
Why do education policies in East Africa fail? What's changing?

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Background

In 1990 the World Bank published a series of papers on the implementation of education policy in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 1990). These papers exposed the gap between policy intention and realisation and attempted to answer the question, “Why have these policies failed?” Over a decade later, we are still facing the same question. There have been significant gains in access to primary education in some countries. However, differences between policy and reality remain, even in countries achieving improved educational development. What are the causes of this? What are the prospects of this situation changing?

This paper addresses these questions from the perspective of international development agencies. It seeks new interpretations of the lack of policy realisation and suggests ways that partnership between international development agencies and national governments might contribute to improved sustainable change.

Our analysis of the failure of educational policy goes beyond the analysis of the policies themselves, to look at the social and political environment in which policies are created. Drawing on examples of recent major reform programmes from Uganda (Universal Primary Education), Tanzania (the emerging education Sectorwide Approach (SWAp) and Kenya, we consider the technical and non-technical dimensions which shape emerging policy. In so doing we draw on the ideas of Chabal and Daloz (1999). Their book, *Africa Works*, provides an unorthodox and interesting perspective on the way governments in sub-Saharan Africa function. Rather than asking why African governments seemingly fail to be effective bureaucracies, they pose the question: What are African governments attempting to achieve? By turning the focus around, they endeavour to show how informalizing politics,

capturing economic failure and ultimately using *disorder as a political instrument*, all serve to profit the vertical links between patrons and clients within the political and social system.

By interpreting the trajectory of educational policies using some of these ideas, we are forced to reconsider the role for development agencies. Currently, international development assistance is delivered using a wide variety of modalities, from project finance to budget support. As a consequence, the relationship between development agencies and partner governments also enjoys great variation. In the final part of the paper we focus briefly on the range of funding modalities currently available and why some are more appropriate than others for East African countries. In this concluding section we turn again to the particular examples of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, and use the taxonomy of aid forms developed by Foster (2000) to provide a basis for a discussion on how, in the contexts described in the course of this paper, partnership is affected by the nature of the aid delivery mechanisms. Although it is possible to identify principles, and even some guidelines to inform development agencies' relationships with recipient governments, our conclusion is that 'one size does not fit all'.

Theory and context

In their analysis of sub-Saharan Africa, Chabal and Daloz (1999) offer an original interpretation of the continent's precarious condition. The authors draw on a wide range of disciplines and comparative material to review the major political, social, and cultural trends of present day Africa from a realistic, if unorthodox, perspective. They explore three fundamental issues:

The informalisation of politics: Are African political systems actually institutionalizing, or have the prevailing personal and vertical links between patrons and clients continued, purposely and profitably, to hold sway?

The 're-traditionalisation' of society: Is the resurgence of ethnicity, witchcraft and other 'cultural' traits in Africa an indication of the continent's move backward, or evidence of its multi-faceted path to modernization?

The productivity of economic 'failure': Is Africa's inability to develop the result of dubious policy choices, or external constraints, or is it the logical

outcome of a singular dynamic by which patrimonial networks are enriched at the expense of the continent's economic growth?

The authors develop a new paradigm – *the political instrumentalisation of disorder* – which makes sense of the process outlined above and provides an interesting analysis of Africa's contemporary politics. We argue, using elements of this analysis, that the trends identified in educational development identified in the 1980s continued into the 1990s, and are likely to continue to affect the development and implementation of national education strategies and policies for some time to come, possibly leading to East Africa's failure to achieve the education Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Our account of the East African is presented in three cameos:

Kenya

The Government of Kenya, as with other East African countries, recognises the importance of education, and regularly asserts that education is a basic human right and a powerful tool for human resource and national development. The commitment to education is to be found in a host of sessional papers and government reports into education spanning the entire post-independence era from 1963. Kenya is a signatory to the Dakar protocols.

Public spending on education in Kenya has increased markedly since independence. Under the latter years of the previous government of President Moi which ended in January, 2003, Kenya was spending just on 30% of total government expenditure on education, representing on average nearly 7.3% of GNP. Recurrent expenditure in Kenya has increased by close to 135% over the past decade to US\$211mill. Whilst this is amongst the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, the outputs of the sector are less than impressive.

