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Meeting the Learning Needs of all Young People and Adults: an Exploration of Successful Policies and Strategies in Non-formal Education

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Meeting the Learning Needs of all Young People and Adults: an Exploration of Successful Policies and Strategies in Non-formal Education

Paper prepared for the 2008 Global Monitoring Report

by

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Executive Summary

This paper explores the development of policies and strategies related to non-formal education (NFE) for young people and adults in the South. While its starting point is the state-of-practice as regards Goal 3 of the Dakar Framework for Action, it takes a broader view of NFE development after 2000 that addresses the attention to Goal 3 in relation to Goals 2 and 4. After discussing general trends in the international debates on NFE, it focuses specifically on the evolution of policies and strategies for action in five selected countries: Brazil, Namibia, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Thailand. Conclusions are drawn regarding promising developments and lessons to be learned.

The paper notes that, whereas countries already had policy visions with a more holistic and integrative perspectives on basic and continuing education, progress has been most significant in the elaboration of suitable strategies for policy implementation. Much effort has been made to better understand the nature of NFE in relation to learning needs of different groups, and to develop modalities for addressing its critical dimensions. Innovations particularly concern policy coordination, inter-sectoral linkages, collaborative governance, decentralisation, instructor development and support, and mobilisation of funding and programme sustainability.

NFE has, however, remained relatively small, poorly funded, and poorly monitored. The linkages with the formal system are often not effective. Countries that have a more conducive national policy frameworks for human resource development, and have started working within a frame of lifelong learning tend to be more successful in diversifying access to quality basic education and using NFE as alternative but equitable pathways to continue education and training. It is argued that out-of-school adolescents in the 10-15 age-group remain the most under-served group.

Introduction

To-date the third goal of the Education for All (EFA) agenda has remained the most elusive of the six goals agreed upon by all nations in Dakar in 2000. While the other five were each associated with specific definitions and targets for 2015, this was not the case for the third goal. Yet, the drafters of the Dakar Framework of Action considered this goal of looking after the learning interests of all young people and

adults important enough to stand on its own. In the aftermath of Dakar several Global Monitoring Reports referred to this goal, noting that it presented ‘major conceptual and methodological challenges’, which could not yet be resolved (for example UNESCO, 2002). The 2007 Report noted that ‘there is no common understanding of types of structured learning activities that come under the umbrella of learning and life-skills programmes’ (UNESCO, 2006). Not surprisingly, Goal 3 tends to be regarded by governments as the least important goal of EFA (Bitoun *et al*, 2006).

In the context of this paper on ‘successful policies and strategies’ it seems imperative that ‘deconstruction’ of Goal 3 takes place. Concrete guidelines need to emerge to enable countries to move forward on this Goal more quickly, and to monitor and assess outcomes and impact. Without this progress it remains problematic to infer what are really ‘successful’ policies and strategies in this domain.

This paper will start with a reference to the conceptual framework for EFA Goal 3, thereby explicitly placing this goal within the EFA (Dakar) context – especially in relation to Goals 2 and 4. This provides a basis for the next section to discuss general trends with regards to policy and strategy developments in the domain of non-formal education and training for young people and adults.

In turn these general trends in thinking and policy action will provide a context to zoom in on developments since 2000 in five very diverse countries. These are: Brazil, Burkina Faso, Namibia, Uganda and Thailand. Each of these countries has made progress in their own way towards EFA and has attempted to work with Goal 3. The focus will be on their visions of NFE in basic education and policy frameworks; their strategies for implementation and for overcoming obstacles; and the role of various stakeholders in these processes. A comparative analysis of their experiences, however rudimentary – given the brevity of this paper – can help to illuminate the current state of NFE development and the lessons to be learned its further promotion.

Conceptual issues and options

EFA Goal 3 reads: “*Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes*”. This goal appears to have been a re-formulation of an earlier goal as formulated in Jomtien (Goal 5 of the Jomtien World Declaration (UNESCO, 1990): “*Expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural changes and impacts on health, employment and productivity*”.

The Jomtien World Declaration made general reference to the learning needs for youth and adults: “*The basic learning needs of youth and adults are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems*”. In the elaboration this article refers to *literacy programmes* and ‘*other needs to be served by skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal education programmes in health, nutrition, population, agricultural techniques, the environment, science, technology, family life, including fertility awareness, and other societal issues*’ (UNESCO, 1990: article 5; see also Fordham, 1992).

Compared to the Jomtien statements the Dakar goal appears somewhat nebulous: it does not clarify the ‘*learning needs*’, nor does it address the notion of ‘*equitable*’ or what is considered ‘*appropriate*’ or who is the arbiter of this. Most likely these issues were left to be defined at country level. The closest is probably the following elaboration, related to young people: On Goal 3 (Dakar Framework for Action, par 36): “*All young people should be given the opportunity for ongoing education. For those who drop out of school or complete school without acquiring the literacy, numeracy and life skills they need, there must be a range of options for continuing their learning. Such opportunities should be both meaningful and relevant to their environment and needs, help them to become active agents in shaping their future and develop useful work-related skills*” (UNESCO, 2000).

An on adults, in relation to Goal 4: “*Adult and continuing education must be greatly expanded and diversified, and integrated into the mainstream of national education and poverty reduction strategies. The vital role literacy plays in lifelong learning, sustainable livelihoods, good health, active citizenship and the improved quality of life for individuals, communities and societies must be more widely recognised*” (Ibidem).

The significance of these Dakar statements is that they actually suggested that the ‘*learning needs*’ of both young people and adults are not just about ‘*basic competencies*’. Rather than limiting the needs to those associated with basic life skills, social participation and livelihood competencies, they widen the perspective considerably in terms of learning needs in general as well as in terms of their being addressed within an extended context of education opportunities, which moreover should be equitable and ongoing. The key words seem to be: ‘*ongoing education*’, ‘*relevant and meaningful*’, ‘*range of options for continuing [...] learning*’, and ‘*literacy [...] in lifelong learning*’ (Ibidem).

The above suggests that there are at least two options for the interpretation of Goal 3: one is a *more restrictive interpretation*: of learning needs in relation to basic, transversal skills, knowledges and competencies, mainly related to basic literacy and numeracy, and personal and socially-oriented needs for effective functioning in society. The other one is a *more expanded interpretation*: focussing on a broader conception of learning that is ‘*life-wide*’ and ‘*life-long*’. This exhorts countries to develop educational provisions that meet people’s needs and circumstances, and that also provide the foundation for continued learning within a national framework.

Clearly, the implementation of each option, along with benchmarks and indicators for monitoring progress, would be rather different. While the first would look for life skills, livelihood and other social competency related programmes, both free standing and as part of basic formal education or non-formal/literacy programmes, the second would also look for how one builds on these themes and what role they play in a wider framework of lifelong learning opportunities for young people and adults, including formal and non-formal pathways and programmes, as well as the bridges in-between.

This means that, in effect, Goal 3 is very closely related to Goal 4, as the combination of basic and continuing learning opportunities applies equally to both categories of learners, the main difference being the more general nature of Goal 3, as well as its

explicit reference to both young people and adults. In practice countries often already look at the two goals together, especially where they have been working towards full integration of 'functional' literacy or basic learning into mainstream programmes, regarding these as starting point for a lifelong learning education system.

