WHY EDUCATIONAL REFORMS FAIL: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract − The paper reviews a number of educational policy statements of East African countries ranging from combining education with production at the primary level, to the financing of higher education. An assessment is made of how successful the policies have been in achieving their original intention. The paper's conclusion is that policy outcomes are far from matching expectations, mainly because of insufficient or no implementation. The reason most educational policies are not implemented is that they are vaguely stated and the financing implications are not always worked out. Another reason for failure is that the content of a policy is based on an empirically unsustained theoretical relationship between instruments and outcomes. The paper makes a plea for the formulation of more concrete, feasible and implementable policies based on documented cause-effect relationships.

Zusammenfassung − In dem Artikel werden eine Reihe von erziehungspolitischen Aussagen ostafrikanischer Länder untersucht. Sie reichen von der Verbindung der Erziehung mit der Produktion auf der Grundstufe bis hin zur Finanzierung der Hochschulausbildung. Es wird eine Bestandsaufnahme gemacht hinsichtlich des Erfolgs, der den erziehungspolitischen Programmen beim Erreichen ihrer ursprünglichen Ziele beschieden war, wobei man zu dem Schluß kommt, daß die Resultate der Programme hauptsächlich dadurch, daß diese nicht oder nur unzureichend durchgeführt wurden, weit davon entfernt sind, die Erwartungen zu erfüllen. Der Grund dafür, daß die meisten erziehungspolitischen Programme nicht durchgeführt werden, liegt darin, daß sie nur vage umrissen und die finanziellen Auswirkungen nicht immer ausgearbeitet sind. Ein weiterer Grund für ihr Fehlschlagen liegt darin, daß der Inhalt eines Programms auf einer empirisch unhaltbaren theoretischen Beziehung zwischen Mitteln und Resultaten basiert. In dem Artikel wird daher für die Formulierung konkreterer, geeigneterer und durchführbarerer Programme plädiert, die auf bereits belegten Beziehungen von Ursache und Wirkung beruhen.

Résumé − Le présent article examine quelques déclarations de pays de l'Afrique orientale relatives à la politique éducative, allant d'un système combiné d'éducation et de travail productif dans l'enseignement primaire, au financement de l'enseignement supérieur. Une analyse est effectuée pour savoir combien ces politiques ont réussi à mettre en oeuvre leur objectif premier. Cet article conclut que les résultats de ces politiques sont loin de répondre aux exigences, en raison essentiellement d'une mise en oeuvre insuffisante, voire nulle. La raison pour laquelle la plupart des politiques éducatives ne sont pas appliquées est due au fait qu'elles sont vaguement formulées et les implications financières rarement élaborées. La seconde raison de cet échec est que le contenu d'une politique se fonde sur une relation théorique entre instruments et résultats qui n'a pas

été vérifiée empiriquement. Cet article plaide en faveur de politiques concrètes, réalisables et applicables fondées sur un rapport de cause à effet bien documenté.

'Educational policy' is perhaps the contemporary equivalent of what twenty years ago was known as 'educational planning'. Whatever it is, and no matter how many other disguises it takes (such as 'educational reform'), practically every country in the world has at one time or another proclaimed an intention or made a decision that would affect some aspect of schooling in society. It is in this wider sense that the term educational policy is used in this essay.

Of course educational policy is proclaimed, or a school reform enacted, not for its own sake but in order to serve a particular purpose. The purpose can 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'.

What has been the record of educational policy making in developing countries? Were intended reforms implemented in the first place, and if they were, did they have their expected effect? If not, why not? This paper attempts to give an answer to such complex questions by concentrating on one world region – Africa – and on a handful of typical attempted reforms that span the full educational ladder.

The Policies

Educational policy statements are found in a variety of official documents such as:

- Political statements or manifestos, e.g., Nyerere's most famous 'Education for Self Reliance', 'The Workers' Party of Ethiopia Programme', or Swaziland's 'Imbokodvo National Manifesto'.
- Reports of special commissions, e.g., Zambia's 'Lockwood Report', or Ethiopia's 1972 'Education Sector Review'.
- The country's educational plan, often embedded in the country's Development Plan, e.g., 'Education', in Botswana's *National Development Plan 1979-85* (pp. 99-132), or Uganda's *Ten Year Development Plan 1981-1990*.
- Ministry of Education Acts, Orders or Circulars, e.g., Lesotho's 'National University Act, 1975'.
- Reports of international agencies, e.g., Unesco's 1961 *Outline of a Plan for African Educational Development* (better known as the 'Addis Ababa Conference').