In the last fifteen budgets of the Moi government, inputs which would have improved the quality of education were not to be found. On average, 92% of the education budget was spent on recurrent expenditures (salaries and administration) and in the primary education sub-sector salaries accounted for 98% of recurrent expenditure. The outputs of the system were equally poor; a decline in the primary education Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) from 101.8% to 87.1% over the last decade, primary school completion rates averaged 45%, a decline of the secondary school GER from 29.4% to 21.7%, of which an average of 82% completed, and an estimated 3.5 million eligible children not

accessing primary education. At the same time, higher education continued to benefit the wealthiest members of the population. A recent benefit incidence analysis reveals that the richest 40% of the population benefit more than five times as much from government subsidisation of university education than do the poorest 40%. (Deolaliker, 1999).

There is a growing number of the poor in Kenya (current economic growth is less than 1%, while the population grows at a rate of 2.7%. Fifty two percent of Kenyans live below the international poverty line of US \$1 a day). Yet the burden of expenditure on education increasingly falls to families. Until the change of government in January 2003, parents and communities paid: a school development levy, a school amenities fee, examination costs, sports fees, local district education office fees, school textbooks costs, and school uniform costs. Although free basic education was declared in Kenya in January 2003, implementing it is some way off. It has been estimated that the cost of keeping a child at primary school in Kenya, without taking into account opportunity and social costs, averages out at the equivalent of US\$120.00 a year. At the same time, the high repetition rate of 13.7% for primary pupils effectively adds an additional year to primary schooling.

Whilst the benefits of public expenditure on primary education are fairly evenly spread across all income groups, as with most sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, the key challenges in the education sector remain access, equity, quality and relevance.

Thus the question remains: why is there such a gap between the rhetoric espoused in international conferences and national policy documents, and the reality of education in Kenya?

Tanzania

For the last 15 years, education indicators in Tanzania have been falling. In 1985 the Government of Tanzania had achieved a GER of 98%. By 1995, the GER had declined to only 74%. By the year 2000, it was estimated that a total of nearly 3 million children, out of a cohort of nearly 7 million children, were not accessing education. An interesting indicator of the consequences of the decline in the number of children accessing education concerns literacy levels. After rising from 15% in 1961 to 90.4% in 1985, literacy levels have declined to 76% in the late 1990s.

A number of social and economic reasons have contributed to this change. Economic liberalisation policies of the late 80s led to an immediate decline in government revenues, and under pressure from The World Bank and IMF, cost-sharing in education was begun. At the same time, population increases at over 3% per year further added to the costs of education.

However, these reasons alone do not explain the losses witnessed since the mid 80s. The education sector is characterised by gross internal inefficiencies. In 1997, teacher-pupil ratios at primary level averaged 1:37, at secondary level 1:18, and 1:6 at higher education. At the same time, repetition rates were high at around 20%. One possible reason for this is the low level of trained primary teachers. The multiples of education financing across sub-sectors also reveal another reason: unit costs for secondary are 7.4 times primary. University students cost 143.5 times as much as a primary student.

While it is clear that poverty is one of the main reasons for the poor performance of the education sector (it is estimated that between 40% and 50% of the Tanzanian population are in severe poverty; the average per capita income is \$US 150.00pa), it must also be recognised that policy failure is also a cause. As an assessment of the present situation in Tanzanian education, the ministry itself has declared that:

Tanzania has had excellent, progressive education policies, such as community education, education for self-reliance, adult education ,universal primary education, work-orientated practical education. Yet most of these policies have not been fully and satisfactorily implemented (Tanzanian Education Sector Appraisal Document, 1999).

There are, however, reasons to expect change. Before debt relief (announced 24 months ago) 35% of the government's budget was spent on debt servicing. The reduction of the debt burden is expected to enable the government to consider major social sector reforms. It has also increased the stability of the government.

Now the question facing Tanzania, and her donor partners is: can the new opportunities presented by debt relief be turned into policy and implementation action?

Uganda - a qualified exception?

