledged subsystem in Ugandan education.

MoES, from its side, has stated that this demand is over-rated, partly because circumstances of households are assumed to gradually improve so that poverty becomes less of a reason and thus the inability to afford the (non-fee) costs; partly because more schools and classrooms are being built closer to people’s homes (Interviews with MoES staff).

In addition MoES’s stricter interpretation of the criteria for eligibility would mean that far fewer children would be in need of NFE, as the motivation of escaping poor
quality formal schooling would not be acceptable. Moreover, the number of over-aged learners would be much reduced due to greater enforcement of age-appropriate admission, thereby effectively ‘passing on’ over-aged adolescents to MoGLSD as a target group for adult education programmes. Thus MoES, though it accepts the need for expansion, does not see a reason for a dramatic increase in the number of centres and their enrolment. Essentially, however, MoES is also aware of its own dilemma: while after much hesitation it has come to accept that a ‘limited’ NFE is necessary, it cannot be seen ‘to debunk FE in favour of NFE’ (Interviews with MoES staff).

The issue of demand for NFE programmes, the nature of NFE and its future direction in relation to the wider system, and thus of the up-scaling of NFE, have become very acute in the context of the new policy in basic education for the disadvantaged.

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It is to be noted that both the Ilon and Kyeyune estimates and the MoES estimates are much lower than those offered in Chapter 4, section 1. This is most likely because these two sources may have only considered the numbers of children that are anticipated to be un-reached, i.e. the un-schooled, whereas the figures in Chapter 4 include the large numbers of primary dropouts that have been accumulating over the years since UPE was implemented. The latter were not seen as legitimate target groups for the NFE programmes for the disadvantaged children.
Part III – POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In this part the focus will be on the actual policy process regarding NFE, associated with the formulation and implementation of the Basic Education Policy for Disadvantaged Children (shortened now to ‘the Policy’). Its progress will be traced and complementary developments will also be analyzed. Developments and their impact on the implementation of NFE programmes will be considered at national level (Chapter 6), and at district level (Chapter 7).

Chapter 6 – The process of policy-making on NFE

In 2001 a national Task Force was established to work on a Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children. This Task Force (TF) was put together by the ESSC, in line with the GWPE and the more recent goals as laid down in the ESIP (1997-2002) and the PEAP (2004/5-2007/8).

1. Policy actions

The TF has been meeting and conducting its work from 2001 to present, as this work has not yet been completed. To date the most important developments have been as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (month)</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Formation of the National Task Force and development of issues paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1st Draft of Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 (Sept.)</td>
<td>Study on Basic Education Policy and Costed Framework for Disadvantaged Children, by Steven Klees and colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 (Nov.)</td>
<td>Endorsement of costed policy framework by the 8th ESR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 (Aug.)</td>
<td>Evaluation of NFE Programmes by JRB Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2nd Draft of Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 (Apr.)</td>
<td>Submission of Costed Policy on Basic Education for Educationally Disadvantaged Children by MoES to Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 (Nov.)</td>
<td>Evaluation of NFE Programmes discussed in ESR, with financial commitments; agreed to mainstreaming as from FY 2005/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 (Jan.)</td>
<td>Kyambogo University produces proposal for NFE Instructors Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 (July)</td>
<td>Circular MoES to districts regarding mainstreaming of NFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 (Sept.)</td>
<td>Circular MoES to districts regarding coding of NFE programmes under MoES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 (Jan.)</td>
<td>2nd Circular MoES to districts regarding coding of NFE learning centres, with Guidelines for Recruitment/Appointment of NFE teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 (Sept.)</td>
<td>Submission of Draft Basic Education Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged Children to Parliament</td>
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</table>

Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07
2006 (Sept.)  2nd Circular MoES to districts regarding mainstreaming of NFE learning centres

The main outstanding actions concern the submission of the Draft Education Bill to Parliament, its approval or deferral, and the adjustments and subsequent Parliamentary approval of the Basic Education Policy for Disadvantaged Children.

2. Dimensions of the policy process

The unfolding of the policy process and the actions by different stakeholders will be discussed by considering several distinct dimensions of this process. Each one refers to a different set of activities that provide a specific contribution, often involving particular actor groups.

While ideally these dimensions should run parallel to one another and thus enhance the quality and effectiveness of the process, this is not always the case. This is because actor groups involved may have different ideas or interests. They may move at different speeds, change their mind or suspend their activities. One result of this may be that the policy process may not move neatly from ‘problem identification’ to ‘policy formulation’ and from there to ‘policy implementation’. For example, implementation may start before policy has been approved.

The different dimensions that will be explored are the following:

1. The technical/administrative dimension
2. The financial/economic dimension
3. The political/legal dimension
4. The institutional dimension
5. The socio-cultural dimension

The Uganda NFE policy process appears to show significant activity in each one of these. Moreover, it reflects contradictions among the dimensions in terms of orientation, and strong disjunctures in terms of orientation and speed – as a result of which the process has already taken an inordinate amount of time. At the same time the different stages show more of a cyclical pattern, as in some respects implementation has already started, offering feedback to other parts of the process. Finally, some of the basic enabling conditions have not yet been resolved, making the entire outcome of the process uncertain.

The overall focus given to the policy has been:

“…increasing community participation in education, universalising access to basic education, strengthening linkages between formal and non-formal education delivery, improving quality of delivery by ensuring appropriate infrastructure as well as curriculum content and methodology, and provision of appropriate learning materials, eliminating disparities and ensuring retention of beneficiaries” (Basic Education Policy, MoES, 2006: Foreword).

Essentially, the Policy has been about institutionalization, in particular the establishment of an institutional framework to coordinate the disparate NFE...
programmes, the creation of a basic education costed policy framework, and the setting up of an effective infrastructure for professional and financial support (Basic Education Policy, 2006). This governance structure is particularly necessary because of the dispersed nature of administrative oversight, shared between districts and NGOs, with only a limited (policy co-ordination and funding) role of MoES.

Its target group became: “children [in the age-group 6-18] who are experiencing barriers to learning, and are directly or indirectly excluded from or denied the chance to optimally participate in the learning activities that take place in a formal or non-formal setting”. Educational disadvantage is seen to arise from the social, cultural, regional, political and economic environments in which such children live (Basic Education Policy: section 2.2). The Task Force, however, developed a broad perspective on disadvantage, looking at its nature and impediments across formal and non-formal education (MoES-SNECG, 2002).

The Policy is seen as a ‘key ingredient of UPE’, as it recognizes the challenges faced by the majority of children, and the need to link formal and non-formal education by establishing learning outcomes/equivalencies within the two systems and harmonizing their curriculum. It appears that the policy also hopes to influence the formal system itself through “flexibility in the provision of formal primary education and responsiveness to the educational needs of disadvantaged children” (i.e. those in the formal schools) (Basic Education Policy: 2.2-2.7). Thus the new policy was put at the heart of the UPE process in Uganda.

**Technical-administrative dimension**

This dimension was coordinated by the MoES-SNECG Department, and involved the participation by other MoES sections, such as primary education, planning, teacher education; and of the independent statutory bodies, such as NCDC; several major NGOs such as ActionAid and the SCF Alliance, and the Education Faculty of Kyambogo University. In addition, several donor agencies (notably UNICEF and USAID) facilitated technical inputs through evaluation missions.

The technical work was spearheaded by the Task Force (TF), which produced an issues paper that was used by consultants working with TF members to produce a draft basic policy in October 2001 (MoES-SNECG, 2002). Further work undertaken thereafter involved a situation analysis, the elaboration of options for policy and strategies, and the elaboration of cost scenarios. The deliberations of the Task Force, and further consultations through focus groups, were subsequently informed by a set of studies by a mixed internal-external team under Steven Klees, put together by UNICEF for the MoES (Klees et al., 2002a and 2002b; Ilon and Kyeyune, 2002) and later in 2004 by another team through JRB Consulting Associates, supported by USAID (JRB Associates, 2004a and 2004b).

The first set of studies produced various scenarios for UPE and the anticipated share of an integrated and up-graded set of NFE provisions, related to population growth and varying UPE targets. The studies concluded that even under the most optimistic scenario, quality UPE by 2015 would be completely out of reach under “reasonable extrapolations of current budgets” (Klees et al., 2002b: xix). The studies noted that UPE could only be achieved by offering alternatives to the formal school
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system to children who, for various reasons, cannot be served by it. The challenge here would be to extend the programmes to become a bigger nationwide system that can cater for all children who need them (Klees et al., 2002b: 45). To this effect a variety of questions were raised, all having implications for levels of costs, regarding:

- **financing** (use and scope of capitation grants);
- **teacher certification and training** (including remuneration);
- **curriculum** (variations of uniformity across programmes);
- **language** (role of local African languages);
- **school administration and supervision** (scope and role of stakeholders);
- **system governance** (nature of national system preserving NFE features, and role of NGOs) (Klees et al., 2002b: 45/6).

Between 2002 and 2004 much work was done by the Task Force to elaborate the agenda for strengthening NFE programmes. It was also evident that the TF was intent on moving towards some form of integration into the wider UPE system. The TF adopted many of the recommendations of the Klees report, especially those related to the alignment of NFE with formal sector regulations and support mechanisms, such as accreditation of instructors, harmonization of the curriculum for training instructors, the inclusion of special needs education and attention to HIV/AIDS and orphans, issues of equivalency between formal and non-formal education, mechanisms for supervision, and the financing of schools through capitation grants and school facility grants (JRB Associates, 2004b).

By early 2004, MoES’s top management had approved the plan for integration of NFE and for further work to be carried out to develop specific frameworks and strategies, such as for training and accreditation of instructors, and work on identifying best practices in NFE and a strategy to address retention of over-age learners. This costed implementation plan (estimated at Ush. 63 billion for recurrent costs and Ush. 8 billion for development costs for four years from 2003) was then submitted to Cabinet. Top management approval already enabled for the implementation of the plan (interview with MoES-SNECG).

Subsequently, during 2004, a second major evaluation and audit was done of all NFE programmes, their conditions, institutional capacities, processes, quality factors and outcomes. This JRB Associates study produced detailed information about all existing programmes and their links to the future, using specific policy objectives as entry points: instructor development, curriculum construction, institutional capacity, mechanisms for inclusion, funding mechanisms, and cost for delivering NFE (JRB Associates, 2004b).

It appears that the above enabled the TF to consolidate the funding components to which NFE should get access under the Policy, to include the capitation grant (which substitutes for user fees and parent-teacher association fees under UPE), the schools facilities grant, the instructional materials grant, the payment of instructors through the payroll, and access to equalization grants (a national fund for local government offering compensatory support for poorer districts).