At the same time Goal 3 also has a close relationship with Goal 2, as it addresses all those young people who in the shorter or longer term cannot be accommodated in conventional primary schooling, but for whom NFE, as remedial or complementary forms of basic education, can be made available in an equitable manner.

The above observations point to the problem that the EFA goals seem to be formulated from a perspective of 'programme supply', i.e. of major provisions already in place for specific age-groups and thus easy to monitor, more than that of 'beneficiary demand', i.e. of learning interests from different population groups. EFA Goals 3 seems not to satisfy either criterion. As a result many people's learning needs do not seem to be taken into account, such as of out-of-school young people in the adolescent years (see also the final section).

Recent international thinking about visions, policies and strategies in NFE

Looking at international policy debates on NFE in relation to developing countries, in the years since Dakar there have been some significant developments. Together these have produced a more articulated body of knowledge around NFE, enabling countries in principle to develop their own visions and approaches while drawing on international experiences. The focus here will be on non-formal education and training for young people and adults at the levels of basic and continued learning.

As significant developments the following can be presented:

- (a) A *more explicit interest* in NFE as complementary forms of education.
- (b) A *greater recognition of the diversity* of NFE in terms of types of programmes, purposes and beneficiary groups.
- (c) *Increase in information* available about programmes, their nature and outcomes.
- (d) More attention to NFE's *socio-economic and cultural context*, its principles and its purposes.
- (e) More attention to the *systemic issues* related to the place and roles of NFE within the context of education systems as a whole.
- (f) Greater recognition of the value and relevance of a *lifelong learning framework*.

Increased interest in NFE

There is a stronger recognition among many governments and international technical and funding agencies that EFA through conventional formal primary schooling for large numbers of children and adolescents will remain elusive for a long time to come. This is coupled with a parallel recognition that national development will be severely impeded without bringing out-of-school youth and adults into the process by way of meaningful non-formal programmes that either build on previous years of schooling or provide basic learning as a substitute.

Both together appear to have heightened the concern that a more visible and robust complementarity between types of formal and non-formal education needs to be

pursued, so as to reach all people. The case for NFE as part of a broader national human resources strategy was made again - and more forcefully so (cf. Manzoor, 1989; Oxenham *et al*, 2002; Easton *et al*, 2003). There have also been other reasons for this greater interest, including the importance attached to adult literacy as stimulance for more effective involvement of parents in the learning of their children – the notion of ‘family literacy’.

Greater recognition of diversity in NFE forms

Renewed interest in NFE has also led to fresh attempts to investigate the myriad appearances of NFE. Hence, a major gain is a greater awareness among stakeholders about distinct types of NFE and their different potential in relation to needs and circumstances of identifiable beneficiary groups. There has not only been more effort to examine the different perspectives and expectations among adolescents, youth and adults with various degrees of schooling behind them. Increased interest has also prompted closer examination of different conditions of disadvantage – such as broken families, the impact of HIV/AIDS, household income poverty, gender discrimination, rural marginalisation, unemployment, displacement resulting from conflict, etc., and what this could mean for the designing of NFE initiatives (Rogers, 2004; WGNFE, 2005; Hoppers, 2005; UNESCO, 2005).

To a varying extent this work enters policy formulation in terms of public recognition and support for selected programmes (Hoppers, 2006). It is also apparent, however, that the motivation for such support is more frequently associated with expected impact on economic productivity than on equity and social emancipation (Jones, 1997; Morales-Gómez, 1999; Abadzi, 2004). Donor preferences also play a major role as to what types of NFE receives funding. Programmatically a greater orientation towards social demand is leading to more judicious combinations of learning areas so as to improve effectiveness – for example in relation to the place of literacy in relation to other forms of training (Oxenham *et al*, 2002 and 2004; Duke and Hinzen, 2006).

Increase of information about programmes

The quality and effectiveness of NFE above is increasingly related to the information that can be made available concerning processes and outcomes of individual programmes. Progress has been made in capturing outcomes of major NFE programmes, especially in adult literacy – leading to a review of World Bank involvement in adult education (Carr-Hill, 2001; Oxenham *et al*, 2002; Lauglo, 2002; Lind, 2002; Easton *et al*, 2003). But there is still little insight regarding the actual benefits of acquiring these basic skills and competencies (Lauglo, 2002: 38; Abadzi, 2004). It is still too often assumed that basic learning has an automatic impact on poverty and the prospects of people’s lives, including reduction of inequality and marginality (cf. Torres, 2001). There is currently much doubt as to whether this is the case in the absence of other enabling factors being in place (Norrage News, 2006).

Little systematic assessment has been carried out of NFE alternatives for out-of-school adolescents and youth, as regards outcomes and impact as well as in terms of relative value of pedagogical processes. The fact that much monitoring and evaluative work is controlled by the sponsoring agencies is not always helpful in securing feedback that is relevant enough for policy and planning (Hoppers, 2005; Pieck, 2006). Often there is little regard for unintended but valuable outcomes. In this context renewed collective efforts of countries and agencies in the area of research,

dialogue and development are significant – such as those by UNESCO/APPEAL in South-East Asia, ADEA/WGNFE in Africa, and ILO/Cinterfor in Latin America.

More attention to socio-economic and cultural context

Though it does appear that international sensitivity to the needs, circumstances, and the life world of beneficiary groups in NFE has much increased, this has also come with its problems. The nature of such sensitivity and the responses to which it leads seem closely associated with the background and ideological orientation of authors and organisations, and the interests to which the results are meant to speak. Here one can set the pragmatist starting points for writing about ‘Adult Basic Education’ (ABE) by persons associated with the World Bank against the more transformative expectations of writers associated with progressive civil society groups (Lauglo, 2002; Abadzi, 2004; Easton *et al*, 2003; Graciani, 1992; Puntasen, 1992; UNESCO/APPEAL, 2000; Lind, 2002; Torres, 2003;).

Whereas Bank-related authors tend to take a more minimalist and re-active approach to the nature and purpose of ABE – focussing on practical skills, relevant for coping with changing environments, with an emphasis on livelihood, health, nutrition, civic education and the like -, those associated with a more progressive agenda prefer to take a maximalist and pro-active stand – focussing on people learning to critique society and to be ready for collective action aimed at changing their life situation and move their communities out of poverty. Both parties talk about ‘empowerment’, but with different connotations. Whereas one side acknowledges basic learning is essentially about improving the lives that people are already living, the other aims directly at social and economic transformation (Lauglo, 2002; Torres, 2003).

Such contrasting perspectives to NFE raise questions about what are the ultimate purposes of non-formal (and other forms of) education, what conception of human development do they represent and what values do they promote? The nature and extent of ‘functionality’ of NFE can clearly not be taken for granted, but needs to be defined within the context of a national vision regarding education and development.

More attention to systemic issues

More awareness has emerged regarding systemic dimensions of NFE, i.e. how its many forms relate to formal education provisions, what roles it plays within the wider totality of education and training opportunities, what forms of public and/or private governance are desirable, and what types of support it can or should expect from the state and other stakeholders. Thus far much attention has particularly gone to issues regarding equivalency, the idea of public-private partnerships, the mobilisation of supplementary financial resources, and the development of systems of transferable credits.

Equivalence of learning outcomes has come to be regarded as of special importance for younger learners who have missed out on formal education opportunities. These may still wish to utilise NFE (and forms of open and distance learning) as alternative pathways to continued formal education and training, either in- or out-of-school. It has found strong support on grounds of ethics (right-to education for all children and adolescents) and equity (Tomasevski, 2003; Rogers, 2004; Hoppers, 2006).