In recent years the experience of Uganda education has attracted attention worldwide. Described as a 'star performer' (Davaranjan et al 1999), Uganda has made significant strides towards achieving universal primary education and improving gender equity. Primary enrolments have increased from 2.5m. in 1996 to 7.2m. in 2001. Attracted by a strong poverty focused policy framework (the Poverty Eradication Action Plan or PEAP), a strategic medium term investment programme, and functioning mechanisms for policy dialogue; external funding agencies have flocked to support Uganda's endeavours. The preferred modalities for delivering aid are sector or budget support. Approximately 31% of the Government's recurrent discretionary budget is allocated for education, of which 65% is allocated to the primary sub-sector. The partnership between the Government and funding agencies within Uganda Education's Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) is characterised by good donor co-ordination, joint review processes, and the mobilisation of resources within the Government's planning and budgeting cycles. To all intent and purpose, it would appear that after two decades of failed education policies, Uganda is on the brink of achieving its goals of "equipping citizens with the power of knowledge... correct attitudes and multiple developmental skills for rapid economic advancement of Uganda and the "transformation of society" (White Paper, 1992, p.1).

In line with global trends (Addis Ababa African Minister's of Education Conference, 1961; Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Rights of the Child; Jomtein, 1990) the 1992 Government White Paper calls for free and compulsory primary education, in recognition of the role of primary education in "the alleviation of poverty, disease, disharmony, degradation and ignorance" (p.15).

During the first decade of the National Resistance Movement government, despite the policy statements, and increased contributions to education, primary education remained largely the responsibility of parents, and enrolment figures increased only marginally to about 75% (GER) 60% (NER) by 1996. This changed impressively with the bold presidential announcement of the UPE initiative in 1996, whereby four children in every family, plus orphans, would be given free primary education: at the beginning of the school year in 1997 5.2 million pupils registered in primary school, an increase of 68% in one year. Current figures are estimated at 6.3 million. At the same

time, the Local Government Act of 1997 decentralised the administration of social services.

Increased access to primary schooling has not been matched by improvements in quality and equity: there are significant deficits in classrooms, teachers and textbooks and national averages are marked by regional disparities.

Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that after several years of inertia, Uganda has made significant strides towards achieving UPE. The business-as-usual approach of large, centrally managed implementation schemes is gradually being eroded in favour of decentralised service delivery, although much still needs to be done to ensure that critical quality inputs actually reach the schools, and impact upon teaching and learning. Strong partnerships between donors and government, coupled with effective donor co-ordination, have allowed for increasingly transparent policy dialogue, and the monitoring of jointly agreed education targets. However, the quality of primary education remains a serious concern, and the enormous challenges posed at the post-primary level threaten to undermine all the achievements to date. It would appear that Uganda is the country in East Africa most likely to achieve the MDGs, and demonstrate some success in the implementation of its education policies, but it will take sustained long-term commitment and resources on all sides if this is to become a reality.

Assessment of policy implementation

Development agencies have long looked to the countries of East Africa as places where there is a good opportunity for successful education development. There is a popular view, often expressed in the media, that the countries of East Africa are on the threshold of achieving the education MDGs, implying that it is merely a matter of a little more effort before Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania will achieve UPE and the institutionalisation of well managed education systems. It is this view that underlies much of the continued development assistance that pours into the region.

Several decades after the region's independence, and in the face of the decline in school enrolments in Tanzania and Kenya (see above and Bredie and Beeharry, 1998) and the crisis of education quality in Uganda (see Ford Foundation, 2001), it seems reasonable to ask whether development agencies ought to consider other approaches. Is it sufficient only to address the technical weaknesses in education systems, or are there other reasons that the

governments of East Africa are not implementing the education reforms they purport to adhere to? The slow progress over this period suggests a need to question the policy intention of these governments, and to find reasons for the gap between rhetoric and practice.

Psacharopolous (1994) reminds us that educational policy is proclaimed or a school reform is enacted, not for its own sake, but in order to serve a particular purpose. That purpose may be pedagogical, political, economic, or any combination of other good causes according to the judgement of that impersonal entity often referred to as 'the policy maker'.

It is from this perspective that we address questions of why there is such a gap between educational policy objectives and their realisation. We address three possible causes for poor policy implementation:

- A reluctance to introduce necessary in-depth reforms
- Weak public administration and institutions
- An aversion to the institutionalisation of bureaucratic practices.

In our discussion of these three areas we draw further on the ideas of Chabal and Daloz, particularly the themes of the informalisation of government and the concept and role of individuals in political processes in sub-Saharan Africa.

We shall also be arguing the need for funding agencies, especially, to look beyond the most immediate and technical discourses which dominate the verbal and documentary exchanges between themselves and partner governments, and to begin to ask whether the countries of East Africa base their education agenda on very different values, processes and priorities to those understood by their funding agency partners.