The study also produced new cost estimates for the various preparatory steps taken prior to implementation – such as the production of an integrated curriculum for instructor training and the costs of the actual training itself. It also elaborated some of
the complexities that would be involved in ensuring that all programmes, centres and instructors would benefit from the grants – such as the applicability of the national formula for capitation grants to NFE learners, the management and accounting capacity required to handle the capitation grants (paid through the district to the schools), the relevance of the guidelines for the facility grants, and the problems posed by the lack of up-to-date records of pupil enrolment, instructors in the centres and available facilities.

To this have to be added the problems associated with ensuring that NFE instructors can be added to the payroll. This requires that the centres be coded and instructors be validated and appointed (by the District Service Commission), which can only be done if they meet the appointment criteria, which include qualifications. Thus a series of steps had to be worked out for this process to be effectively conducted, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Grading and coding of the learner centre in NFE (District Administration, Ministry of Public Service / MPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Validation, interviewing and appointments of the instructors (District Admin. and District Service Commission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Including instructors in the ‘staff ceiling’ on a supernumerary basis (MPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Entering instructors on to the government payroll as ’NFE trial teachers’ (MoES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Training of the instructors (Kyambogo University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Substantive appointment of instructors as NFE teachers and payment of full salaries according to a new NFE scale (MPS, MoES, Ministry of Finance). 5</td>
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Due to a large extent to these complexities and the difficulties MoES faces in dovetailing the district administrative steps with those of MPS and MoES, the implementation of mainstreaming NFE, officially announced to districts in July 2005, has taken a long time to be completed. By all accounts this appears to be due to the lengthy time required for the administrative steps to be completed. While at present (April 2007) most instructors have been provisionally appointed, they still have not received their salaries. Yet, sponsoring agencies had ceased to pay their salaries in December 2004 after approval of the mainstreaming plan in the Education Sector Review meeting of November (MoES, 2004).

In terms of programme grants, some of the NFE programmes (ABEK, COPE and BEUPA) were ‘mainstreamed’ in 2004, in terms of receiving capitation and materials grants (MoES, 2003). As regards the remaining programmes, while the coding of centres has been completed, they still have to receive the same grants (interviews with NGO and agency staff).

5 This exercise has only been applicable to those NFE programmes recognized as catering for un-reached disadvantaged children (the 7th category in Chapter 5); within these programmes each centre was coded, and all NFE instructors were provisionally registered in the anticipation that all of them, regardless of prior qualifications, would be trained to the required new standard. Basic training will give these instructors an ungraded certificate of Kyambogo University, leading to appointment as NFE teacher with grade U8 (i.e. the lowest civil service grade), carrying a salary somewhat higher than before (Ush. 91,000 net), but less than half of that received by trained (Grade III) primary school teachers. The intention is that ultimately NFE teachers will all require O’level qualifications, followed by advanced training as Grade III (NFE) teachers.
In the meantime, Kyambogo University and its team of professionals, including academics, NGO representatives and teachers, have produced an integrated curriculum for the initial training of existing instructors (Kyambogo University, 2005). The curriculum, which took several years to develop and involved strong disagreements between NGOs and university staff regarding the level of the course and the required qualifications for entry, was based on the materials produced by the NGOs for use in the centres. This proposal, however, still has to be approved by the MoES and by the University Senate before it can be implemented (interviews with Kyambogo MoES and NGO staff). Work on the harmonization of the curriculum for the NFE learners appears to have been postponed, as there is no agreement on how to match harmonization with the current adaptation to local conditions (Interviews with MoES-SNECG, NCDC, NGO staff).

**Financial-economic dimension**

Steps in this dimension have tended to follow the technical-administrative one fairly closely. This was largely due to the fact that the Task Force had been appointed by the Education Sector Coordination Committee, had several NGOs/agencies represented as members, and also reported regularly to the ESR meetings as from October 2001. As the need to cater for disadvantaged children and the principle of equity in access to UPE had already been included in the ESIP framework, the 8th ESR could adopt the drafting of a Basic Education Policy for Disadvantaged Children in 2001 as a ‘process undertaking’. This meant that the progress of the policy process would continue to be closely monitored as an incentive for government to give it the attention it deserved (MoES, 2003c). It also ensured that there was continued dialogue on the proposals under the policy.

The ESR regularly discussed and endorsed the proposals for mainstreaming NFE programmes under UPE, so that it would receive government grants. Thus by 2003 it was reported that material support to some of the programmes had been incorporated into the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) (MoES, 2003b: 72). It also strongly supported the developments regarding the proposed training, accreditation and payment of instructors. This work has been supported by agencies through project funding (MoES, 2004).

The ESIP report (MoES, 2003c) noted, however, that the costed framework for the Policy had to be developed within the boundaries of the existing budgetary structure. Thus it appeared that much of the funds that MoES needed to implement the Policy were not readily available. The ESIP Report recommended budgetary redistributions so as to give stronger financial support to NFE programmes. This was especially essential with regard to the wage bill for the instructors for which extra money had to be found.

When, by November 2004, MoES tabled the evaluation report at the Education Sector Review meeting, agreement seemed to have been reached on the incorporation of the wage bill into the MTBF as of July 2005 (MoES, 2003b and 2004). This was also the target that had been set by the current sector plan (Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), 2004-2015).
Since early 2005, however, serious delays have been experienced in the policy processes, which have continued up to present. By that time, many of the ingredients of the new Policy were in place: the essential text of the new Policy was ready to be submitted to Parliament, while implementation had already started in a number of NFE programmes and sufficient funds seemed to have been identified to ensure that all programmes and all instructors had access to UPE funds.

There are two possible explanations for such delay: one is the bureaucratic delay at district and national levels, associated with the coding of schools and the appointment of instructors. The other one may well have been the financial pressure coming from strong competing claims for funds, particularly from UPE (whose vote is shared with NFE), the new curriculum and the preparation for universal secondary education (interviews with MoES-EPD and agencies). In these years, donors also began to pay more attention to the North, as growing chances for peace enabled more attention to be given to social emergencies, including the need to extend NFE provisions to children in conflict areas (MoES, 2004 and 2006c; interviews with UNICEF and ActionAid).

**Political-legal dimension**

Unlike the financial dimension, the political-legal one has not moved in tandem with the technical-administrative core of the policy process. This dimension was not directly linked to the policy process for disadvantaged children. Its importance stemmed from the more fundamental need for official backing for UPE implementation in general, both in terms of continued political support and in terms of legal framing through the enactment of a new Education Bill. But, as it happened, political support gave the highest priority to UPE in terms of formal primary education, while the Bill has been on the drafting board for about seven years, has gone through two official drafts, and is currently still waiting to be tabled in Parliament.

For the Policy on Basic Education for Disadvantaged Children, the Bill is relevant for the following reasons:

- It provides legal protection for the sub-system of NFE within the context of UPE, and for measures to assist disadvantaged children in formal schools.
- It clarifies the identity of NFE, its supporting structures, and the categories of disadvantaged children eligible for the NFE option as a basis for enforcing regulation.
- It provides the legal basis for appropriating funds from the national budget (Interviews with MoES-EPD).

The dynamics of this dimension reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a ministry of education, particularly in promoting somewhat controversial policy agendas. While its strength lies in the ability to mobilize popular support, its weakness resides in its limited influence on actual political decisions taken, and on the actual procedures and ultimate text of the legal framework. Here, what matters is not so much the rhetoric of the original GWPE as the political standing of the central education agenda.
The difficulty for the policy process is that the draft Bill is ‘overtly silent on NFE’ and is thus still not comprehensive enough to enforce certain actions’ (interviews with MoES-EPD).

An analysis of the two drafts shows that:

- None of the versions defines the term ‘non-formal education’ or any other term identifying the collectivity of NFE programmes; nor do they introduce or define ‘disadvantaged children’, ‘learning centre’ or ‘NFE teacher’.
- The definition of ‘schools’ and ‘UPE’ is such that technically NFE centres can be accommodated as a separate category.
- Unlike the 2003 draft, the 2006 version refers to non-formal education centres as being part of private institutions, whereas the Policy provisions for government recognition and support should make all NFE centres comply with the definition in the Bill concerning government-aided institutions (Art. 9).
- However, under Art. 58 the MoES is authorized to prescribe new categories of schools by Statutory Instrument.
- Under ‘structure’, the key clause making primary education (of seven years) compulsory is under Art. 9(2); however, the clause only allows for alternative approaches in the case of school dropouts, not for children who fail to get access.
- Whereas the 2003 draft has a major section of the Bill on NFE, providing for a Directorate of NFE and a National Council, this has been removed in the 2006 version, because of the decision not to merge the two ministries (see below).

**Source:** MoES, 2003a and 2006d.

The conclusion here must be that in 2003 an effort had been made to cater explicitly for the policy developments in the NFE domain, whereas in the 2006 draft only a rather cursory reference was made. Thus, there is presently no evidence that the stipulations of the current Policy on Education for Disadvantaged Children or the concerns of the MoES have been taken care of in the Bill as it has now gone to Parliament. Rather, it appears that the Bill attempts to move the responsibility for NFE from the public sector to the private sector.

Thus, the enactment of the present draft of the Bill could seriously affect the strength of the Policy and hinder its implementation. In this vein MoES hinted at the possibility of having to wait for future amendments or to ‘re-package’ the Policy and to request for a separate NFE Bill (interviews with MoES staff). At the same time, for the government the present Bill would still meet the core political objective, i.e. the legal enforcement of compulsory primary education (interview with Members of Parliament).

**Institutional dimension**

This dimension appears vital for NFE development and has at least two major dimensions to it: the overall institutional infrastructure needed to promote, maintain and enhance the collectivity of NFE programmes for disadvantaged children, and the institutional format of the actual provision on the ground.

The MoES and the Task Force, as well as the ESR parties have considered this dimension to be vital for the establishment of a healthy and effective provision of primary NFE that is complementary to the formal system and that lies under the UPE.
flag. It is essential for the coordination and effective financial and professional support of the programmes, as a basis for its expansion, at least to the extent that is desired and feasible, and as a frame for quality assurance and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The need for such an overall framework was, as agreed upon in ESIP, in the draft Policy, and in the context of the ESRs (MoES, 2003c).

A new institutional framework would also define the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, and the financial and other resource contributions expected, in particular from government, NGOs, districts and communities. Thus this could replace the MoUs that had been in pace with NGO providers, though in the context of decentralization the MoUs with districts would probably remain in place.

A major disappointment in this regard was the non-implementation of an integrated institutional infrastructure for NFE, both the MoES part and the MoGLSD part, as recommended in the GWPE and repeated in the 2003 draft of the Education Bill (MoES, 2003a, part V). This followed a political decision not to pursue the merger of all education responsibilities under the MoES, the precise reason of which remains unclear. To this date the issue of ‘where NFE (in its entirety) belongs’ has not been resolved (Interviews with MoES staff).