The implications of equivalency are far-reaching. They include the requirements that any ‘appropriate’ mix of knowledge, skills and competencies – for example literacy, life skills and livelihood training – should be packaged within a wider curriculum comprising all relevant core curricular subjects, and that there should be agreed on and effective bridges offering transfer possibilities to other forms of education and training (Duke and Hinzen, 2006; Hoppers, 2006). However, there is still a trend of regarding such programmes as non-equivalent ‘remedial work’ only, so as to help maximise what people have already learned at school. In practice, this has been a major function of literacy programmes (Jones, 1997; Carr-Hill, 2001; Abadzi, 2004).

Greater recognition of lifelong learning framework

In many ways the awareness of the systemic dimensions has reached further when seen within a wider context of ‘lifelong (and life-wide) learning’. This has particular relevance in the South where the concept has come to cover all types and forms of education, including non-formal basic education (Aitchison, 2003). The coherence and integration provided by such framework is now seen as vital for the achievement of Goals 3 and 4 of EFA. Equal access to basic and continuing education, including training for life skills, can only be extended to all if there is a “*system of lifelong learning [...] integrating general education and vocational training and re-training, social and cultural learning needs. It calls for more, and more systematic, ways to continue after literacy classes for youth and adults, for entry points from out of school classes into the formal set-up, and thus a systematic approach to value and credit learning outcomes from the diversity of non-formal education and skills training*” (Duke and Hinzen, 2006:138).

The flexibility of non-formal learning, together with an overarching frame for crediting learning outcomes would enable adult learning to move away from the ‘schooling model’ thus “*freeing the participants to learn what they want, when they want, where they want and for as long as they want*” (Rogers, 2004:11). In actual fact, the lifelong learning frame provides the *formal* context within which both formal and non-formal education can address their particular clienteles with content and pedagogical styles that are appropriate to those learners (Duke and Hinzen, 2006; Hoppers, 2006).

The country case studies

This section will address how NFE is reflected in the visions and policies on education and development of the selected countries, and what strategies along with core partnerships have been devised to realise these goals.

The types of NFE that will be the focus of this review are:

- (a) Literacy and numeracy programmes (officially as from the age of 15; but often with younger participants)
- (b) Equivalency, ‘second chance’ or alternative schooling (from about age of 10) – often referred to as ‘complementary education’
- (c) Life skills and community development skills training – focussing on improving personal and social skills and competencies

- (d) Income generation, non-formal vocational training and rural development programmes (usual as from age 15, but often with younger participants) – often referred to as ‘livelihood skills’ programmes.

In substantive terms the country reviews will address the following aspects:

- ❖ *The formulation of an integrated vision on basic education, and the role given to non-formal education.*
- ❖ *Visions on meeting learning needs of all young people and adults.*
- ❖ *Orientation of actual policy frameworks, including intentions regarding NFE development.*
- ❖ *Policy strategies envisaged for meeting learning needs of young people and adults through NFE in a sustainable manner, and approaches to tackling obstacles.*
- ❖ *Efforts to monitor policy implementation and achievement of policy goals, and to define indicators for success.*
- ❖ *Roles and responsibilities attributed to different stakeholder groups.*

This brief review will concentrate on significant developments since 2000; these will be illuminated within the wider context of the country’s development.

(1) BRAZIL

Visions and policy frames

In 2000 Brazil faced the situation that well over one half of the population over 15 years old, or one third of the total population, had not completed primary education. This included a total of 22 m. young people between 15 and 24, of which 3 m. had not attended school at all. The figures hide major disparities between regions, as well as between ethnic and racial groups.

Under President Lula, since 2003, the visions and policies in education underwent a major shift. Whereas before 2003 primary education for children and adolescents had been seen as the major strategy for preventing illiteracy, with youth and adult education relegated to a secondary position, the new education vision - reflecting a broad national drive towards social inclusion - regards adult literacy as a political priority for the state. Recognising education as a human right for all, literacy has become an essential step towards guaranteeing the right of citizenship and towards mobilising young people as well as adults for participation in basic and continuing education. Special efforts are to be made to make education respond to the diversity of population groups and their socio-cultural realities (Henriques and Ireland, 2006).

Against this vision Brazil developed an integrated education for youth and adults, the Youth and Adult Education YAE/EJA), as a form of specific schooling geared to the population 14 years and over, all implemented through decentralised structures. This form is allowed greater flexibility as to work load, curriculum, forms of evaluation, and use of distance learning methodologies (Ribeiro and Batista, 2005). It has an agenda for basic and continuing education for youth and adults that extrapolated from formal schooling and constructed pathways for youth and adults within a frame of ‘continuing, lifelong education’ (Henriques and Ireland, 2006).

Strategies for implementation

The agenda includes two national government-funded programmes: a new six-months national literacy campaign, the 'Literate Brazil' programme, and the 'Making School' programme. In the context of the decentralisation policy, the government has made agreements with states and municipal bodies, NGOs and other public and private organisations for the implementation of these programmes. The programmes are subsidised and all participants are registered nationally.

For the literacy programme, organisations design programmes within a national frame, with special attention to needs of groups like fishermen, indigenous peoples, young people without literacy, etc. Though the state maintains a benchmark of 4 years primary education for functional literacy there is a strong interest to raise this to 8 years as guaranteed in the constitution. This is recognition that short exposures to literacy training has to be followed by continuing education (Ribeiro and Batista, 2005). The programme had 1.9 m. trainees by 2004. Next to this large numbers continued to enrol in literacy programmes run by NGOs and CBOs, such as Freire's Literacy Movement (32.000 learners in 2004 (Ribeiro and Batista, 2005).

The 'Making School' (*Fazendo Escola*) programme provides opportunities for continuing education up to 8th grade. It concerns school-based primary courses for both young people and adults, which are supporting through hiring extra teachers, in-service training and ingredients for school meals. Under a recent (2005) policy of Universalised Differentiated Support the state now guarantees financial support to all youth and adult learners (3.3 m) enrolled at the primary level of YAE/EJA in municipal and state schools. Actual level of support is related to a new 'educational fragility index' of states and municipalities (Henriques and Ireland, 2006: 15). Also here the ministry sets guidelines for the programme, such as curriculum, with adaptations for local conditions and special needs, and monitoring of outcomes. A national assessment system for both programmes is being developed.

By 2006 the primary school equivalent enrolments in the YAE stood at 3.3 million learners, mostly in state and municipal schools. By this time total coverage has reached over 10 m. learners, implying that coverage of the out-of-school population is well underway (Ibidem). Many youth of over 15 are also enrolled in regular schools.

The sustainability is to be enhanced through collaboration at local level (guided by the Youth and Adult Education Forums at state level), the usage of existing facilities, and the establishment of an integrated Basic Education Development Fund (FUNDEB) for all basic education, replacing the Primary Education Fund from which YAE/EJA was previously excluded (Henriques and Ireland, 2006). The fund is the main national channel for state funding for fundamental educational development, as well as for the improvement of the teaching profession. For the latter purpose a special Teacher Education Institute (ISE) has been established (World Bank, Education Notes, 2003).

From an equity perspective the current debate regarding criteria to fix funding norms per student across different forms of education is significant. A core issue in the stakeholder consultations is whether costed norms can be set for learners in an equitable manner, i.e. corresponding to the real funding needs of each type in each level of education (Ribeiro and Batista, 2005: 19).