Policy statements in the above documents typically refer to the following:

- Primary Education: Increasing coverage, improving teaching quality, combining education with production, teaching in local languages.
- Secondary Education: Increasing coverage, diversifying the curriculum, improving links with employment.
- Vocational Education: Meeting manpower requirements, providing the skills needed by a modernizing economy.
- Higher Education: Indigenizing the higher civil service, meeting high level manpower needs.
- Overall: Promoting cultural needs, serving political ideology, education financing and system regulation.

Let us follow the above taxonomy and document for a number of countries the exact formulation of policies, as stated in the official documents and, where possible, the outcome of such policies.

Primary Education Policies

Increased Coverage

Such a policy intention is encountered in practically every country in the region, from independence to date. For example, one resolution of the Addis Ababa Conference was that 'All African States should aim at achieving universal primary education within a maximum of 20 years' (Unesco 1961b: 10). In Swaziland, 'The ultimate goal is to achieve universal free primary education for every child' (Imbokodvo National Movement 1972). In Lesotho, 'Every ... Mosotho child should complete a seven-year primary course' (Lesotho Education Sector Survey Report 1982, para. 5.1).

Yet although it provided the site of the home of the Addis Ababa conference which proposed a 71 per cent participation rate in primary education by 1971, Ethiopia had only achieved 18 per cent by 1974 (Kiros 1986: 81). An attempt in Ethiopia to set less ambitious targets for the expansion of primary education – Minimum Formation Education, a result of the 1972 Education Sector Review – which could last as little as one year and be terminal for most students was rejected, mainly by the teachers; according to some, it contributed to the 1974 revolution (Kiros 1986: 87). A major Literacy Campaign was launched in 1979 to eradicate illiteracy in Ethiopia by 1987. Today, the illiteracy rate in Ethiopia is of the order of 45 per cent (Unesco 1985).

In Zambia, the 1962 United National Independence Party's (UNIP) 'Educational Manfifesto' promised compulsory primary education up to the age of 15. Although considerable progress was made over the next two decades in terms of increased coverage, the 1985 UNIP 'Policies for the Decade 1985-95'

re-emphasized compulsory, but not free, education to grade 9 (i.e., to the end of junior secondary) (Achola 1986: 8 and 15).

In Uganda, the situation today is one of 'increasing illiteracy' (Odeat 1986). And in Lesotho, '... although access to primary education is open to all, UPE has not been achieved' (Thelejani 1986: 22).

Rapid population growth is often blamed for the non-implementation of UPE in African countries. In Zambia, for example, when UPE was espoused in the early sixties the population growth rate was of the order of 2 per cent. By 1985 it stood at 3.4 per cent.

> If ... the Zambian government insists on its goal of universal basic education (grades 1-9) for all, 1.74 million additional school places would have to be added to the current 1.3 million by the year 2000 .... This is clearly a daunting task given that education will have to compete with other social services for increasingly dwindling national revenues. (Achola 1986: 44)

Quality Improvement
Of course beyond coverage, many African states set the goal of improving the quality of education children receive. Emphasis has been on teacher training, the construction of schools and the student-teacher ratio. For example, in Zambia's first development plan (1966-70) the improvement of primary education was to be by means of expanding teacher training (Achola 1986: 18).

The 1963 Report of the Uganda Education Commission (para. 27) stated that 'The task ... is not just to provide more primary schools but to provide better primary education'. Yet in Uganda today there is a high dropout rate at almost every level of the educational system (Odaet 1986). Furthermore, 'Training Colleges should be filled to capacity' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, para. 142). 'Teachers' salaries must not be allowed to fall below the general level of salaries ... to arrest the drift into other occupations' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 549). 'The raising of the teaching quality of Training Colleges is a high priority' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, para. 143-144).