The institutions whose establishment had been foreseen included a Directorate or Department of Non-formal Education, and the National Council for Non-formal and Adult Education. Their functions were related to coordination and supervision of all programmes, and assistance in the development of new programmes, materials, curricula, training programmes and the mobilization of resources – all with special emphasis on special needs education and opportunities for women and girls (MoES, 2003a: Art. 12-17). A formalized network of non-formal and girl-child education promoters has even been proposed (MoES, 2003c: 54).

The non-implementation of this structure has been regarded as a negative development by some stakeholders, including in MoES and NGOs (interviews with MoES and NGO staff). In particular the potential of the two ‘branches’ of NFE – given their close affinities in target groups, orientation, approaches and methodologies – to act as a counterweight to the formal traditions of FE, which are said to be very strong, is seen as being undermined. To counteract this situation the MoES is now planning to create a third section within the Department of Pre-Primary and Primary Education focussing on non-formal education.

The non-realization of a Directorate for NFE in MoES has led to a continuation of the policy coordination responsibility to rest with the Department for Special Needs Education with an administrative role for the Department for Pre-Primary and Primary Education, which was intended to be temporary. This, together with the overall halting of a process to establish a full sub-system of NFE, is regarded as undermining the credibility of NFE as a serious alternative branch of primary education, and its continued association with special needs – i.e. as an inferior provision of education.

Moreover, as there is no common voice, there is a fear that this affects the interests of all disadvantaged children and adults, undermines the identity of NFE

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programmes and their ability to expand, and makes the mobilization of donor programme funding more difficult (ESIP, 2003). Thus, rather than becoming the showpiece of UPE in Uganda, NFE risks, once again, becoming its Cinderella. Key stakeholders in MoES, NGOs and agencies agree that the sidelining of an institutional framework to protect and promote the collective interests of the NFE programmes is a major problem of the current policy process (interviews with MoES, NGOs and agencies). So far, such a framework is lacking (interviews with MoES and NGO staff; Okuni, 2003).

A second major aspect of institutional development in the context of NFE is the very institutional form of the NFE provision itself. This aspect has not received much attention. Yet, a clear delimitation of this ‘other kind of school’ is essential for the survival and expansion of the programmes as a valid and recognizable form of basic or primary education. It is this delimitation that requires legitimating through the Education Bill.

**Socio-cultural dimension**

The development of a policy and its effective implementation is not only a matter of putting all relevant technical ingredients in place and receiving formal approval; it is also closely related to evolving opinions and perceptions.

The general importance of developing or enhancing institutions is not only to create a clear and recognizable set of procedures, norms and standards in human interaction associated with a particular social purpose, but also to establish a corresponding image, with its own associated beliefs and valued practices, to which people can attach a particular relevancy for their lives. The latter would link new practices with criteria that have legitimacy.

In non-formal education, with its emphasis on ‘what it is not’ and its generally negative associations of poverty and inferiority, this kind of institution building can have special significance. In the research it was evident that on the one hand the policy process and the actions of the principal protagonists (MoES-SNECG, NGOs and some of the agencies) generated much credit for NFE, and attention to disadvantaged children has been gained. This has enabled many actors to change their mind on the value of NFE as an alternative mode of delivering primary education. Not in the least, the positive outcomes of the pilots convinced many parents and communities that this was the better option for their children, especially for girls.

Yet, there are also still many leftovers of an older image of NFE, for example: in the MoES’s wish to keep it small and limited; the low level of urgency attached to the establishment of an integrated support structure for NFE; the difficulty of mainstreaming NFE as a separate item on the budget; the difficulty in the Auditor-General’s Office to acknowledge that temporary buildings of NFE centres are as acceptable or unacceptable as FE classes under a tree; the long Parliamentary delays in considering this important piece of legislation; and the long delays in administrative action at the district level (interviews with MoES and Parliament staff).

These are important reasons that give backing to the Task Force’s emphasis on institutionalization, both at the level of NFE for disadvantaged children and young
people in general, and at the level of its actual format on the ground. It is the latter that will ultimately define the image and valuation given to it by the public.

3. Outcomes of the policy process

Clearly, the process of policy-making is still ongoing, in all its dimensions. Some dimensions do not correspond with one another (technical-administrative and political-legal), and some parts have moved backwards (political-legal and institutional), forcing the core of the exercise – the technical-administrative dimension – to slow down and possibly go into reverse as well. Also other contextual factors have their impact, such as macro-economic and political developments. Moreover, the slow pace meant that in the course of time the process lost some of its initial champions.

Thus, at present the outcomes are still rather mixed. While the best part is that some programmes now receive government assistance, some instructors are on the payroll, and all of them are likely to be trained soon. Most of the instructors are presently teaching without pay and with little supervision, contributing to a serious reduction of teaching and learning and of quality, as has been established by the Education Standards Agency. As indicated above, two major factors may be responsible for this, i.e. the time taken by complex administrative procedures for getting NFE teachers onto the payroll; and the serious financial constraints emerging as of 2005, probably as a result of competing priorities.

It is clear that the key dimensions of the process that ensure sustainable integration in the future, i.e. the political-legal and the institutional parts, still have some way to go. These are the ones that will have to carry the effective implementation of what has been agreed upon in the other dimensions, notably the technical-administrative and financial ones. Neither a policy paper as such nor finances can substitute for this. Thus the policy process is still rather vulnerable, and successful conclusion is not assured.

Chapter 7 – Local level policy implementation

1. The district perspective

In the context of this study, two districts were visited so as to obtain a district perspective on the development of NFE programmes and the relation with processes of policy development and implementation. The districts visited were Masindi in the Western Region and Kamuli in the Eastern Region.

Both are rural districts with a diverse natural environment, including forests, dry and humid savannah, and extensive wetlands, with a sizeable population (each with over 0.5 million inhabitants) and a high rate of poverty (both well above the national rate of 44 per cent (UNICEF, 2001)). The districts are also facing challenges of a rather young population (over 50 per cent are below 18 years old), increased urbanization with part of the population dispersed across a wide area, including fishing and nomadic communities.
Thus, in education the district authorities are dealing with the implementation of UPE, while at the same time paying attention to the needs of disadvantaged children, for whom NFE programmes have been initiated – ELSE in Masindi, and COPE in Kamuli. In addition, Masindi has had to cope with the influx of about 28,000 internally displaced children crossing the Victoria Nile from the North, all of whom had to be absorbed in the district education provision. In both districts poverty also compels many children to abscond from school to engage in petty commercial activities.

Under decentralization the district has the responsibility for implementing government education policy. For this it avails of an infrastructure that includes a DEO Office in the district administration, a school inspectorate, both reporting at the political level to the District Council with its Executive Committee that includes an Education Secretary. He/she works with an Education Sub-Committee that deals with all education stakeholders in the district. The many NGOs and CBOs operating in the districts have their own NGO forum for the purpose of coordination and communication with the district authorities. Generally, this cooperation appears to be good and often highly productive (Interviews with district and NGO staff).

While the two districts have made significant headway in implementing UPE, they regard the problems of poor quality education, dropout and non-attendance as their major challenges. These have been exacerbated by what are considered insufficient resources at their disposal and insufficient authority to allocate these. Apart from the conditional grants that are transferred from the central government, the districts have only a small grant from the Ministry of Local Government and some opportunities to raise local revenue from licences, fees, fines and other charges (interviews with district staff).

Although some funds are available from the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP), this, along with local revenue, amounts in these districts to only about 2 per cent of the (estimated) total district income (the latter being approximately US$ 7.5 million in Masindi and around US$ 10 million in Kamuli). This is partly a consequence of the government’s recent abolition of the so-called Graduated tax – an unconditional grant which reportedly caused a drop of 38 per cent in revenue in Masindi (interviews with district staff).

On the other hand, districts have many commitments as regards supplementary investments, such as for school infrastructure; and other education, social and economic services, including school inspection, co-curricular activities, sports, adult literacy, youth development, bursaries, and more. There is widespread concern that there are insufficient means to supplement government grants in a manner that ensures minimal quality in education. In particular there are problems with the capacity and funding of the district inspectorates, and of school supervision and guidance. These also affect the quality of the NFE centres (interviews with district staff).

At the same time, there has been much concern about faltering community support for educational development. District authorities attribute this to the introduction of

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7 Tax levied on all able-bodied men and working women.
UPE, in which the impression was given that primary education would be completely free and that thus no further parent-teacher association contributions would be necessary. It is alleged that political leaders, by making conflicting statements, did not help. This refers to their discouraging parents from contributing to education or the denouncement of officials to maintain supplementary financial support from the communities, such as for construction, scholastic materials and food (Interviews with district staff).

It appears that districts do find themselves “between a rock and a hard place”, in that they have a major responsibility, for which they receive insufficient support from the centre and are kept on a short leash. They feel accountable to the people for ensuring quality access for all in the midst of very problematic local circumstances, while also being accountable to central government for following programme instructions.

2. Participation at district level

According to the MoES-EMIS 2004 data, Masindi had a NER of 78.45 per cent (girls 75.49 per cent), while Kamuli had a percentage as high as 99.34 per cent (girls 98.76 per cent). The latter figure, which is far above the national average, is probably an overestimation and it does not appear to match the opinions of the District staff. Official 2004 figures for Masindi show a total of approx. 30,000 school-age children out of school; the corresponding figure for Kamuli is only approx. 1,000. However, many of these 1,000 may still enter primary school at some point in time.

Though actual figures are lacking, in both districts probably nearly all children of school-going age enter P1 at some point. Kamuli scores well as regards the percentage of children in P1 that are aged 6 and 7 (total 72.5 per cent - girls 71.6 per cent), which is much higher than the national average of 62.9 per cent. In Masindi this percentage is only 49.8 per cent (girls 51.2 per cent) (MoES-EMIS data, 2004). Also surprisingly, over-age enrolment in P1 is low in both districts: 4.4 per cent (girls 4.1 per cent) are between 10-12 years old in P1, as against 6.9 per cent (girls 6.8 per cent) in Kamuli – the latter being slightly higher than the national average. Nevertheless, across the entire school population there is a substantial percentage of older children. Figures are only available for Masindi for 2006 and they give a percentage of 22 per cent being older than 12 years (Link Community Development, 2006).

As pointed out by district officials, the bigger problem concerns survival rates, dropouts and repeaters. A crude comparison between P7 enrolments in 2003 (first year of graduation of UPE influx) and P1 enrolments in 1997 shows 23 per cent (girls 18.1 per cent) for Masindi, and 25.2 per cent (girls 24 per cent) for Kamuli. The corresponding figures for the 2004 output as compared with the 1998 input show 28.3 per cent (girls 24 per cent) for Masindi, and also 28.3 per cent (girls 22.3 per cent for Kamuli (MoES-EMIS data, 2004). This indicates that performance overall may have been improving over time, though it is uneven for girl pupils. The district figures compare well with the national ones, except for girl pupils. However, the latter’s retention has improved considerably over the period (see Chapter 3).