At the level of youth Brazil has developed a set of wide-ranging youth learning and development programmes that cut across formal, non-formal and informal education, offered through a variety of federal ministries. These include both social and economic development initiatives. They reflect a new National Policy on Youth, coordinated by a National Secretariat in the President's Office (Brasil, 2006). It is not clear to what extent the curriculum for primary education under YAE/EJA has been adapted.

It is now the policy of the Ministry of Education to professionalise the teaching of youth and adults, partly by developing a specific identity for teaching-learning processes for this segment of the population, and partly by enhancing training requirements for teachers (all literacy teachers now have to be secondary school leavers and volunteers) and the quality of adult teacher training in universities. In the latter NGO partners are involved and new distance programmes are developed for teacher development using *e-learning*. In this way one hopes to reach the large numbers of teachers that have been newly recruited in the YAE/EJA programmes.

Roles of stakeholders and challenges

The approach followed in Brazil is a 'collaborative' model. As implementation of the programmes is decentralised effective interaction with states, municipalities and civil society and private sector bodies is essential. This concerns ongoing dialogue as regards the policies, frameworks for implementation, and funding norms. Links with other ministries at federal and state level, and with public bodies, are now accepted as essential to secure an inter-sectoral approach to poverty reduction, linking education strategies to, for example, those related to transfer grants for vulnerable parts of the population and to ensure relations with the world of work.

The state, through a national Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD), established in 2004, maintains a strong supervisory, regulatory, funding and monitoring role. In the context of the national policy of combating exclusion and inequality, SECAD has, for example, begun to coordinate literacy and adult education activities with programmes of rural education, environmental education, indigenous people education and ethno-racial diversity (Ribeiro and Batista, 2005).

The major challenges, however, remain the mobilisation of sufficient funding to extend the youth and adult education programmes to all those eligible, and the linking of education with other social programmes and those seeking to generate income and employment. In addition there remains the question how a national support infrastructure can promote the 'plurality of methodology' in education and protect the rich diversity of NFE and of the civil society organisations that are involved in this work.

(2) NAMIBIA

Visions and policy frames

In Namibia, a national vision on an integrated approach to basic education has been evolving since independence in 1990. It has culminated in the Vision 2030 statement, which in a bid to move towards Namibia becoming a knowledge economy

calls for rapid economic growth to be accompanied by equitable social development (Namibia, 2006: 7).

The evolution has benefited from considerable reflection, stimulated through international interactions, in particular CONFINTEA 1997 and Dakar 2000. This resulted in a National Plan of Action for Adult Learning in 1998, the recognition of Namibia as a 'Learning Nation' by the 1999 Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training, and the endorsement of the contribution of adult learning to national development in the Second Plan (2001-05) (Namibia, 2002). Following this a National Policy on Adult Learning could be launched in 2003 (Ibidem).

In Namibia NFE equivalent education is part of the 'formal system', defined as all learning that which leads to certification (Ibidem: 5). Within this frame progress is made to elaborate a lifelong learning perspective, by constructing parallel tracks: one through the regular school system, the other through the national literacy programme (NPLN) followed by the Adult Upper Primary Education Programme (AUPE), leading into further academic education by distance (NAMCOL) or non-formal skills training and employment preparation programmes (Namibia, DABE, 2003). Thus much of 'NFE' for youth and adults consists of 'formal education to be attained through non-formal (i.e. non-conventional) channels, such as literacy and distance learning.

Strategies for implementation

The NLP has a basic literacy stage, followed by a functional literacy one – with attention to agriculture, health, small business development, etc. -, and a literacy-in-English stage. Together they are regarded as equivalent to 4 years of primary schooling (Indabawa *et al*, 2000). The NLP enrolls a total of about 25.000 learners per year across the three stage, of which 70% were women (Namibia, 2006: 62). AUPE provides a Grade 7 equivalent qualification of upper primary education with adult content and methods, catering for a total of about 6.000 per year (Namibia, DABE, 2003). NAMCOL provides courses at both junior and senior secondary level, and attracts some 25-30.000 learners per year to these programmes (Namibia, 2006: 62).

In recent years the literacy programme has diversified to include Adult Skills Development for Self-Employment, Community Learning and Development Centres, and Family Literacy. There is also a separate programme of Community-Based Skills and Development Centres for youth and adults focussing on training and employment.

Complementarity between the formal line and the 'non-formal/adult' line is assured through equivalency in certification within the context of a National Qualifications Scheme. Thus learners can cross from one to the other. The aim is to ensure that every young person and adult can reach a Grade 7 equivalent of education, including the acquisition of a range of basic skills.

While both the second stage of the NPLN and the AUPE curriculum already contain content themes that are closely related to the life situation and the socio-economic environment of the learners, efforts have been made to introduce a range of general skills in the formal school curriculum, such as life skills, HIV/AIDS prevention, health education, human rights and democracy, environmental education, ICTs and entrepreneurship development (Namibia, 2004). Thus, it appears that the learning

needs of all those who attend some form of education will be catered for in an appropriate manner, i.e. in relation to their life situation. Other youth may benefit from programmes offered by other sector ministries (such as Labour or Youth Development) – though these are implemented separately and are at present not informed by any common framework.

Current bottlenecks reportedly concern the low rate of transition from the NLPN into AUPE, and from the latter into the NAMCOL programme. While the former is mainly a problem of adults having insufficient access to continuing education, the latter is more a problem of adolescents for whom access to NAMCOL is very restricted. Instead, NAMCOL appears to serve as a conduit for those who fail Grade 10 but wish to enter formal vocational training programmes¹. Thus, for many young people NFE provisions at different levels may still function as an involuntary exit route out of the system. This apparent problem of vertical articulation in NFE could be an obstacle in a context where skills development is a key strategy for national development.

In the context of the first operational cycle of ETSIP - a programme for national investment based on a 15-year strategic plan - all education and training is to receive a major boost. Within this frame the ‘policy, legal and institutional frameworks to support equitable access to high quality and responsive adult learning’ will also be strengthened. This has produced a strategic objective of expanding ‘equitable access to quality information and lifelong learning programmes’ (Namibia, 2006: 10-12).

It has been established that in view of the high current literacy rate (83%) there is a need to change curricula and to widen the adult learning programme while maintaining its orientation towards poverty alleviation. Closer synergies with the formal system are sought, and workplace literacy and entrepreneurship skills will get special attention. The self-employment programme is to be extended (Idem: 63-5).

Roles of stakeholders and challenges

The resources for NFE are provided through many organisations, including other government ministries, para-statal and private sectors, NGOs and CBOs, and international agencies. Thus, Namibia opted for a role of the state, whereby it simultaneously executes its own programmes, enables other organisations to deliver learning programmes and catalyses experiment and innovation (Oxenham, 2004).

A significant strategy has been the expansion of Community Learning and Development Centres across most regions, which serve as venues for information access and a wide variety of non-formal or informal learning activities involving different ministries. These centres are regarded as models for ‘local learning centres’, which are now established in government buildings, company and church facilities, and education institutions around the country. This, together with efforts to develop new funding modalities, is meant to ensure greater sustainability.

An umbrella body, the Adult Education Council, provided for by the 2003 Policy, along with an Adult Learning Promotion Fund, has not yet materialised due to legal obstacles. This, and the development of national policy on lifelong learning, are now priorities under ETSIP. Policy review is meant to address closer integration of all

¹ Personal communication, National Director for Adult Education, February 2007

components of education and economic development at local, regional and national levels (Namibia, 2006).