A reluctance to introduce necessary in-depth reforms

Developing appropriate national policy responses to low enrolments and poor quality primary education is the main challenge of educational development in the region. Each of the three countries featured in this article have differing histories of the reform process. Both Kenya and Tanzania have long histories of external support geared to strengthening public administrations and the institutionalisation of reform initiatives, and yet neither has achieved the depth of reform expected.

In Kenya, we have witnessed long delays and prevarication over calling a national Education Forum, in spite of the production of volumes of reports and preparatory papers. This can be explained only in political terms. Indeed, Maina and Muliro (2001) make this point with reference to Kenya. Reforms which are made have tended to arrive as directives from the presidential office. Policies have been made in this way on, for example, the recruitment of more teachers, or the need to introduce specific additional subjects into the curriculum or on discipline in schools. These ‘grand scheme’ announcements, just like the numerous task forces set up regularly, carry with them the weight of political imperative. However, as *ex cathedra* directives they are rarely linked to any real tangible output, nor are they embedded in strategic priorities, indeed they often run counter to existing priorities.¹

What is the purpose of these announcements, grand schemes and task forces? The cynic may argue that the setting up of task forces is a form of decision-avoidance. Following the announcement of a task force to address issues of school unrest, David Adude in *The Nation* on 15 August, 2001 provided a useful summary of the role of task forces in Kenya’s education system. He noted that the Education Minister had “assembled an impressive array of the ministry’s cadres to announce the team. And its job? To repeat what umpteen other teams have done before - to investigate the causes of strikes and unrest, and make recommendations.”

The editorial went on to list the number of reports compiled in the past decade, and noted the failure to implement any of them, concluding that it was the fear of change, rather than the lack of information that paralysed the education system. Fear of change was attributed to the “the mental rigidity that characterizes the establishment”.

However, other reasons were also apparent in the political economy of Kenya. The recent enormous increase in the number of private schools in Kenya has led to a remarkable growth in rent-seeking activities both in the public and private school sectors, with the potential especially in the latter that this growth provides for extracting financial gains through regulatory bodies. The clientistic relationships that have been set up serve to profit the vertical relationships amongst the elite.

¹ Recruiting increased numbers of teachers in Kenya, for example, will place additional financial pressure on parents in a context where already 92% of the education is spent on teacher salaries. It will certainly not allow the GoK to decrease the percentage of recurrent expenditure and allow for an increase in development funding.

A lack of strategic rigour also allows opportunities for the presentation of policies by presidential decree. In the same way that President Moi made unprecedented announcements concerning task forces and teacher recruitment, a programme leading to free basic education in Tanzania was announced by presidential decree in Tanzania during the 2001 presidential election campaign. Ironically, it forced the Ministry of Education finally to produce an education sector development plan, after over five years of prevarication and delay. It has also had the effect of mobilising the donor community, and with HIPC (debt relief) funding is now coming on stream too. The prospects for large investment in education in Tanzania now appear most promising. How deep the reform process in Tanzania becomes, and indeed, now in Kenya, remains to be seen, however. If Chabal and Daloz are correct in suggesting that:

The aim of the political elites is not just to gather power. It is much more fundamentally to use that power, and the resources which it can generate, to purchase, as it were, the 'affection' of their people (1999, p.158)

then the prospects for sustained reform are slim.

Uganda's case is interesting because it is somewhat different. It is clearly an example of deep reform occurring by presidential decree, and it has been followed by a number of in-depth reforms which have supported and developed the process. With the Local Government Act of 1997 and the UPE policy of the same year, the country decentralised the administration of social services and made primary education effectively free. However, as Appleton (2001, p.371) argues, before UPE was declared in 1997:

... education had arguably been a low and declining priority for the government. In 1987, when the Museveni government had first come to power, it set up the Education Policy Review Commission to report on the state of education. The commission's most notable recommendation was to attain universal primary education by 2000. However, the government was slow to implement the measures and commit the resources needed to meet this goal.