More telling is the calculation in Masindi of the survival rates for those reaching P7 in 2006. This amounted to 21.3 per cent (girls 18.2) with repetition, and only
5.5 per cent (girls 4.6 per cent) without repetition. Thus, it appears that only less than a quarter of the pupils, especially girls, who start P1 ever reach P7 in this district (Link Community Development, 2006: 20). The same Masindi source also reported that repeater rates are also still high, especially in P1 (22.2 per cent) and the middle grades (up to 19 per cent), while they tapered off in the higher grades.

The official MoES-EMIS data provide some indication for the accumulation of dropouts over the years. For both districts, the numbers between 1997 and 2006 appear to have dropped from a high in 1997; but they increased again more recently. The total accumulated figures over ten years of UPE can be estimated at about 60,000 for Masindi, and about 70,000 for Kamuli (calculated from MoES-EMIS data).

However, these figures do not address the issues of non-attendance, about which Kamuli in particular is rather worried. Most of the dropouts would have been below 18 years old, and thus still eligible for completing their primary education in some form or other. Given the figures for both out-of-school children and dropouts, there is in both districts a substantive group of children and adolescents that could be targets for compensatory NFE-type initiatives.

The specific target group for the NFE programmes for disadvantaged children as covered by the policy framework for educationally disadvantaged children will be much smaller in both districts – though there are no precise figures available. The actual enrolment in the relevant NFE programmes was reported to be 3,274 (49 per cent girls) in Masindi (ELSE programme, funded by ActionAid), and 734 (54 per cent girls) in Kamuli (COPE programme, funded by MoES) (ActionAid, 2005; MoES, 2006b). It would be reasonable to conclude that in the two districts there is considerable scope for expansion of the ELSE and COPE programmes, as well as for special remedial NFE programmes for dropouts. Such conclusion would very likely apply to many districts in the country.

3. Responding to policy

The policy developments explored in the previous chapter all played themselves out largely at the national level. The districts were not represented on the Task Force for the development of the policy framework for disadvantaged children. However, some NGO representatives and NFE instructors participated in national deliberations. Furthermore, some districts (including Masindi) received members of evaluation teams examining the nature of their experiences with NFE. By so doing, they provided indirect feedback to the national process.

District interviews revealed that there was little knowledge about the evolution of this policy process and about the substance of the proposals. District authorities felt that communication was poor and that they tended to be on the receiving end of the policy ‘stick’.

Districts did not need to be reminded of the problematic aspects of UPE. They were at an early stage confronted with reality that many children, both in remote communities as well as in urban townships, were not enrolling in schools. They also had to deal with large numbers of youngsters dropping out of schools or roaming the streets in the townships. Thus, a major task was to explain the policies to the
communities, and to try and sensitize parents to send their children to school and make sure they would stay. At the same time, there is evidence of a strong awareness at the district level that UPE, in its version of ‘free access to formal primary education’, is not a panacea that will solve all problems.

At district level, the following measures/initiatives to address educational challenges have been reported:

(1) **Ensuring that disadvantaged children of selected communities have access to NFE programmes of different types.**

In both districts at an early stage, the district authorities were keen to collaborate with NGOs and agencies (UNICEF) to establish NFE programmes in those communities whose children could not attend regular schooling – following criteria negotiated with the sponsoring organizations: ELSE in Masindi and COPE in Kamuli. It was confirmed that, while the initiative had come from the sponsoring organization (as this supplied the hard data on which planning could be based), the design and implementation had involved close collaboration with the DEO’s Office and the District Council (Interviews with district staff).

In each case it was clear from the beginning that the sponsorship and technical support would be temporary and that the centres would be handed over as soon as possible. Districts also acknowledged that this provided difficulties, as they were ill prepared for such a move, in terms of understanding the administrative, management and financial implications. They were also very unclear about the possibilities to secure financial support from the national level. For lack of initial guidance and funds, officials tended to lose interest in the NFE centres. Many of these were turned into ordinary ‘government-aided schools’, losing their NFE orientation and features (Interviews with district staff).

Although some of this was rectified through further negotiations, the districts were still in a difficult position, as in Masindi, under the new policy, MoES was not yet ready to effectively mainstream the ELSE centres in the budget. There is still lack of information about the precise administrative procedures to be followed, and there are misunderstandings about the interpretation of MoES circulars – even at the highest level in the districts. In Kamuli, administrative errors caused further delays in appointments of COPE instructors, and thus in their salary payments (Interviews with district staff).

Districts recognize that there is a case to be made for further expansion of the NFE programmes in areas that have similar conditions to those stipulated in the draft policy on disadvantaged children. They also see a need for special programmes for dropouts and over-age children. Even though districts are at liberty to make proposals to this effect and submit these to MoES, the lack of clarity about procedures and responsibilities still impedes effective action. There is also grave concern about the availability of national funds to support expansion. However, Masindi has initiated steps to replicate an ABEK-type approach the pastoral areas of the district (Interviews with district staff).

(2) **Exploring other initiatives to assist schools and communities to cater for out-of-school youth**

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Districts, being well aware of their overall responsibilities, do explore administrative, policy and financial spaces to cater for out-of-school youth. This is expressed in various ways, for example by offering assistance to parents in the process of establishing community schools, through the posting of a government-sponsored teacher, and facilitation in the process of recognition and full government sponsorship. In Masindi it appears that a large number of government schools had been founded by parents.

Since conditional grants are disbursed on the basis of total indicative amounts allocated to particular budget items, such as school facilities, districts have some discretion in the precise distribution of such grants across the districts. Thus there is scope for giving some priority to disadvantaged areas, so as to undertake ‘affirmative action’, based on primary leaving examination results, in terms of improving essential facilities and attracting qualified teachers – as in Kamuli (Interviews with district planning staff).

An interesting innovation has been the permission granted by the Masindi Council to allow some of the ELSE schools to serve as ‘dual process’ schools, in that they were permitted to operate an NFE centre and a regular primary school under the same roof, with one headmaster but separate complements of staff, materials and curricular approaches, each serving different clienteles in the area. This appears to have produced new forms of collaboration between the two sections, such as with regards to teacher development and support. Although there are also ideas regarding separate classes or streams for groups of over-age youngsters, these appear to be difficult to realize as they require extra teachers and thus negotiation with MoES and the Ministry of Public Service about the ‘staff ceilings’ for the district (Interviews with district staff).

New forms of collaboration were also reported from Nakasongola District, where an initiative was taken for joint monitoring of schools and NFE centres by district and NGO staff (Interviews with MoES-SNECG staff).

Finally, both districts also have gone to some lengths to identify un-recorded categories of children not in school and negotiating with external organizations about the provision of skills training schools for primary dropouts. Thus, in Masindi it was discovered that child labour took place on a large scale in the tobacco growing areas.

With the help of a Ugandan NGO on the elimination of child labour in tobacco-growing areas, a survey was undertaken, on the basis of which a plan was made for freeing the children of school-going age to go back to school and establishing a vocational training institute for the older children, to be paid for by the Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco (ECLT) in Geneva. After a two-year development phase, this new centre has now been handed over to the district (Interview with Principal of a vocational training college). In Kamuli the district negotiated for the Fathers of Don Bosco to set up a post-primary vocational training centre in that area (Interview with Principal of a vocational training college).

(3) Mobilizing supplementary funding for UPE implementation and for disadvantaged children

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Such mobilization is directed towards local communities as well as towards foreign NGOs and agencies. Concerted efforts are now made to mobilize communities for renewed participation in educational development, both in terms of offering labour for construction and other forms of involvement in the schools.

There is also a strong interest in collaboration with the dozens of local NGOs or external ones with representation in the district, and in ensuring their continued involvement. NGOs are particularly appreciated for: (a) their role in providing information on conditions and needs in the districts through surveys, research, and EMIS work; (b) their role in experimenting with new tailor-made approaches in development related to NFE programme development, but now more in terms of stimulating multi-sectoral collaboration at local level, from which all schools communities can benefit; (c) supplementary financial contributions for special initiatives, even though, to the regret of districts, the possibilities are diminishing because of increased budget support among donors (Interviews with district councils).

At the same time districts are trying hard to increase their tax collection. They hope to persuade government to find a replacement for the abolished G/tax and widen the scope for discretionary space in financial planning. With gradual improvement of district management of the planning process and the increase in quality and relevance of participatory planning in the districts, it is hoped that more priorities can be addressed through tailor-made strategies. A major strategy here is to further enhance monitoring and evaluation by both departments’ (DEO) and districts’ teams as inputs into the planning process (Interviews with district planners).

(4) Engaging in legal development at district level
Both districts are also keen to consider enhancing the legal framework within which action can be taken to ensure enhanced participation in education. Districts are at liberty to pass local bills into Ordinances by Council, to the extent that these are not inconsistent with the Constitution or other laws and policies in force at national level (Republic of Uganda, 1997).

The districts are dismayed by the fact that the new Education Bill has not yet been enacted by Parliament. As a consequence they are in the process of preparing to enact their own legal instrument so as to enforce school attendance, particularly by youngsters who appear not to have a valid reason to be out-of-school (Interviews with district council members). As there is no national act to serve as a ‘mother law’ regarding compulsory attendance, it is anticipated that such Ordinance can be endorsed by the Attorney-General (Interviews with district councils).

The Masindi proposal appears to be focused on three issues: (1) compelling parents to take their children to school; (2) enforcing retention in school; and (3) addressing defilement and early marriages, which is a principal cause of girls being out-of-school. Moreover, it is considered imperative that NFE provisions have a legal basis also, so as to enable its expansion in other parts of the districts (Interviews with district staff).

It is not possible to conclude that the above policy responses in the two districts are representative of districts across the country. Nevertheless, the two districts were selected in such way that together they represent average situations of rural districts,
with the exception of post-conflict conditions in the Northern districts. Thus it is likely that many districts find themselves in similar situations, though the manner of responding may vary greatly, depending on the district leadership and the strength of civil society.