(3) BURKINA FASO

Visions and policy frames

The Burkinabe constitution (1991) recognises education as a fundamental right for each citizen. At the same time Burkina is one of the world's least developed countries. Its economy has a low level of competitiveness and generates only limited employment and revenues. Within this context education, with an emphasis on basic education for all, is regarded as a key to poverty alleviation and the country's development.

Given the small size of the formal education system, absorbing only a third of the primary school-age population (with an intake ratio standing at 56.8% in 2004), there have been great expectations of the role that NFE could play (Balima, 2006). The vision was developed in the late 1980s, and received an impulse with the creation of a single ministry for all basic education and literacy (MEBA) in 1988.

MEBA has maintained an integrated vision of basic education, in which the formal and non-formal sub-systems were brought together as complementary components. Together they would give each citizen a minimum level of education in accordance with the needs and potentialities of the country. This should provide a basis for continuing education aimed at improving the conditions of life and existence, and for ensuring individual and collective advancement. It has been acknowledged that the two systems should interact with one another, and eventually coalesce within a common framework for applying what has been learned from education and literacy (Koudougou Seminar Report, 1999 in Balima, 2006).

The Education Outline Act of 1996 had defined NFE as involving “*all activities of education and training, structured and organised within a non-academic framework. It concerns every person who desires to receive special training in a non-academic context*” (Loi d'Orientation, 1996:19/20). While this legal anchoring of NFE appears to have protected and promoted NFE development in a manner that enabled innovative approaches to curriculum and pedagogy to be pursued, it may also have made closer cooperation between the two ‘sub-systems’ and a more equitable treatment of non-formal alternatives to basic education and training by government more difficult.

In practice formal and non-formal education and training have evolved as different sub-systems, with different philosophies and support mechanisms, and with only minor efforts to construct bridges. There appears not to have been much debate about a lifelong learning framework, as in conditions of resource constraints the emphasis has firmly remained on basic education (effectively up to Grade 4 equivalent). In terms of continuing education technical and vocational skills development still appears to be regarded as the most suitable form (Badini, 1997)²

² This is also based on personal information from MEBA and APENF staff in Ouagadougou, Feb. 2007

Strategies for implementation

In non-formal education and training, basically three strategies have been pursued: (1) an integrated, functional literacy programme, supported by the creation of Permanent Literacy and Training Centres (CPAF); (2) non-formal basic education for non- or partially-schooled adolescents (9-15 years) through various programmes like CEBNF and community schools; and (3) skills training programmes (*'formation professionel'*) through various public or private centres, for those having completed primary education (Balima, 2006). The latter provisions have a relationship with the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Youth, while informal sector apprenticeship training, which also takes in many lowly schooled youth, is associated with yet another ministry.

The non-formal basic education programmes all last for 4 years, divided into two initial years of instruction in the national languages, followed by instruction in French for another two years. Other innovations, like the TIN-TUA's Centres 'banmanuara' (CBNs) and the Bi-lingual Schools, have a bilingual approach as from year one and prepare learners for the Primary Leaving Examination (CEP). The latter are actually part of the formal system and receive full funding from the state (also the CBNs are now in the process of being recognised as 'formal').

The total enrolment capacity of non-formal basic education provisions, however, has remained very small in relation to demand, and the field has continued to be highly fragmented, without effective bridges between the programmes. It was estimated that in 2004 the NFE provisions enrolled approx. 5000 learners in about 100 schools, while the formal sector innovations (such as bi-lingual schools and satellite schools) enrolled about 30.000 additional learners, all out of a total potential target group of an estimated 1.5 m out-of-school youth in the 9-15 age-group (enrolment in the formal system was about 1.1 m) (MAE/Danida, 2005).

The focus of NFE programmes for adolescents, youth and adults has been very strongly on knowledge and skills considered relevant for daily life, on environmental concerns, awareness of rights and responsibilities, participation in community development, and livelihood skills (WGNFE, 2005; Balima, 2006). It does not appear, however, that such learning areas have been introduced in the formal education curriculum. On the other hand, MEBA has adopted the bilingual approach as a key strategy for the further improvement of the formal school system.

Roles of stakeholders and challenges

The state, the donor community and civil society have become the main stakeholders in NFE provision and development. Resource provision has been increasing under the ten-year plan (PDDEB, 2000-2009) and the target for government contribution has risen from 1% to 7% of the education budget. However, the partners have not yet been able to address the extreme fragmentation of NFE, or the improvement of linkages with formal education.

The problem of coordination among different state ministries dealing with education and training has not yet been tackled successfully (cf. Burkina Faso, MEBA, 2000). Much more advanced in Burkina, however, is the coordination among NGOs and civil society organisations involved in NFE. They have their own association (the APENF),

which has established a positive working relation with MEBA, and has become a model for the sub-region.

Significant new strategies have been the introduction and promotion of public-private partnerships (*'faire-faire'* strategy - 1999) in the governance and management of NFE, and the consequent establishment of a common Fund aimed at mobilising more and diverse resourcing of NFE (FONAENF - 2002). The strategy aims at collecting and managing financial contributions from different sources, encouraging government and partners to increase their support, building capacity in NFE implementation, and adopting new forms of financing for NFE favouring disadvantaged groups. The FONAENF enjoys financial and managerial autonomy and is said to be free from political or moral pressure (Diagne and Sall, 2006; Tiendrebeogo and Batabe, 2006).

The two strategies together have led to an increase in funding commitments, though sustainability, especially in terms of lower donor dependency, remains a serious problem. Also, programmes other than literacy (i.e. those for non-formal basic education) are only now beginning to benefit from support (Balima, 2006). The lack of sufficient resources has seriously affected NFE expansion and quality improvement, to the extent that several programmes, including CPAF and CEBNF are in jeopardy, and that the national system for monitoring and evaluation cannot function effectively (Balima, 2006). As a result, in spite of increased inputs into NFE, there is still insufficient clarity as to actual outcomes in terms of 'successful' graduation and impact on people's lives.

(4) UGANDA

Visions and policy frames

The beginnings of the current policy regime in Uganda lie with the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) of 1987. Its findings and recommendations were later reflected in a government White Paper of 1992, which has served as a basis for promulgating policy ever since. Subsequent policies and plans for basic education have included the Primary Education Reform Programme (PERP – 1993), the Uganda Children's Statute (1996), the launch of UPE in 1997, the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP, 1998 – 2003), and the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP, 2004 – 2015).

The broader vision comes from the Constitution (1995), which recognises education as a fundamental right, irrespective of age, gender or other dimensions. It imposed an obligation on government to provide free and compulsory basic education to all its citizens. Moreover, it stipulated that the state should take appropriate measures to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest level of education standard possible (Constitution, Art. 30, in Byamugisha, 2006: 19). Broader national policies have been spelled out in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP, 2003) and the Vision 2025.

The main government thrust in basic education appears to have been in the area of primary education, so much so that the term basic education has become synonymous with primary schooling. The latter has also been seen as the main impetus for the eradication of illiteracy (Okuni, 2003). This was reflected in legislation to make primary schooling compulsory for the relevant age-group (0-17) (under the Uganda

Children's Statute), and the launch of UPE. The latter move was greatly facilitated through government capitation grants to households, at first for four children per family, later extended to all.