The apparent about face in 1997 in Uganda has many possible explanations. Given that the announcement was made during a Presidential election year², perhaps we can concur with the view that "...redirecting education to serve the

² During the 2001 Presidential elections in Uganda nearly every candidate, including the successful incumbent, promised to meet the demand for post-primary education. Currently less than 15% of the eligible age group is enrolled in post-primary education. There is a popular expectation that Universal Secondary Education is not far off.

needs of a modern state is fundamentally a political process regardless of whether the strategy is adaptive, evolutionary, or revolutionary” (Nansozzi 2001,p.3). There is little doubt that the announcement served both to capture the popular vote and to endear the Government of Uganda to the international community (De Temmerman, 2001, p.3). The Ugandan reforms are indeed in-depth, and are having far-reaching consequences for the future of the country. Nonetheless, it has been argued that these reforms have not been points of departure after all, merely the playing out of vertical political links and the operational consequences of the NRM’s accession of power in 1986 (see Nsibambi, 1998, p.1). This is not to denigrate the UPE policy, or its outcomes, but merely to locate the policy within this wider context.

One way of understanding these acts is to consider changes from the perspective of the individual. The kernel of Chabal and Daloz’s analysis of the concept and role of the individual in sub-Saharan Africa is that:

individual rationality is essentially based on communal logic. What we mean is twofold. First, individuals act on the whole with a preponderant respect for the psychological, social and religious foundations of the local community from which they are issued. Second, and more generally, relations of power are predicated on the shared belief that the political is communal (1999, p.156).

This means that instead of individuals acting as free and intentional agents in politics and society more generally, we must see individuals in East Africa acting as ‘nodal points’ of larger communal networks. The concept of reciprocity is very important in this, and follows on from the communal nature of the individual, especially as it means that:

the logic of any action (whether political or not) lies in what it induces by way of expectations of reciprocity between the parties involved. Because of the conception of the individual on the continent, relations between people must also be seen as taking into account the community of which they are a part. This can only be done when there is a clear recognition of the nature of the exchanges involved. Relations, as it were, must be propitiated by reciprocity because they are not seen as distinct from the context within which they take place. Thus, political acts are played out on the market place of the various patrimonial networks concerned (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.157).

An interesting example of this is evident in the formal political arena throughout East Africa. It is generally acknowledged that ruling parties have been returned to power in part because they were perceived to be more able to deliver on expected patrimonial promises than their competitors (Kibwana et al, 1996). The ruling elites’ priority when in power then becomes the need to direct resources to the feeding of the patrimonial system rather than the long

and arduous investment in development. In Uganda, up to 1997, and in Kenya and Tanzania currently, we see this situation played out not simply in the lack of investment in education, but in the level of patronage given to particular sub-sectors or groups, leading to a grossly inefficient use of resources .

The defining features of patrimonial systems are vertical links within politics.

What is significant in Africa is the extent to which vertical and/or personalized relations actually drive the very logic of the political system. It is not just that politics are swayed by personal considerations or that the personal is manipulated for political reasons. It is also, and perhaps more importantly, that the overall aim of politics is to affect the nature of such personal relations (Chabal and Daloz, 1999, p.158).

The personalisation of politics in East Africa is played out in the presidential decrees and patrimonial networks within governmental structures. It is informative to consider how weak institutional structures of educational administrations allow these networks to grow and allow the political elite to both benefit and retain control.

Weak public administration and institutions

Although the state in Africa has deep roots, Bayart, Ellis and Hibou have shown the extent to which public administration and institutions in Africa remain weak “as a result of the rhixome-like nature of the state and of the organisation of public power in general” (1999, p.91):

Administrative procedures and legislative or institutional rules are only one channel among many which the public authorities use to manage the country’s affairs. Personal relations and personal networks, whether of an economic, political, religious or regional nature, frequently offer far more effective instruments of public management (ibid.).

The funding agency community consistently point to the existence of governance, institutional and other procedural and administrative shortcomings within government in East Africa. It is argued that these frustrate the development and implementation of effective education policies. Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999) highlight how the collapse in public administration in Africa has affected the development and implementation of government policies. In these circumstances poorly paid and poorly prepared East African civil servants frequently negotiate with funding agencies education policy reforms and projects extant of wider policy and strategic frameworks, agreeing to outputs and policies without reference to accurate

statistics on the education sector, and often committing their governments to performance targets beyond the capacity of the executing agencies. These same civil servants are often unable, and generally reluctant, to manage relationships upwards with their political masters. As a result a kind of “double whammy” effect is produced: agreements with funding agencies on unfeasible and impractical education reforms/projects (some of the Education Sector Improvement Programme (ESIP) targets in Uganda); the development of education policy statements which have little grounding in the reality of the sector’s capacity, needs or resource constraints (curriculum reforms in Uganda); projects and programmes which have very little overall strategic coherence (Community Polytechnics in Uganda).