The review of the two districts demonstrates that at least some attempt to take proactive stands in ensuring that the needs of communities and disadvantaged children in their areas are being met. Moreover, there is some interest in exploring alternative provisions for UPE as well as diversity in school development in order to respond to different circumstances that legitimate greater flexibility and deviation from the norms.
PART IV – CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR SYSTEM INTEGRATION

This last part of the paper will draw conclusions and implications from the presentations and explorations in the previous chapters on policy processes and their implementation. The focus will be first on the nature of ‘integration’ or ‘mainstreaming’ of NFE within the education system, and the extent to which this serves the purpose of moving towards an inclusive and equitable provision of quality basic education for all children (Chapter 8). Thereafter we shall concentrate on what appear to be the most critical factors that can help to ensure this goal is achieved (Chapter 9). In the final chapter (10), implications will be considered for the further development of NFE in Uganda and for approaches to be taken in NFE in a more general sense.

Chapter 8 – The elusiveness of integration

The purpose of this paper has been to explore how ministries of education go about trying to integrate forms of non-formal education into the mainstream education system, and by so doing create a more comprehensive system of basic education that serves the needs of all children. This chapter will address what system integration has come to mean within the Ugandan context, what purposes it has served, and what its strengths and weaknesses appear to be.

1. The meaning and extent of integration in Uganda

Mainstreaming and integration

The JRB Associates evaluation report had given the following definition of mainstreaming in Uganda: “Bringing into line with existing conventional, formal or institutional operations of Government” (JRB Associates, 2004b: viii). This suggests that mainstreaming has been about the alignment of NFE with the regular system, or about one being fully adjusted to the other.

The notion of integration, however, is somewhat different and signifies: “combining parts into a whole” or “completing something that is imperfect” (Oxford Advanced Dictionary). In a system’s context, this notion involves bringing elements together in a manner in which they interact with one another and in their own way serve common goals (adapted from Senge et al., 1999). The term hints at a quality to be added to the (imperfect) whole.

For the purpose of this booklet, it is helpful to distinguish between three types of integration: (1) integration as a ‘merger’ of different elements into one, thus becoming the same substance; (2) integration as ‘co-ordination’ of different elements, bringing these together in an equal and purposeful inter-relationship; and (3) integration as ‘subordination’, i.e. in a relationship in which one becomes less than or subservient to the other. In this context the notion of ‘alignment’ is akin to that of ‘subordination’.

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As discussed in Chapter 6, in Uganda the integration of NFE and FE has largely been pursued in the technical-administrative dimension of the policy process and in its financial-economic dimension. NFE programmes are being mainstreamed in terms of teacher training and development; in terms of remuneration and anticipated career structure for the instructors/teachers, and in their recruitment and deployment; in terms of receiving full access to UPE grants (and access to the payroll for the instructors); and in terms of an array of procedures and administrative regulations regarding appointments, organization, management and accountability, as applicable to schools, with a number of notable exceptions. Mainstreaming has also taken place in monitoring and guidance by the school inspectorate (district and ESA).

In terms of scope, this mainstreaming appears to be not yet complete. Some important aspects that have not been mainstreamed concern the adequate collection of annual census data together with their incorporation into the district and national EMIS data. In addition, it has not come to the point that NFE learning centres can be referred to as ‘schools’ of a particular type. Thus in these respects NFE is treated more like an ‘annex’ than as an integral part of a unified national system.

At the same time it should be noted that, in essence, integration with the formal system has been a principle of NFE programmes from the very beginning. They have either been developed as a distinct part of the mainstream (such as ABEK) or as separate pilots that were to be ‘handed over’ to the government as soon as possible, though with preservation of special NFE features. Aspects that have addressed integration from inception include: adherence to the national primary curriculum and to UNEB assessment procedures (with the exception of ABEK), the principle of equivalence and thus the transfer route to the formal system, school management structures, and district supervision and professional support (implemented through designated NFE staff).

**Extent of integration**

In terms of types of integration, it appears that the above elements are being integrated in different ways. The following distinction can be made:

- **Integration by merger:** the access to UPE grants; monitoring by the district school inspectorates; management and accounting procedures; and the use of the national curriculum and assessment procedures. Here the same provision serves both the formal schools and the NFE centres.

- **Integration by co-ordination:** teacher training and professional development; teacher recruitment and deployment; teacher access to the payroll; school supervision; flexibilization of curriculum implementation, curriculum adaptation, equivalence and transfer. Here there are separate provision procedures; but they have the same value.

- **Integration by subordination:** remuneration and career structure of instructors; NFE locations as ‘learning centres’. Here separate rules apply, which are not equal to one another.

- **No integration:** EMIS data.

There is no suggestion that integration should consistently be of one type only. One would hope for a judicious assessment to be made, about which components should be treated in a certain manner and for what reasons. For example, there are solid...
equity grounds on the basis of which access to government grants should preferably be integrated by merger rather than by creating separate funds, as is often the case. On the other hand, the technical-organizational components, which constitute the heart of the distinct NFE contribution, need to be integrated either by co-ordination or by subordination if it is considered important that the special NFE features are to be retained. Often such features suffer as a result of mainstreaming by government.

Technical issues regarding integration that have not yet been adequately resolved in the Uganda situation include: the harmonization of the curriculum for learners, the remuneration and career structure of NFE teachers, the use of a national qualifications framework for permitting alternative routes for NFE graduates to continue learning, and the incorporation of NFE into national EMIS data.

**Curriculum:** this issue appears to have been postponed rather than removed from the agenda. But there are differences of opinion in the TF about the extent of ‘harmonization’ and its format, and thus as regards how to address the dilemma of balancing the need for a national curriculum frame with the need to adapt to local interests and circumstances.

**Remuneration and career structure of instructors:** the proposed arrangements in this respect mean that future NFE teachers, after a two-year special training programme, will receive a non-credit certificate. In addition, they are to be appointed in a specially designed NFE career track with salaries that are substantively lower than those of the FE colleagues, without possibilities to transfer elsewhere in the system. This ‘integration by subordination’ is of questionable value as it, while giving recognition to community volunteers, would also consolidate their ‘inferior’ status and may thus undermine the very purpose of upgrading. Moreover, there are also good grounds to argue for an integrated approach to teacher training and development – with room for specializations – for the system as a whole.

**Assessment:** in terms of this issue, the challenges for NFE learners to proceed through the formal system through official UNEB exams are likely to remain daunting. This is because of difficulties for learners to adapt to the regular school environment, and because of remaining problems of poverty that prevent adolescents from paying non-fee contributions. Though the Uganda Qualifications Framework has been established, this has not yet addressed the possibility of establishing an alternative route to post-primary opportunities by way of a competency-based equivalent to the Primary Leaving Examinations.

**EMIS data:** the annual school census is still exclusively focused on the formal education delivery, and while attempts have been made to collect NFE data, there have been problems with ensuring a complete response and with reliability of data. MoES expects that the adoption of the Education Bill will improve data collection (Interviews with MoES-EPD staff). The challenge, however, will remain how to integrate NFE data into the EMIS system.

Notwithstanding the challenges of implementation and sorting out key issues that remain, the above adds up to an impressive range of essential features of NFE programmes that have come to be mainstreamed. It also shows that in many respects the NFE integration has been carefully handled, giving recognition to the different
characteristics that have become essential to the NFE approach. At the same time, full equity in access to the UPE grants has in principle been achieved.

Integration in Uganda has protected five major characteristics as the core of the NFE approach in which the programmes remain essentially different from the regular schools:

(a) The involvement of communities in appointing teachers
(b) The flexibility in daily timetables and school calendar
(c) The condensation of the curriculum and its adaptation to the local environment, and use of multi-grade teaching
(d) The emphasis on child-friendly pedagogical practices and learning organization.
(e) The strong emphasis on life skills (mostly in terms of personal care and development; sometimes also related to vocational skills).

Conclusions

The above suggests the following conclusions regarding integration and mainstreaming of NFE for disadvantaged children as an alternative form of primary education in the Ugandan context:

- There is no ‘parallel’ system of NFE as alternative for primary education in Uganda, and there has never been one.
- NFE as an equitable alternative in MoES essentially constitutes a set of loosely coupled complementary programmes that exist in the margins of the formal system, with the aim of providing the same learning opportunities in an adapted form to those youngsters who otherwise would not have access to primary education.
- NFE programmes in this category, as they are now, do not constitute a coherent and identifiable category of education provisions with a distinctive collective philosophy.
- Most programmes from the outset have had a holistic orientation on improvement of quality and relevance for both NFE and formal schools.
- Mainstreaming, rather than a simple ‘alignment’ of NFE to FE, has largely been about integration as ‘co-ordination’ of equal parts, involving recognition of the distinctive characteristics of the programmes, as a basis for a potentially productive inter-relationship.
- NFE programmes have equitable access to the UPE grants in the national budget.
- NFE programmes have gone beyond the ‘pilot phase’ and provide a foundation for successful scaling up; however, expansion has not taken place.
- Integration of NFE has only applied to NFE as complementary programmes to enable un-reached children to access UPE; it has not involved adult literacy and other adult learning, nor has it been opened to remedial programmes for dropouts should these be established.
- ‘Mainstreaming’ enables government to ensure full control over the NFE programmes through regulation and allocation of resources.
- This process has also enabled government to promote equity and partnership.
- However, integration essentially remains ad hoc, temporary, and thus vulnerable, as it is insufficiently institutionally and legally anchored (see below).
2. Integration revisited

The Ugandan approach to integration or mainstreaming can be seen as one model of how to deal with NFE provisions as an emergency option for certain categories of children and young people to get access to quality primary education. One may refer to this model as the ‘unitary one-system’ approach to educational development. This model essentially wants to preserve the integrity of the (primary) education system as it has been evolving since colonial days, while acknowledging the need for special provisions for the poor and the disadvantaged to the extent necessary. Such provisions serve as complementary arrangements to the formal school, and are subjected to the same control and support mechanisms, thus ensuring equity and promoting quality and effectiveness.

It is significant that central government/MoES has been at pains to demonstrate its opposition to have ‘parallel systems’ in the sense that NFE would go its own way, and thus, effectively, become a ‘threat’ to the formal system. The wish to maintain the one-system approach probably also explains the restrictions set on the expansion of the programmes and on the type of children who may get access.

MoES also expressed its reservations regarding moves to ‘flexibilise’ the formal system, which could have assisted ordinary schools to become more able to respond to specific needs conditions pertaining to the local communities – as is de facto the case in ABEK. Reasons expounded for this stand include the extra costs attributed to a more flexible system, and the heavier workloads in supervision and inspection that this would bring along (Interviews with MoES staff). By contrast, district authorities and NGOs, often with a stronger interest in local accountability than in central control, show themselves to be more open to the exploration of local solutions in school organization.

The difficulties associated with the national policy process on education for disadvantaged children may, in part, have resulted from the wish to adhere as much as possible to the one-system model. These may particularly include the lack of progress on the institutional front, i.e. the establishment of a Directorate for NFE, the development of an overall institutional framework for the NFE programmes emphasizing their common purpose and identity, the coherence of their practices, and their collaboration for programme development and for mobilization of resources for investment.