UPE was specifically to benefit all children of 6-13. In the context of equitable access to quality basic education special interventions were considered necessary for the benefit of children who were socially excluded, as caused by disability, geographical location, culture, ethnicity, language, and conflict (Eilor, 2005). NFE initiatives were considered to have special relevance where UPE could not yet be achieved for social, economic and environmental reasons – such as in the case of over-age children, children in pastoral areas and in fishing villages. Here NGOs were to make a special contribution by targeting 'drop-outs' and adults (Uganda, MOES, 2004). NFE is clearly seen as a range of compensatory programmes aimed at providing 'complementary basic education' (CBE).

Adult education and training has never been a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, but comes under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Community Development. This ministry runs a national functional adult literacy programme (FAL, initiated 1996), now governed by a National Adult Literacy Strategic Investment Plan.

Strategies for implementation

The MOES has collaborated with national and international organisations to develop NFE programmes for young school leavers and non-schooled adolescents, mainly in the 10-15 age group. The major programmes are: Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education Programme (COPE), Basic Education for the Urban Poor Areas (BEUPA), Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), and Child Centred Alternative Non-formal Community-based Education (CHANCE).

The NFE programmes tend to be focused on the needs and circumstances of disadvantaged learners in the area. They provide a condensed and adapted curriculum in selected core subjects, using locally recruited teachers in facilities that reflect local conditions. Life skills, health-related and livelihood skills complement the core curriculum, in varying degrees of collaboration with the community. Each programme follows its own philosophy and is responsible for providing management and pedagogical support, with some or more involvement of the local education office (Chelimo, 2006).

However, it has also been pointed out that the national education system, whether through formal or non-formal approaches, has to a large extent not responded to the learning needs, aspirations and challenges of children in conflict affected and post-conflict areas (Webley, 2006: 12). With donor support some initiatives, related to livelihood training, are now being implemented in Northern Uganda.

There does not appear to be an overall conceptual and strategic frame that guides NFE providers in tuning their programmes and provides a basis for quality control and assessment of outcomes beyond immediate learning achievements. This pre-empts insights as regards the actual socio-economic value of such programmes for the learners or for their communities (Okuni, 2003; Hoppers, 2005).

A study conducted in 2002 in the context of working out a policy framework for education for disadvantaged children, had proposed to incorporate CBE programmes as an essential component of the national UPE strategy, since without such alternative programmes it would be impossible to ensure primary education for all by 2015 (Klees *et al.*, 2002). By that time CBE should enrol 11% of all primary school age children. The study estimated that in 2001 1 to 1.5 m children in the 6-12 age group were excluded from school, a target for whose achievement major resource increases were considered essential (Ibidem).

Actual enrolments in CBE in 2004 were put at just over 70,000 learners (over half of these being girls) nation-wide in a total of 657 centres. By that time MOES had increased its support to providing capitation grants, grants for school facilities and instructional materials, the recruitment and payment of instructors, and the development of training modules for instructors (Byamugisha, 2006: 41). However, while some mainstreaming of CBE has taken place in terms of financing, this appears much less the case in policy and programmatic terms (Okuni, 2003). Also the planned integration of all NFE, including the FAL, in one ministry has not materialised.

The functional literacy programme (FAL) has been hailed as a successful programme (Carr-Hill, 2001). Based on needs assessment surveys in the early 1990s it grew from a pilot into a national programme (1995). Its evaluation in 1999 showed that FAL was a relatively effective programme that compared well with Action Aid's REFLECT. A major finding was that many learners already had some years of schooling behind them and that the programme was used by many school dropouts as a form of continuing or remedial education. Outcomes in terms of changing practice and improving life situation were low, and it was concluded that participation in FAL was insufficient to lift people out of poverty (Ibidem).

Role of stakeholders and challenges

A major stumbling block towards a more integrated approach to basic education and progress towards a lifelong learning framework is the split of basic education across two ministries (Okech, 2005:7). The dispersed responsibilities probably hinders progress towards a coherent national system of adult and lifelong learning, and a streamlining of participation of young people and adults into NFE programmes appropriate to their circumstances and learning interests (Okuni, 2003).

The low position occupied by adult education in the organisational structure of the MGLCD does not help the visibility, prioritising and monitoring of adult learning. The integration of policy formulation, resource allocation and implementation is seen as essential in order to achieve the Dakar goals 3 and 4 (Ibidem). Importance is also attached to the need to define formal and non-formal education better in legal terms (Byamugisha, 2006). Finally it is considered imperative to strengthen the coordination of the large number of small, autonomous NGO-run adult education initiatives across the country, for the purposes of improving programmes and their cost-effectiveness. In this regard much preliminary work has been done by LABE (Okech, 2005).

(5) THAILAND

Thailand has a long tradition of attaching great importance to NFE as an essential part of its education and training system. In its most recent incarnation NFE has become

part of a national drive to improve the country's human resource base in a bid to reduce its vulnerability to shocks and excesses resulting from globalisation and to improve international and regional competitiveness (Thailand-ONFEC, 2006a). NFE plays a major role in increasing access and in extending the minimum required years of schooling for all from 6 to 9 years, under the Buddhist concept of *Khit-pen*, “*the ideal of a person who is a critical, rational and a problem solver*” (Ibidem: 12).

The key vision as expressed in the latest development plan: “*The Thai society should be a knowledge-based and learning society. Learning opportunities should be created for all Thai people, designed to promote logical and critical thinking and lifelong learning, so that people will be able to cope with changing conditions. Science and technology should be strengthened, so that Thai society can benefit from local innovation, creativity, and the accumulation of intellectual capital, in order to increase international competitiveness and to appropriately supplement Thai local wisdom and national traditions, culture and religion*”. (Suwanpitak, 2005: 25).

In the 1980s and 90s the term ‘NFE’ came to replace that of ‘adult education’ and applied to “*any learning activity outside formal school classrooms that assists the out-of-school populations to acquire knowledge, skills and information essential for the improvement of the quality of everyday life*”. The concept moved from ‘compensatory education’ to the exploring of NFE and informal education as ‘complements to formal education’ within the overall holistic and integrated framework of lifelong learning. Specific distinctions are now made between different out-of-school population groups, including: those never attended school, those who completed but wish to continue, those in disadvantaged conditions to access any form of education or training, and people of special groups such as Thai living abroad and street children (Thailand-ONFEC, 2006a: 24).

The integration of different forms of learning within a context of lifelong learning is reflected in the new National Education Act of 1997. The Act only recognises two levels of education: basic education (including secondary and vocational) and higher education. Basic education (BE), formal or non-formal, is compulsory for 9 years, while all individuals should have equal rights and opportunities to receive BE on state expense for 12 years. The same Act also provides for the flexibility and appropriateness of organisation and curriculum of NFE, and the transferability of credits across types of education (Thailand-ONEC, 1999).

Thailand produced a separate National EFA Plan of Action, to run parallel to the National Plan of Education (2002-16). The EFA goals have been translated into specific goals for the country, whereby Goals 3 and 4 have been collapsed into one composite goal focussing on adult literacy, and on basic and continuing education for all adults. Specific goals include the promotion of a community learning process and lifelong learning developed in all its forms, and the development of a learning network to enable lifelong and extensive learning for all. The operational goals (period 2002-06) include increasing the average level of education for those 15 year and older to no less than 9 years (Thailand-MOE, 2002; Suwanpitak, 2005).