While a lack of coherence and functionality of the administrative machinery frustrates donor agencies’ attempts to realise projects successfully, it may serve the purposes of those who can profit from disorder. Poorly functioning government machinery effectively insulates the political masters from constraining donor agreements and allows those in government to control the pace and direction of change. Weak administrations are those which can be controlled through the exercise of individual power and authority. They also provide an environment which allows for informal bureaucratic practices.

An aversion to the institutionalisation of bureaucratic practices

At a formal level, the governments of East Africa have structures and procedures governing the management of education. These are often strictly hierarchical and bureaucratic, with many interactions characteristic of rule-bound organisational behaviour. In much funding agency-government interaction, formal protocol is strictly observed. Indeed, form and symbol appear to be all-important. Reports and recommendations are formally received and noted, formal statements are made regarding commitments, and future intentions are inscribed in written exchanges. Beyond this, however, a different reality exists, one which presumably reflects the real working world for most civil servants. Our experience within the education sector reveals the following: an inability or unwillingness to institutionalise more formal and impersonal social relations; a reluctance to engage in meaningful planning and budgeting for the sector, even where there are commitments to that effect; and the subtle use of strategies to maintain the status quo, in spite of repeated expressions of commitment to reform.

In their analysis of African post-colonial culture, Chabal and Daloz (1999) stress three key points:

The first is that the African post-colonial cultural order....constitutes a distinct universe, the understanding of which helps to account for the events and processes with which we are here concerned. What we observe in Africa is not a resort to 'imagined' or frozen cultural customs, used purposefully to 'assert one's difference'. It is a spontaneous and rational recourse to a deeply rooted cultural environment. Second, this mindset is shared by all layers of the population and it would be deceptive as well as hypocritical to argue that it does not apply to the elites. ... Third, we would maintain that, given the current norms of political rationality throughout the world, this perennial preference for the infra-institutional is best understood from the standpoint of disorder (1999, p.132).

One conclusion of this is that what is occurring in East Africa represents the negation of the funding agencies' Western type of educational development model, and that only those aspects of change which meet 'local perception,' are accommodated and colonised. Chabal and Daloz continue:

As far as (political) actors are concerned, this type of behaviour may well turn out to be most eminently rational (ibid.).

Turning their analysis to education systems, they suggest it is possible for a country's education system to decline, for educational development to be insignificant, while at the same time for the members of a large number of (informal) networks to continue to benefit from the failures of the system. An East African example of this is the high rates of return obtained by elites from limited access to secondary and higher education, particularly in a context of globalisation. It may even be true that a country's educational failure is, in this respect at least, more 'profitable' for this group, than is 'development' and 'progress'.

From a western, funding agency perspective, this situation is hard to accept, especially when one considers the enormous weight of evidence and opinion supporting the positive role of education in development. The failure of governments to provide education for all, has long been questioned:

given the apparently strong private and social benefits that accrue from primary schooling, together with the significant range of positive externalities associated with its provision, why have the governments of developing countries been so tardy in ensuring its universal availability, and why has this circumstance been tolerated by their populations? After all, primary schooling was formally accepted as a human right almost 50 years ago (Colclough, 1993, p.47).

Colclough's answer to these questions is multi-faceted, but essentially he concludes that many governments have acted ineffectively or not at all to provide education to all the children and that demand for schooling, particularly for girls' schooling, has remained low, mainly because of poverty. We suggest that these failures extend beyond the issue of capacity or efficiency, or political will, and reflect a deeper understanding on the part of the stakeholders involved of local social and political dynamics. Our analysis suggests a rationality to retaining an informal and capricious institutional structure. As Psacharopoulos (1994) pointed out, there is a reason for policy decisions. Our analysis shows there are equally reasons for *avoiding* making policy decisions and retaining a level of disorder and informality. Disorder and the informalisation of government practice presents a space which can be manipulated by those with power to preserve networks of clients. Chabal and Daloz suggest that these structures are required in order for a sense of development. They suggest that:

in Africa, the measure of achievement has long been, and seemingly continues to be, found in the immediate display of material gain – that is, consumption rather than production. At a most fundamental level, then, the logic of the notion of success is antithetical to the economic 'mentality' underpinning development (1999, p.160).