The same may apply at least in part to the slow progress on the political-legal front, for example the omission of explicit references to NFE in the Bill, and thus the absence of an explicit legal grounding for NFE as an alternative schooling option. The same applies to slow progress on the socio-cultural front, i.e. the counteracting of the low image of NFE, for example the less than wholehearted support from national political leaders and the continued exclusive emphasis on UPE by way of formal education. In other words, the emphasis on the unitary one-system model may have affected foremost those parts of the policy process that would bolster the sustainable development of NFE provisions as an alternative model for primary schooling.

At the district level the model leaves little discretionary space for a pro-active adaptation of policy implementation to local needs. In particular, the use of a
Restrictive model may have contributed to the inability of the MoES, the districts and their partners to effectively address the problem of dropouts and the education needs of over-age learners, both constituting top priorities in Ugandan educational development. At the same time, however, the model does provide for equitable access to resources and support for NFE programmes (though not necessarily for greater equality in performance).

There are other models of integration of NFE with the regular formal school system. One is the ‘two or multiple-systems’ approach, in which there are different and parallel sub-systems; an option that the Ugandan government has clearly rejected. This model, applied in some countries, would include the promotion of different sub-systems, each with their own philosophy and identity, institutional set-up, curriculum and pedagogical practices, and school organization; and perhaps even systems of professional and financial support. This would have stimulated large-scale NFE expansion, probably covering the needs of dropouts and over-aged students, and perhaps other categories of learners through alternative provisions. Nevertheless, such sub-systems would operate as inferior options next to a dominant conventional formal system, and probably not achieve equitable access to resources and support.

The other model is the ‘diversified one-system’ model. In this approach, there would still be one integrated system (combining the ‘merger’ forms with the ‘co-ordination’ forms), but one that would have a common policy, regulatory and support framework, within which recognition is given to a diversification of forms of ‘school-type’ education in accordance with community interests (however defined), and mediated by the districts and local partners.

This would constitute a ‘flexibility with restrictions’ approach, within which alternative education formats can be fully recognized and supported, allowing for movements between the different types according to need and interest. They would all have to adhere to national criteria of access, equity, quality and relevance. This is the kind of model that allows for typical NFE features to be mainstreamed as one category of schools, and NFE lessons to be learned across the system as a whole.

Here there is also space for a ‘common core curriculum’ or set of core competencies to be developed across the board, and a range of supplementary options in accordance with local needs, but implemented through a locally negotiated partnership of stakeholders, with a careful assessment of outcomes at the national level. Arguably, in Uganda many of these features were promoted in the GWPE and have been revamped in debates around the policy process on education for disadvantaged children.

Thus, there are different approaches to integration that countries can follow. For example, while those in East and Southern Africa seem more intent to pursue a unitary one-system model, in West and Central Africa the two-system approach is more common. There is no evidence as yet of a country having attempted to follow the third model.

The choice may have much to do with national education traditions, the relative size of the systems and political imperatives. However, considerations may also require a professional and pedagogical perspective. For example, the recognition of...

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diversity of content, pedagogical approach and organization seems more relevant when dealing with adolescents who are faced with a wide variety of life situations and directions, than when it concerns younger children for whose initial education a more or less standardized model may be more appropriate. Given the differentiation in community support, in value attached to education, and in quality of teaching and learning across the country, government may correctly be wary of sanctioning diversity at primary level. Its dilemma resides in having to address the need for primary education of a relatively large category of older children (adolescents) with widely varying circumstances within an organizational and pedagogical framework that is designed for meeting the needs of younger children.

3. Integration and scaling up

Non-formal education has always benefited from a tradition of constituting tailor-made responses to learning needs as they emerge across time and space. It also has a tendency to constantly adjust to needs as people and circumstances change. Thus, when NFE is used as a modality for experimenting with new alternative approaches to resolve problems of access and relevance, any outcomes of such pilots are by nature provisional and context-specific.

It is for this very reason that integration and scaling up can be a risky undertaking. To be sure, very often the mainstreaming by government of forms of NFE do lead to the loss of the innovative features, if not of the creative and reflective space that stakeholders require to enable such programmes to continue to grow. Also in Uganda, district authorities and NGOs found that haphazard transfer to government could mean the end of the very innovation that was being experimented. Mainstreaming on a large scale, laying a basis for up-scaling, as is being undertaken in Uganda, can mean the ‘freezing’ of the experiment into a particular policy and legal mode, turning expansion into a bureaucratic rather than an organic process.

Thus far the Ugandan stakeholders have been rather sensitive to the ‘special features’ of the NFE programmes, giving due regard to the possibilities of integration by co-ordination. There seems to be a consensus that a balance must be found between system integration and programme autonomy, while giving due regard to equity and quality. But the full access to the national budget and the many procedures that have come in its wake may well end up constraining the special features themselves, for example the extent of flexibility, the involvement of the community (such as in the appointment of teachers), and the adaptation of the curriculum.

As a result the framework for programme development and expansion has to be very carefully thought through. It may need to focus less on the specific organizational form and content than on the principles of reflection and participatory design that enabled the proto-types to be developed. This can mean that the preferred ‘solutions’ to community needs for learning may vary, resulting in different formats, as CHANCE has experienced in Uganda.

It would be quite possible for the initiators of the pilots to work out a common frame within which further expansion of NFE across similar communities, if not other potential beneficiary groups, could be negotiated and managed – as has been recommended by donors. In the context of decentralization, ‘scaling up’ would

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effectively amount to enabling districts and communities, with other local stakeholders, to emulate NFE development processes within set frames and criteria of eligibility.

However, since up-scaling is also to be achieved within the context of integration, the nature, direction and scope would be determined by the model of integration that is followed. In the Ugandan model – of a ‘unitary one-system’ approach – MoES would probably set very close restrictions to what approach to NFE is acceptable and what communities would be eligible. It is thus unlikely that there would be an extensive process of ‘up-scaling’.

An extensive enlargement of the programmes will be more likely to occur within the third model of integration – the ‘diversified one-system’ approach. In this case more beneficiary groups could be identified, with different circumstances and needs (such as dropouts and over-aged learners), and a wider framework could be agreed upon within which districts, along with communities and civil society organizations, would engage in developing appropriate programmes. As this could amount to more substantive up-scaling, criteria would have to be set to ensure complementarity with the rest of the system, articulation with continuing education opportunities, and conditions for resourcing and partnerships. Clearly, such degree of up-scaling would also require specially trained cadres as teachers, supervisors, professional support staff and assessors.

In a scenario whereby UPE continues to under-deliver, there may well be pressure to re-distribute some of its resources to an upgraded NFE or complementary part of the system, as a legitimate alternative option for parents and learners.

Chapter 9 – Critical factors impacting on success

1. Successes and challenges

It is evident that in the 15 years that have passed since the publication of the GWPE, much work has been done to move towards a quality basic education for all in Uganda. Even though UPE as the core of the move towards EFA has absorbed most attention and energy, it is a success by itself that the fate of children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot have access to the regular school system has received substantive attention from the very beginning. It is even more significant that the principles of democracy, inclusiveness, equity and relevance have come to inform the policy work that has been undertaken to address the needs of disadvantaged children. While much still remains to be done, the recognition of these guiding principles will continue to shape the direction that policy and system’s development will take.

Successes of the policy process include the very fact that the process to develop and implement a Policy on Basic Education for Disadvantaged Children has been initiated; that a lot of time, money and effort has gone into the various stages and dimension of this process; that valuable partnerships of stakeholders have been forged and are still very much alive; and that NFE provisions have been recognized and developed as essential components of UPE; and – not least – that NFE programmes are being integrated into the system while preserving their essential characteristics.
At the same time there are still major challenges outstanding, which, arguably, should be addressed in order to achieve full implementation of the policy, and to achieve an optimal basis for its further enhancement and sustainability.

These challenges include:

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<td>The payment of UPE grants to all remaining NFE programmes</td>
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<td>The approval of the teacher training curriculum and its implementation</td>
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<td>The establishment of essential national institutional structures for NFE</td>
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2. Critical factors promoting success

Although the above issues are all important and have immediate practical relevance, there is still some way to go before NFE for children and young people would have established a more solid and ongoing place within the education system – one that protects and promotes its quality and relevance; that is effective in terms of its impact on the lives of children and their communities; and that is also politically, institutionally, and financially sustainable.

For this reason it is helpful to review the policy process to-date in terms of its strong and weak points, searching for those elements that appear to have accelerated the policy process for NFE development, as well as those that appear to have thrown up blockages. In this section we shall look at the first category of the factors that promoted success.

In order to identify the critical factors that have made a difference in this policy process, it is relevant to revisit the various policy dimensions as identified and

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Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07
discussed in Chapter 6. Here it was clear that progress in some dimensions could be made very quickly, while in others the movement was much more erratic.

The following factors appeared to have been critical for speedy progress:

- **Political will** – This was not only essential as a starting point for an entire process, but was clearly also necessary to maintain a momentum or to ensure popular mobilization and sensitization. MoES has recognized this factor as the ‘breakthrough’ in achieving EFA (MoES, 1999). Key examples have been the initiation of the review process of the entire education system (EPRC), the extensive consultation processes associated with the GWPE, and the launching of UPE in December 1996.

- **Timing** – This was critical in that crucial decisions regarding NFE were made at a point that NFE development could be directly linked to a main agenda, i.e. UPE. This link associated NFE with the limited reach of UPE, which could be considered insufficient in relation to the explicit reference points of the ‘right-to-education’ for all children and those of democracy, equity and inclusiveness. Examples have been the inclusion of NFE in the EPRC-GWPE process, its inclusion in ESIP, and the establishment of the Task Force at the time that the shortcomings of UPE were becoming very visible. In effect, the GWPE came to serve not only as a rich ‘policy basket’ from which a variety of policy ideas could be lifted and pursued during the next 15 years, it also served to provide continued political legitimacy to the agendas (including NFE) once they were picked up, reminding stakeholders that the transformation was not yet completed.

- **Role and position taken by NGOs and agencies involved with NFE** – In a comparative context across Africa it was significant that the ‘senior’ organizations involved (ActionAid, SCF Alliance, UNICEF and GTZ) took the position that their role was to identify the needs, and in conjunction with communities and districts, to pilot feasible and effective approaches to reach disadvantaged groups through alternative education strategies. This was not about establishing parallel systems or conventional non-formal compensatory projects, but about pointing the way for improvement of access, quality and relevance through both FE and NFE, related to the UPE agenda. Thus, by the time MoES and political opinion became alarmed at the progress of UPE and a TF was established, the NGOs were ready to demonstrate effective and popular strategies for extending the reach of UPE and for addressing the problems of dropouts and over-aged children. MoES has acknowledged the crucial role of this ‘practice’ in making officials change their minds about NFE.