Strategies for implementation

Significant is that NFE is not exclusively seen as an alternative option for the disadvantaged only, but applies to all people who are not in a position to attend formal

schooling (such as prison inmates, street children and Thai living abroad). Moreover, it has now expanded from literacy and primary education to an extensive network of provisions reaching to secondary education, vocational training, life skills through distance learning, workplace and community learning centres, and the joint sharing of resources with the formal school system (Thailand-MOE, n.d.).

NFE is now divided into five main programmes: literacy promotion (i.e. the national literacy campaign), continuing education (equivalency programmes of general and vocational education for further studies or work), education for life skills development (including livelihood skills), vocational development (for those in the same occupation) and vocational skills training (short-courses for individuals) (Suwanpitak, 2005).

Equivalency programmes work within a national NFE curriculum frame for basic education, which incorporates basic core subjects, life experiences and a practical component of 'quality of life improvement'. In functional literacy the curriculum has a national, regional and local part. Skills related programmes are planned and implemented in collaboration with other sector ministries (Thailand-ONFEC, 2006a).

A major strategy is to implement NFE activities at decentralised levels through District NFE Centres and Community Learning Centres. The latter include public libraries and have been established in most sub-districts around the country, especially also in the remote rural areas. The management and coordination of activities in the centres is largely in the hands of the communities themselves. This includes the identification of learning demand, and the facilitation of access to courses or other learning activities, thus enhancing local control and sustainability. Regional centres provided specialised support in various fields, such as curriculum development (within a common national guiding framework) and materials design (Idem).

The main strategy for out-of-school youth and adults appears to be a combination of continuing to expand access to equivalency opportunities for academic and vocational training, and reaching the remaining disadvantaged with programmes targeted at specific groups, in the areas of life skills, health promotion and HIV/AIDS prevention, vocational skills development, entrepreneurship training, protection of children and women against abuse and violence, promoting family security; and in general, improving learning resources available through learning centres, the media and the internet (Thailand-MOE, 2002).

While Thailand is making much headway in tending to the learning needs of young people, there are major challenges left. For 1996 it was calculated that some 4.2 m. young persons (3-17) were out of-school (i.e. 25.7% of the total age-group). Out of these 18% were enrolled in forms of NFE and 33% were working. Of the remaining 2 m. about half were estimated to constitute the real disadvantaged groups, such as prostitutes, homeless, disabled and children of labourers (Piromruen and Keoyote, 2001: 29-30). Overall gross enrolment for primary education was 104% in 2005 (Thailand-MOE, n.d.).

Many disadvantaged have already been reached through tailor-made 'non-regular' classes for specific groups, through both formal and non-formal education (such as the Hill Tribes) (Ibidem). The ministry has also been pleased with the progress as

regards the development of ‘learning communities’ at local level and the expansion of equivalency opportunities in the context of lifelong learning, and the significance in this regard of ‘recognition of prior learning’ (Chaisang, 2005). However, there may still be major concerns about the 1.6 m young people under 16 years of age (1993 figure) who were in some form of ‘less visible employment’, especially those between 12 and 14 years – even though their numbers were already diminishing during the 1990s (Tzannatos, 1998).

Current NFE efforts are also guided by an MOE issued ‘Strategic Plan for Nonformal and Informal Education Reforms towards Lifelong Learning 2006-2008, or the ‘Non-formal Education Roadmap’ (Thailand-ONFEC, 2006b). This document sets out a frame for action, so as to enable the ministry, with its partners, to implement two specific goals by 2008: (1) to encourage at least 50% of the working-aged population to enter into the secondary education level, and (2) to obtain an average of 9.5 years of education. The frame provides for actions along many fronts, including how to approach the learners, the development of a data-base of learners, the establishment of materials and tests banks, the development of an integrated curriculum frame, the development of a system for ‘learning coupons’, personnel training, measurement and evaluation systems, credit accumulation and transfers, and quality assurance (Ibidem).

The role of stakeholders

Until 2003 the main driving force behind NFE development was the Department of NFE in the ministry of education. In the new administrative structure this Department became the Office of the Non-formal Education Commission, under the Office of the Permanent Secretary (Suwantipak, 2005). The ONFEC works in a decentralised manner through Regional NFE Centres, Provincial Centres and community learning centres, as well as a variety of special institutions.

ONFEC also works with many other ministries, civil society and private sector organisations, and with some international agencies. Quality assurance work is done both internally and externally; the latter through the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment. Since NFE only receives 1.3% of the education budget, supplementary funding from other sources, including from community contributions has remained essential (Thailand-ONFEC, 2006a).

A comparative analysis of country cases

This section offers a set of findings and tentative conclusions regarding actual policy practices in countries of the South in relation to NFE for young people and adults. We shall also examine to what extent policy development at country level appears to reflect international trends as discussed earlier in this paper.

- ❖ There is evidence of growing interest at country level to pursue a more holistic and integrated perspective on basic education addressing the needs of the entire population. However, in concrete terms policy actions related to system’s development seem to focus more on achieving integration within NFE as a ‘sub-system’ (intended for all those who are not-in school) than integration between formal and non-formal education.

- ❖ Where countries have adopted a ‘lifelong learning’ approach, this appears to assist greatly in constructing equivalencies and bridges across the two ‘sub-systems’ as part of the general effort to improve *life-wide access* to learning opportunities and *life-long continuation* of learning (i.e. enhance both *horizontal* and *vertical* articulation). This tendency is stronger in more developed countries of the South (e.g. Namibia) than in less developed countries (e.g. Burkina).
- ❖ The recognition, systemic embedding, and active collaborative support to forms of NFE also appears to benefit much from broad political acceptance of diversity in education as part of a national policy of social inclusion. In addition, such developments seem strongly connected with the degree of public endorsement of long-standing cultural traditions in popular education and their legitimate place in the modern world (e.g. Brazil, Thailand). The difficulties in overcoming systemic fragmentation and moving towards innovation in many African countries seem less related to traditions than to peculiar socio-political histories.
- ❖ In terms of significant innovations in policies and strategies associated with NFE development post-Dakar, it is evident that these tend not to lie in the nature of the policies themselves (most countries proclaimed basic education policies after Jomtien), but rather in the strategies developed to give guidance to and address problems of policy implementation.
- ❖ Valuable innovations in NFE are particularly found with regard to: policy coordination (the role of multi-stakeholder councils or platforms for consultation – Brazil, Namibia, Burkina), inter-sectoral coordination (programme coordination and linkages with macro-economic policies – Brazil, Namibia, Uganda, Thailand), collaborative governance (Brazil, Namibia, Thailand), decentralisation policies (local governments and public-private partnerships - Brazil, Burkina, Uganda, Thailand), instructor development and professional support services (Brazil, Uganda, Thailand) and mobilisation of funding and programme sustainability (including criteria for funding norms for different types of education, and roles of communities - Brazil, Namibia, Burkina, Thailand).
- ❖ At the same time it is also clear that major challenges remain in these very same aspects of NFE development: such as:
 - How to get such national councils established and to function in an effective and democratic manner?
 - How to coordinate civil society and private sector organisations in manners that combine responsiveness with equity?
 - How to supervise and strengthen local government structures, and ensure compliance with national policy goals and priorities?
 - How to ensure appropriate staff recruitment, training and development while acknowledging the need for an integrated teaching service?
 - How to increase public funding for NFE in an equitable yet sustainable manner?
- ❖ There is a noticeable conviction that the state has a major role to play in NFE development, not only in terms of policy making, coordination and monitoring;

programme implementation, promoting partnerships and catalysing experiment and innovation. It appears that where this role has been more pronounced and recognised as a central component of national policy, the education ministry is more successful in moving towards an integrated yet diversified system serving all population groups. Of crucial importance appears to be its role in setting and promoting principles, norms and standards across the system.