The notion of this form of success is apparent in education mainly through the importance given to grand schemes, such as new universities and curriculum launches, rather than root and branch reforms of the sector or the priorities of basic education. We conclude that a key feature of the development and implementation of education policy in East Africa is the dominance of the short-term view, and the imperative of the micro- (as opposed to macro-) perspective. On the other hand, in drawing the lesson that the dominance of the short-term view has led to a lack of long term and substantive gains in education, we need to be aware of the risk of losing the insights gained from understanding the reasons for the domination of 'short-termism' and the dynamics which give rise to it. What we are suggesting is that reasons why it is worthwhile for politicians avoid setting up a properly regulated and managed education sector, and to avoid giving a guarantee of quality education for all, when there is so much to gain for so many from a continuous climate of disinvestments, disorder and uncertainty.

Partnerships for improved and sustainable change

Given the foregoing analysis regarding the policy environment in East Africa, should development agencies continue to support educational development in the region? And, if the answer is in the affirmative, what form should this take?

In order to answer this question it is important to consider two related questions: first, in this context: What is the aim of educational aid? Secondly, following on from the first question: What is the most appropriate choice of educational aid instrument?

Since the World Conference on Education For All (WCEFA) in Jomtien in 1990 there has been an international consensus regarding the aim of educational aid: basic education for all. As Samoff has pointed out, this is

clearly a desirable goal. Nearly everyone is for it. Governments, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations all regularly reiterate their support...Funding agencies provide significant resources, indeed have done so over many years, to assist in reaching that goal (2001, p.1).

The funding agencies supporting education in East Africa are all signatories to the Dakar Framework For Action of April 2000 which collectively commits the international community and country governments to the goals of Education For All (EFA). Given this commitment, the emphasis that Dakar gives to the role of country governments in leading efforts to achieve the EFA goals, the crucial importance of national educational policies and the knowledge that policy formulation is primarily driven by domestic political economy, the most appropriate choice of educational aid instrument should be one that allows the maximum amount of predictable aid flows to education and strengthens and promotes leadership by the country government.

We should also recognise that in Africa:

- countries that have truly severe economic and political crises tend to move to the extremes, either developing coherent reform movements or declining rapidly;
- successful reformers have consultative processes that build consensus for change;
- large amounts of aid to countries with bad policy environments has the effect of sustaining those poor policies, and encourages the delay of reform;

- aid can play a significant role in promoting and sustaining reform; and
- in general, donors have not discriminated effectively among different countries and different phases of reform process. Donors tend to provide the same package of assistance everywhere and at all times (Devarajan, Dollar and Holmgren, 2001, pp.5-6).

Foster (2001) has recently summarised the characteristics of main aid forms in terms of conditionality (policy measures that the partner government agrees to implement as a condition of the aid), earmarking (limitations placed on what the aid must be spent on) and accountability (how the funds will be disbursed, accounted for and audited) and these are incorporated in the table below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Main Aid Forms

Aid Form	Conditionality	Earmarking	Accountability
Structural Adjustment	Macro – donors consider government going in the right direction and judge they achieve more leverage through conditionality than earmarking	None	None
General Budget Support	As above	None	Government systems
Sector Budget Support	Encourages more serious planning and budgeting at sector level	To sector	Government systems
Sector Earmarked	Earmarking to additional spending on priority areas linked to performance indicators	Within sector	Government systems
Government Projects	Earmarking to projects or specific spending within a sector	To projects within sector	Government systems
Donor Project	Government commitments to the project	Total and usually off Government budget	Donor systems

Using this matrix, we consider that it is probably appropriate to use sector level policy conditions to support policy and institutional change within two of our countries' education sectors, Tanzania and Uganda. However, this level of conditionality will only be appropriate if other macro level or cross-cutting issues which are critical to the success of reforms at sector level are being addressed. A key cross-cutting issue concerns the allocation of financial resources to the sector. In the case of Tanzania and Uganda, donor flows represent a significant share of public funding for education (see Devarajan, Dollar and Holmgren, 2001) and the major donors providing the bulk of such funding are able to reach agreement with the governments on the policies, plans and expenditure programmes to be implemented within the sector. It is possible, therefore, that by effectively using sectoral level conditionality, some measure of policy and institutional change may be achieved in Tanzania and Uganda. This is not to say, however, that donors should use their financial leverage to impose policy changes for which there is little domestic support.