- **Professional leadership** – This leadership, at a high MoES level, was located in the MoES-SNECG, which attracted the mandate for taking up the policy for basic education for disadvantaged children. MoES maintained the same incumbents in this leadership position, allowing these to forge productive coalitions within and outside the MoES for the sustenance of the NFE process. Such ‘network leadership’ is often considered crucial for ‘carrying seeds’ across an organization and spreading new ideas and innovative practices throughout a wider set of stakeholder groups, irrespective of hierarchy and protocol (Senge, 1999).
This kind of professional leadership has been essential in co-ordinating the Task Force, initiating a programme of work and sustaining this work for the last six years, with all the negotiations, consultations, challenges and pitfalls that such agenda brought along.

Mechanisms for communication and co-operation – This last critical factor concerned the establishment of particular mechanisms that during the course of the policy process have been able to provide platforms for communication, consultation and decision-making. It was very fortunate that Uganda availed of a critical mass of enlightened educationists, spread out across MoES, universities, civil society and some international technical and donor agencies, who used the platforms to promote the policy agenda in general and NFE in particular.
The main platforms became: the Task Force, the Education Sector Review (ESR) meetings (informed by an active donor group, the Education Funding Agencies Group), and to some extent the Education Sub-Committees of LG Councils in various districts. Although the quality of participation and of the discussions and the extent of consensus appears to have varied, in all such platforms there have been many moments of significant decision-making that have affected the course of the policy process, whether at national or at district level.

3. Limitations and gaps

It should be acknowledged that the above critical factors have been especially at work within the technical-administrative and the political-legal dimensions of the policy process. They have also played a role in the financial-economic (the mobilization of funds) and the socio-cultural dimensions (the improvement of the image and belief systems around NFE).

But the factors have not been consistently positive. For example the legal dimension (the processing of the Education Bill) may have suffered as a result of a slack in the political attention to the NFE-side of UPE – especially when the perceived need came along to focus all attention on PPET. The financial-economic dimension also seems to have been less effective, as a result of political attention being shifted elsewhere and thus insufficient financial resources being available to implement the policy, let alone to cater for expansion.

Particularly at district level some of these factors appeared to have worked out more negatively. The political will appears to be there among the political leaders in the council, while national leaders were said to work at cross-purposes. The timing of the steps towards mainstreaming did not work well, causing many problems for the centres and the instructors. The national leadership did not manage to mobilize the districts to give extra support to the process. Districts also had very little institutional and financial space to do their own experimenting with the policy and explore local solutions; and there was poor communication with the national level and misunderstandings arose about procedures.

Thus, at district level, the response to the national process was not effective feedback from district experiences and pro-active ongoing experimentation. The response rather consisted more of a degree of paralysis, a regression of current implementation and in delaying the mainstreaming even further. In many ways the
process has worked counterproductively, even though districts may stand to gain much from the policy in the future.

A major gap remains the limited attention given in the policy process to the articulation between the NFE programmes and continued learning in the non-formal sphere. This development of the technical and vocational skills component in the programmes does not appear to have been well developed, except in the BEUPA programme and to some extent in COPE. Yet, there is also evidence of serious constraints in terms of instructor training and resources. It is not clear to what extent there are real opportunities of transition into community polytechnics or other skills programmes or to the labour market. Because of the standoff with MoGLSD, the link with adult education programmes also seems tenuous. In the context of persisting poverty and unemployment in Uganda, this absence of effective lifelong learning routes remains a major weakness in NFE.

Overall, the critical factors have not been successful in pursuing the institutional dimension of the policy process. The factors were apparently not strong enough to ensure the substantive alignment of the content of the Education Bill with the provisions of the Policy Bill that is already with Parliament. They have also not been strong enough to ensure the establishment of the Directorate for Non-formal Education or a Council for NFE (anticipated in 2003); or at least their retention in the draft Education Bill. Moreover, they were not strong enough to ensure an effective organizational structure for co-ordination, promotion and expansion of the existing NFE programmes, neither at national nor at local level. In the process, they were not able to ensure the development of a clear institutional definition as to what the alternative NFE version of school is essentially about, and thus consolidate the positive image of NFE by ensuring its legitimacy.

Was this because the advantages offered by these critical factors were not sufficiently understood by the different parties, or were they inadequately used? Or was it more that most parties underestimated what it would take to get not only formal recognition for the needs of disadvantaged children, but also to secure a permanent and a legally-financially solid anchoring of NFE in the system that would guarantee that their disadvantage in educational terms would be a thing of the past?

Maybe MoES and its partners have insufficiently understood the depth of the challenges associated with 'marginal policy areas' – whether this is about NFE, or girls' education, early childhood education, or lifelong learning.

The analysis in this booklet shows that, in any case, there were certain elements missing in the process. Some of these are directly related to short-term mobilization and advocacy; others to medium-term value of institutional mechanisms for consolidating success.

- **Mobilization and advocacy** – This is about the scope and extent of national mobilization. It is possible that the Task Force has not been sufficiently inclusive in terms of stakeholders across the country and, moreover, has not worked sufficiently with district authorities and NGOs to drum up support for the policy agenda and for the sensitization of political leaders. Maybe there was too much reliance on the ‘Presidential’ effect, and on the convincing logic of good practice.
It is also possible that the TF could have used its mandate more effectively to engage political leaders at national and district levels and ensure visible support for its agenda – especially its more vulnerable parts in the institutional, socio-cultural and legal spheres.

*Other institutional mechanisms –* It can be argued that the TF, with its allies in the MoES and donor community, have pinned their hopes too much on the formal institutional structures that were to be established through the Bill. It did not appear to pay much attention to encouraging non-statutory bodies in the voluntary sphere as substantive advocacy organizations, which could assist in strengthening stakeholder ownership and national policy action. Presently, such ‘policy networks’, bringing together a wide variety of national groups, organizations and individuals around a particular policy issue, are often successful in ‘building the case’ for policy action and advocating for specific measures to be taken (Nutley, 2003). Such is the case in the HIV/AIDS campaigns and those working on girls’ education.

A second example of ‘other mechanisms’ that can be tabled here is the probable need for a stronger co-ordination structure at government level for the purpose of policy change management. While task-forces can do much to co-ordinate preparatory technical work, the responsibility for co-ordinated action across government departments, statutory bodies, political institutions, and technical organizations can only lie with a high-level formal committee that maintains the overall policy direction, supervises the agenda for policy action, and thus manages the change process across the entire range of policy dimensions that have been discussed here. Such a mechanism could possibly have prevented some of the disjunctures, stagnations and backtracking in the different policy dimensions.

Chapter 10 – Future directions for NFE

In this final chapter the focus will be on implications of the policy exploration in this booklet in two ways: the implications for further policy work on NFE in Uganda, and the implications in terms of what the findings may mean for the manner in which NFE for children and young persons is addressed in a more general sense. Some pointers for knowledge generation on NFE will also be presented.

1. Implications for Uganda

Since the short-term and medium-term challenges, as they arise from the current agenda of the Task Force, have already been provided in the previous chapter, it is possible to focus here on other implications that could be considered.

A major issue will remain the nature and terms of integration of NFE programmes for disadvantaged children with the regular school system. While MoES and its partners in many ways appear to have settled for a ‘unitary one-system’ model for further UPE development, its viewpoint of ‘disadvantage-as-essentially-temporary’ is flawed. It ignores the extensive body of evidence concerning the continued nature of many of the problems besetting disadvantaged children. Moreover, it has been leading...
to a minimalist approach in UPE development, whereby the ‘one-size-fits-all’ continues to be promoted and which allows NFE programmes to be mainstreamed with almost full benefits for the centres and their staff, while at the same time limiting their further development.

Programmes themselves remain *ad hoc* solutions without a clear common identity, a common governance structure, or a common regulatory and support framework. NFE provisions are also unlikely in this way to acquire a clear and ‘positive face’ towards the public, like schools have had for the last century. Their expansion will be dependent on individual decisions at national level, negotiated with individual districts. It is likely that in this way both districts and civil society will remain rather constrained in the further development of NFE. Thus the alternative provisions will remain vulnerable and will fail to inspire creative solutions for other priority problems of UPE. Moreover, it will prevent cross-fertilization with formal schools, as ‘contamination’ of formal schools’ characteristics will appear suspect and subversive.

The alternative option is not the ‘multi-system’ model, but rather the ‘diversified one-system’ model, as introduced in Chapter 8. This would have a chance to create more space for the development of a complementary set of UPE provisions that has its own identity, its own characteristics and criteria, and its own supportive structures. Its recognition and own location in the ‘delivery’ menu of education will enable collaboration with regular schools and facilitate controlled expansion or replication as the needs are identified under the supervision of the districts.

Attention to the institutional development dimension of NFE is key. Recognition as a separate set of ‘schools’ would stimulate common mechanisms for advocacy, promotion, support and development of such an NFE category to emerge – for example as an association that serves as a ‘policy network’ for NFE. This would bring all relevant stakeholders together in a structure that collaborates with MoES (and its directorate or section for NFE), statutory bodies, colleges and the districts. Moreover this could become an effective way to continue the struggle for improving NFE’s image and providing it with its own legitimate place on the education map.

The implication is not that such institutional infrastructure would have to be integrated with that part of NFE that is the responsibility of MoGLSD. Actually, the forced separation between the two ‘branches of NFE’ (or whichever name will be applicable) can also be used as an opportunity to define the differences in focus, philosophy, modalities and environment, as these pertain to each of the two branches. They may be linked in an effort to restart the debate on ‘lifelong learning’ and the creation of vertical opportunities for NFE graduates. Yet the two branches do not serve the same needs and purposes. In this context a case can be made to utilize a different term for those NFE programmes that are part of equivalency schooling.

Some autonomy for an NFE category of schools for specific client groups such as disadvantaged children would also facilitate other mechanisms to be put in place. For example, it would help in the creation of a national NFE fund (i.e. NFE for children), as a source for investment into the further development of NFE, its support services and expansion. Other countries, such as Senegal and Burkina Faso, have good experiences with such independently managed funds (Diagne *et al.*, 2006; Tiendrebeogo, 2006).
The case also needs to be made to widen the applicability of the policy frame that is still being finalized. This policy had adopted a broad definition of disadvantaged children, using educational, economic, political, social, cultural, health and ability criteria. Yet in programmatic terms, the focus has mainly been on NFE programmes established for the un-reached disadvantaged children, and to some extent for the over-aged adolescents (especially in COPE).