- ❖ There are clear tendencies to promote integrated functional approaches to adult learning, whereby basic literacy and numeracy are combined with other types of skills (life skills, health-related competencies, livelihood skills, entrepreneurship development and the like), and whereby basic and post-literacy are also combined within the same programmes, to be followed by continuing education opportunities. Yet, elsewhere there are also significant new initiatives to run literacy campaigns (Venezuela, South Africa).
- ❖ While there is evidence that the need for life skills development as a core set of competencies for all is accepted in all countries, little appears to have been done to develop national frameworks to guide their inclusion in all forms of learning for children, youth and adults. In practice it seems more common for separate programmes to exist, run by different government ministries and civil society organisations for different population groups. There are many variations in the manner by which life skills are combined with other skills (notably health and livelihood skills) in specific NFE programmes.
- ❖ The absence of common frameworks for the development, implementation and monitoring of life skills and other essential economic and social skills required by young people and adults across entire age-groups at country level makes it extremely difficult to monitor progress in relation to EFA Goal 3 (i.e. in its more restricted interpretation), other than considering indicators of programmes being in place, and types of population groups being targeted.
- ❖ There is evidence, however, that many countries seem more interested in considering life and other essential skills as part of a general basic education equivalent that is promoted for all population groups. Each of the five countries surveyed has set policy principles regarding the benchmark to be reached (4 years in Burkina, 7 years in Namibia and Uganda; 8 years in Brazil, and 9 years in Thailand. It would appear that a common strategy is to improve appropriateness of curricula within this frame, and use these as reference points for NFE equivalents – to the extent these are recognised.
- ❖ Within the context of NFE development countries are still struggling with the issue of how best to accommodate the needs and interests of young people with those of adults. Out-of-school youth tend to make ample use of any education option that keeps them learning, even those that have not been designed for them, such as adult literacy programmes. Yet, governments are keen to ‘streamline’ education participation in those NFE programmes they control. As a result there are often problems with ‘throughput’ as ladders and bridges in practice do not function and vertical articulation is highly problematic (Namibia, Burkina, Uganda).

- ❖ A major problem, exacerbating the above, is the very small volume of NFE opportunities in relation to demand, designed to cater for the needs of adolescent young men and women. In the countries reviewed here complementary basic education (CBE) programmes for the 9-15 years old tend to be very limited, and in several cases cover only a fraction of the total age-group out of school. Thus quality opportunities for appropriate remedial or continuing education, serving as pathways from basic education to further specialised forms of education or training, are not available to significant numbers of this age-group – though both Brazil and Thailand show how quick progress can be made if policies and resources are in place.
- ❖ Monitoring and assessment of NFE processes and outcomes is still highly problematic. Even where systems are in place scarcity of resources often hinder its effective usage as a basis for policy and planning. The absence of national strategic frameworks for addressing specific policy issues in NFE and basic education at large also pre-empts meaning formative evaluation of policy goals as the criteria and indicators have not been sufficiently developed.
- ❖ Our conclusion as regards country policy practices in relation to international reflections on NFE is that there are still major gaps between what country aim or profess to be doing on the one hand, and the actual realities on the ground on the other hand. It appears rather difficult for countries to apply principles of diversity and equity, with a view of reaching entire age-groups, on the shop floor of actual policy processes. Perhaps greater recognition and more information are necessary but not yet sufficient conditions for EFA compliance, and that these need to be complemented by enabling environments of a socio-political and cultural nature to become successful.

Main lessons for policies and strategies, and ways forward

From the discussion in this paper and the nature of its findings and conclusions, several key issues regarding policies and strategies for NFE can be identified. They are subdivided in those relating to policies themselves, those relating to strategies for implementation, and some relating to enabling factors that allow countries to make more rapid progress in reaching the Dakar goals.

Issues of policies

A major issue is to what extent policies articulate the diversity of learning and of valid forms of education and training. It can be argued that the range of organised learning outside the ‘formal’ school system is too wide to be identified by a single term. Policy-making could be greatly enhanced by moving beyond the formal – non-formal divide to recognise a plurality of education forms, that can serve different clienteles in different (formal or less formal) manners but all serving under a common and integrated education framework. The Namibian definition ‘formal’ being characterised by what leads to certification is helpful in that it creates much space for recognition and public support of multiple learning pathways, within a coherent life-long and life-wide framework.

Issues of strategies

Recognition and support, coupled with effective quality control and monitoring, allow selected forms of education to be extended and upgraded in accordance with demands, within the bounds of affordability and sustainability. Common frameworks for basic and continuing education also allow for guidelines to be agreed upon regarding essential skills for children, youth and adults, which – as in Thailand – can inform curriculum development at local level serving specific clienteles. This would have to include a policy regarding languages and exposure to the nation's cultures.

Further strategic frames can be helpful in regard of shared governance, division of roles between stakeholders, and the extent of decentralisation; in regard of a differentiated, but unified teaching service and strategies for educator development and support; and in regard of out-sourcing of educational services and conditions under which supplementary funds are obtained, managed and accounted for. A major challenge is to define the nature and extent of the state's involvement in different forms of education, what criteria are applicable for coordination of non-state providers, and how available resources can be shared equitably across the system.

Issues regarding enabling factors

There is a growing literature dealing with the socio-economic and political conditions within which the expansion of education and training and the reaping of its benefits by individuals and communities can take place. It increasingly appears that the former is the motor of the latter, rather than the other way around.

More than this, the further development of NFE or the diversity of non-conventional forms of learning in relation to diverging needs, and of its links with a changing regular system of school, demands much intellectual and strategic reflection within the countries, bringing the best of talent together in joint dialogues. It also demands much space, cognitively and organisationally, for national stakeholders to explore and (re-)value both the national wealth in learning traditions and modern international practices, and agree what is appropriate in accordance with people's demands and national goals.

The international partners are there to inform and to guide, and to stimulate national debate rather than pre-empt this with international blueprints and prescriptions. In this regard much can still be done to facilitate national reflections on NFE and other types of education experience, with a view of translating overall policy perspectives into strategies that are in line with countries' interests, traditions and resources. Very delicate in this regard is the consideration of trade-offs between expanding the system horizontally (through NFE and other parallel forms of education and training) and expanding it vertically (the expansion of formal secondary education and TVET).

In this context also the EFA Goals do not have to be sacrosanct. One of the findings of this study is that significant opportunities for remedial and continuing education, catering for the needs and interests of out-of-school adolescents - in many countries the overall majority of the age-group - is not available to significant numbers of this group. Indeed it can be argued that not only do the EFA Goals reflect a bias of the major formats of education delivery, but also that as a consequence adolescents have become the single most neglected category of learners.

A case can be made that, for the age-group that has become too old to enter primary education (as from age 9 or 10) and is still too young to be much interested in standard adult education (those of 18 and younger – in line with the provisions of the Convention for the Rights of the Child), the EFA Goal 3 can safely be re-formulated to address the very complex life situations and diverse learning needs of this underserved population group.

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