Finally, our assessment of the possible success of using various forms of conditionality, is that it can be most effective in creating movement and development. Indeed, we would argue it creates a more balanced partnership between government and funding agency. The big test will come when in these new days of budget support, DFID has yet to test its will to 'turn off the tap'.

Lessons learned or guides to action

Samoff has pointed out that "simplifying findings ('lessons learned') in order to generalize may lead to stating the obvious rather than developing useful guides to action (2001, p.16).

Our concern in this final section of our paper is to suggest understandings drawn from our experiences which can guide funding agencies faced with the problems we have identified. In particular, as practitioners engaged in education policy dialogue in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, what should we be aware of? What's changing?

We suggest that the first thing to be aware of, as Chabal and Daloz have pointed out, is how vital it is

to avoid falling prey either to the optimistic economic prognosis currently mooted by the World Bank or to an admittedly more common gloom of 'Afro-pessimism'. The future of

the continent may be equivocal but it does not appear to lie in the lessening of informalization. On the contrary, we are likely to witness an increase in informal practices, both domestically and internationally (1999, p.138).

An increase in informalisation demands that funding agencies give greater consideration to the implications of the politics of patronage in East Africa, as these dynamics often shape the gap observed between policy statement and implementation.

Apart from authoritarianism, a vital, non-coercive form of consolidating power has been to rely on patronage. To secure political incumbency, public benefits have been distributed and opportunities to profit provided along political lines. Thus in their quest for self-preservation, state elites have dispensed government-controlled resources – jobs, licenses, contracts, credit – to select political allies as well as mediating access to economic opportunities in favour of close associates so as to enhance their hold over state power (Tangri, 1999, p.10).

The needs of the patronage network frequently take precedence over development priorities in the Education Sector. From the perspective of those working with development agencies, the key issue is to understand that the processes politicians in East Africa use to engage the population in discussions about the education system may operate at two levels. While there may be talk of educational development and reform, the reality of the exercise of power does not give much evidence of a commitment to the sort of structural and infrastructural reforms that, development agencies would argue, make educational development possible.

This leads to a situation where very different perceptions and agenda are held concerning the role of donors and host governments. Indeed, one can assert that the rationality of the donors differs sometimes quite markedly from the rationality of their partners. One can cite frequent attacks on donors by President Moi, for example, who accused them of meddling in the internal affairs of Kenya. But it is important to stress that these perceptions are not simply related to the provision of aid, but also to how funding agencies perceive their role too. Whilst the likes of President Moi overtly acknowledge the political nature of our work, funding agencies themselves tend not to acknowledge this.

The existence of both overt and covert political agendas lessens the impact of the technical development discourse in which funding agencies frequently engage. The language of SWAs and Project Management frameworks is that of technical rationality. Logframes assume an objective reality. In many senses

they are 'seductive', inferring causality, prediction and hence control of a social dynamic.

Our experience further suggests that for many ministry officials (and politicians too), there is an inordinate faith in proclamation, especially when this is in written form. There is a strange assumption that once a directive or plan or strategy is on paper, and has been affirmed by an authority, action will 'automatically' follow. It doesn't. "Programmes work through their subjects' liabilities" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.36), by people co-operating and choosing to make them work.

Given these different dynamics, how can funding agencies best support the achievement of sustainable educational development? We suggest that the new modalities of aid, namely budget and sector support, can create opportunities for joint working in which policy, strategy and implementation can be addressed holistically. The experience in Uganda, in particular, indicates that political commitment to a poverty agenda, combined with an increasingly open dialogue between partners creates an environment in which shared targets are less likely to be derailed during implementation. We consider that more work is needed on the part of funding agencies to develop their thinking in these areas. In particular, the following questions need to be addressed:

What form of conditionality would best suit strengthening government accountability? (and accountability to whom?)

How realistic is it to expect governments to fully implement conditions when it is well known that donors are under pressure to give?

Recognising that technical discourse is limited, how might stakeholders in education assess whether a country government is serious about achieving the IDTs?

What do we know about good governance that could be applied in the context described in this paper?

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