It has not been clarified by the Task Force or by the MoES to what extent the policy frame will explicitly be utilized to promote tailor-made NFE school equivalency initiatives for other categories of disadvantaged children – such as dropouts, orphans and vulnerable children or working children, or whether other NFE programmes already ongoing, such as those for child soldiers in the North or SCF’s accelerated learning programme, could be recognized and supported under the policy. In view of the large numbers of children and adolescents involved, such other types of complementary programmes seem to be badly needed. Arguably NFE must play such a complementary role for as long as formal schools cannot effectively respond to the learning needs and circumstances of children.

All the above could be of great help to the districts, as such supportive infrastructure would pick up many ideas and innovations in districts that thus far could only find rudimentary attention. In particular, it could help to help stimulate the development of an integrated approach to educational development at the local level. Such integration (following the ‘co-ordination’ model) has already been promoted through COPE and ELSE in the past, based on a conceptualization of an NFE centre and a nearby formal school forming a single entity offering opportunities for primary education to all children in the community, but through different streams as desirable. In such a situation, one type complements the other, thus eliminating competition between formal and non-formal schools (DeWees, 2000).

This is only one step beyond collaboration at district level to ensure an integrated approach to education needs assessment, to development planning and to service delivery, each based on the recognition of equitable diversity. The challenge here will be to operationalize the principle of ‘complementarity’ within the context of the integration model that is adopted, and to work out the potential value: in pedagogical terms for learning by different categories of children or adolescents, and in terms of efficient use of support services and resources. It demonstrates that complementarity is applicable at different levels, from the institutional level (that of centres and schools), to the level of district planning and support services, to the national programme and policy levels.

The structures of decentralization, with enhanced capacity for management and resource allocation, would have great potential for addressing diverse learning needs in an integrated, cost-efficient and effective manner.

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8 Here reference can be made to the estimates of a total out-of-school population of 15 per cent of the age-group 6-15 or approx. 1 million in 2002 (Chapter 3) and the forecast of a similar number being out-of-school by 2015 (Chapter 5). Such figures still exclude large numbers of dropouts in the 16-18-year-old age range, who according to the Children’s Statute are also entitled to basic education.
2. General implications for NFE development

From an African and international point of view the Ugandan developments in NFE for children and young people shows several unusual and positive characteristics. These include:

- the extensive attention given to NFE as part of a national drive towards education for all;
- the insistence by all parties that NFE provision be based on equitable access, have special relevance for identifiable categories of disadvantaged children, and retain equivalence with the formal school system;
- the efforts made by NGO providers to link NFE development directly with efforts to improve quality and relevance in mainstream schools;
- parallel efforts by NGOs to link school-based support with multi-sectoral district initiatives focusing on family and community needs;
- the apparent high popularity achieved by NFE programmes, to the extent that government felt compelled to prevent pupils from crossing over;
- the policy decision not to turn NFE into a parallel (sub-) system, but to let it remain ‘complementary’ to the regular provision of formal schools; and
- the effort to mainstream NFE in a manner that gave it equal access to the national budget for primary education, while at the same time being able to protect the essential NFE.

All such characteristics stand out as goals that many countries either regard as being still outside their grasp, or have decided not to pursue for reasons of cost constraints. In addition, Uganda managed to put a comprehensive policy process on the track to give NFE development a base in policy and legal provisions, and prepare the ground for effective mainstreaming of the programmes. This process touched on every dimension of policy, in an effort to give the best grounding for this service to disadvantaged children.

In terms of lessons to be learned from these developments and processes, the following deserve attention:

- In education reform, it helps to make all modes of delivery needed to reach all children and young people of school-going central concerns in the review and planning as potentially complementary options.

- It appears to be quite feasible for government to work with national and international partners to encourage the establishment of good quality and successful programmes of NFE as an alternative mode for providing primary education to different categories of disadvantaged children and young people as a contribution to EFA.

- There are some indications that with the necessary protection and guarantees NFE options could be mainstreamed within the national education system while retaining its innovative features. It is likely, however, that tensions will remain between the need for NFE to grow organically and the imperatives of the wider bureaucratic environment.
Policy processes directed at NFE should in particular take care to make these as comprehensive as possible; special attention is needed for the political-legal, the institutional, and the socio-cultural dimensions of the policy process – notably because NFE often constitutes a ‘marginal policy area’. It is highly questionable whether NFE as an alternative form of primary education can remain sustainable without the support from clear and effective frameworks in these dimensions.

Not only technical co-ordination committees, but also higher level policy management committees, bringing together key parties associated with each of the policy dimensions, appear to be essential in ensuring coherence, congruence and effective dovetailing of all policy components, and in preventing essential ones from faltering on the way.

Sustained ‘network’ leadership, that facilitates new ideas and developments, brings all parties together, negotiates compromises, and forges support coalitions, is essential for the success of reform in which NFE is to remain a central component.

The institutional agenda for NFE development is not only necessary to provide platforms for debate, consultation and decision-making while the process is ongoing. It is also essential to put in place a lasting infrastructure for continued advocacy, enhancing stakeholder ownership, combating institutional and cultural inertia, overall co-ordination, and promotion and development of the joint NFE provision.

The key to the undoing of social exclusion does not lie in the adjustment of the policy rhetoric, but rather in promoting institutional structures that can be seen to deliver equal and successful access to real opportunities, and that have an actionable grounding in law, and equitable shares of the government budget.

It is essential to distinguish between different purposes and orientations (and thus beneficiary groups and outcomes) for NFE. This is also applicable in the specific domain of NFE as alternative education provision for children of school going age. Purposes can vary from NFE as nursery provision for developing new ideas and innovations to be scaled up in the mainstream, via NFE as a complementary but equivalent provision serving the education needs of specific categories of children only, to NFE as a parallel sub-system serving general learning purposes of out-of-school children and young people. In each case the modalities related to organization, substance, teaching and learning, as well the implications for the policy process and NFE up-scaling or expansion, are different.

The nature, direction and scope of system’s integration, involving NFE, can vary greatly depending on the degree of openness and flexibility that is permitted in the system: from integration as a ‘merger’, via integration as ‘co-ordination’ of equal elements, to integration as ‘subordination’ of one element to another. Integration of elements (NFE and FE) as co-ordination seems more likely to be sustainable in a ‘diversified’ education system than in one that is essentially ‘one unitary system’. In any policy process it has to become clear what type of system and what type of integration is considered to best serve the policy goals.
The construction of partnerships around an NFE or wider education reform process is essential. This booklet, however, shows that in such a process there are many different moments of action or non-action, in which ‘co-reflection’ with partners or visible partner solidarity can make a difference. In different ways these moments are crucial for decision-making regarding overall policy direction, policy strategies, central concepts, principles or categories, legal procedures, systems’ development, the nature of integration, etc. Which coalition, with what type of support, can be mobilized? And at what moments can this make all the difference for the ultimate direction that the policy will take?

3. Some pointers for monitoring and research

The exploration of the Ugandan NFE policy process has revealed the necessity of strategic information to be available to the different stakeholders. The supply of such information tends to be quite a challenge, as so often it is not clear what would serve as strategic information. There has been a common habit of collecting project specific data on enrolments, characteristics, inputs and outcomes in terms of achievement.

At the same time, while interest in understanding the scope, outcomes and impact of NFE has much increased, research and evaluation efforts have often continued to consider the NFE terrain as a totality to be analyzed separately from formal education and without distinguishing between client groups with specific needs and interests. Though this kind of survey research has its own value to understand the scope and diversity of NFE, it has reduced the value of findings and conclusions for policy purposes.

The study has shown that monitoring and (formative) research in the context of policy development for NFE is particularly useful in the following areas:

- The extent of enrolment and participation related to age, gender, and level; and also in relation to characteristics of disadvantaged population groups.
- The patterns of participation and achievements in relation to different age groups, such as children (6-12) and adolescents (13-30).
- Participation in relation to the total out-of-school population, and thus the nature of potential demand for formal and non-formal education.
- Further analysis of the phenomenon of dropping out, non-attendance and repeating, in relation to quality issues and learner circumstances.
- Community and learners’ interests and motivation regarding different forms of education in relation to socio-cultural and economic conditions and aspirations.

By including in the EMIS system data linked to indicators in the above areas of concern, at national and decentralized levels, with regard to both formal and non-formal forms of education, integrated data sets can be developed and comparisons between the sub-sets can be made. These can be of tremendous help in policy-making.

It appears also that cohort studies tracking the same P1 cohorts through the primary system, or through the various levels of NFE programmes, are generally missing. For NFE this makes it very difficult to measure efficiency, as well as success.
in terms of completing the programmes, and transfer into the formal system or possibly into other learning opportunities and/or the labour market. Data available in Uganda in this regard are only patchy and not systematic enough to demonstrate programme achievement.

A major area of formative research that is rarely undertaken concerns the careful tracing of key developments in specific NFE programme initiatives: from initial problem analysis, through design and programme decision-making to the ups and downs of implementation, together with the programmes’ interactions and experiences with the local environment, sponsoring organizations and the policy arena. Such ‘programme biographies’, with an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, outcomes and impacts, can help greatly in emulating successful processes and partnerships in situations where NFE initiatives can make a significant difference.
REFERENCES

Part 1 – Respondents

1. MoES

Director of Education
Commissioners of Departments
Departmental Staff
Education Planning Department staff
Education Statistics Section staff
National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)
Education Standards Agency (ESA)

2. MoGLSD

Literacy Officer

3. Donor and Technical Agencies

Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE)
Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI)
USAID
The World Bank
UNICEF
GTZ
Commonwealth Education Fund

4. Non-governmental organizations

Federation of NGOs in Uganda (FENU)
ActionAid
Save the Children Fund (SCF) in Uganda
Save the Children Fund/USA
UGAADEN
Literacy Network for Uganda (LITNET)
Adult Education Network
Literacy Adult Basic Education (LABE)
PAMOJA, Uganda
Uganda Literacy Adult Learners Association (ULALA)
Christian Children Fund (CCF), Kamuli
Plan International Uganda, Kamuli
Link School-Community Development, Masindi
Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO), Masindi

5. NFE Programme and other Institutional Staff

BEUPA staff
CHANCE staff
ELSE Centre instructors
COPE Centre instructors
Kyema Vocational Institute, Masindi  
Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre, Kamuli

6. University staff  
Kyambogo University, Faculty of Education  
Makerere University, Child Heath and Development Centre  
Makerere University, Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (IACE)

7. District Council and Administration  
District Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Masindi  
District Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Kamuli  
District Planners  
District Education Office staff  
District Education Inspectorate

8. Political Leaders  
Chairperson Sub-Committee for Social Services, Parliament of Uganda  
A/Chairperson of Council/Secretary for Education, Masindi District  
A/Chairperson of Council, Kamuli District

Part 2 – Documents and published literature


Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07


Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07
Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07


Towards systemic integration of non-formal education – case-study from Uganda – Draft 1, June’07