In Swaziland, the second development plan (1972-78) set the objective 'to raise the quality of education by reducing the high incidence of drop-out and repeaters' (cited by Magagula 1986: 17). One way to do this was to reduce the student-teacher ratio from 45:1 to 36:1 within the planning period. This indeed happened, although none of the expected effects followed:

> Despite the reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio ... instead of the normal 7 years to produce a primary school graduate, it took 12.6 years in 1981 ... The number of repeaters went up over the plan period ... by nearly 50 per cent .... There was no improvement in the overall pass rate SPCE during the plan period (Swaziland Primary Certificate Examination). (Magagula 1986: 48)

In Lesotho, 'in spite of ... programs ... geared to produce large numbers of teachers ... there is a chronic shortage of teachers ... worse in the sciences. The latest is the brain drain in South Africa where salaries are very high' (Thelejani 1986: 26). '... The push out rate is high. Only 14 per cent of primary school graduates enter secondary education.' Also, '... there is an apparent decline in the quality of education, like bad examination results (Thelejani 1986: 22).

After several years of emphasizing the improvement of the quality of education in Ethiopia, it is recognized that '... it has not been easy to raise the quality of education in a significant manner ...' (*The Workers' Party of Ethiopia: Programme 1979*: 96).

In Botswana, '... the quality of primary education has fallen short of people's expectations ...' (Botswana 1980: 99). 'In 1979 ... 36 per cent of [primary school] classes were without a classroom of their own' (Botswana 1984: 126).

In Tanzania '... there is a big shortage of teachers ... By April 1982, primary schools in the country had a shortage of 34.94 per cent of the required number of teachers' (Tanzania 1984: 12).

Combining Education with Production
The impetus for such policy change came from the striving for 'relevance' in education. The Plan for African Educational Development (Unesco 1961b: 21) clearly stated 'that the following measures be adopted for absorbing the surplus of unskilled manpower: (a) That primary education be given a practical bias.'[2] But in Tanzania, pursuant with 'Education for Self-Reliance', the Third Five Year Development Plan states that 'Work is to be more integrated with theoretical subjects' (Tanzania 1980: 24).

In Zimbabwe the Government also adopted the philosophy of education with production '... to make school experiences meaningful and worthwhile in terms of real life activities outside the school campus' (Mutumbuka, Education Minister, 1984, as cited by Maravanyika 1986: 27).

> However, the problem ... was that most of the teachers did not understand the philosophy of education with production ... Rather they saw it in terms of ... activities associated with vocationalism long rejected by the Blacks during the colonial era ... The schools ... failed to attract staff with the appropriate qualifications for meaningful practical skills teaching .... To date, Education with production is more of a slogan than a meaningful educational philosophy .... (Maravanyika 1986: 28-29)

In Lesotho also 'the school system has definitely failed to produce ... persons ready to be involved in rural and manual work ...' (Thelejani 1986: 25). '... Practical subjects are regarded by learners and parents as second rate in

the educational scene. Incidentally, the introduction of practical subjects is an attempt to make education relevant' (Thelejani 1986: 28).

In Zambia, '. . . production training should be a compulsory subject which shall form an integral part of the curriculum' (Zambia 1977, chapter 8, para. 13).

The result has apparently been rather different:

> . . . the president issued a decree that . . . all educational institutions would combine education with productive activity. The . . . aims were to foster in pupils and students respect and love for manual work. The program has had only marginal impact on the students . . . Academic education, which paves the way for entry into the university attracts the most able students and subsequently offers the best rewards in terms of social standing . . . (Achola 1986: 45).

Secondary Education Policies

With some progress achieved in primary education, it was the next stage of education that naturally received attention: 'The urgent need for expansion of secondary education is emphasized' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, para. 58). But in Swaziland, the government decided in 1975 that 'secondary system expansion was to be determined by manpower requirements' (Magagula 1986: 20), and so, at first, did Tanzania. In all African countries, the expansion of secondary education had to be linked, one way or another, to productive employment, for example: 'Education will be made more relevant to the world of work . . .' (Botswana 1980: 99).

Curriculum Diversification

This has been the equivalent of combining education with production at the secondary level: . . . 'To meet the demands of . . . African social and economic life . . . is the need to expand the curriculum at the second level in the direction of more *technical and vocational education*. Such programmes are necessary to provide the skilled and semi-professional manpower essential for economic growth' (Unesco, 1961b: 6, emphasis in the original). 'The concept of "secondary education" should be broadened to include practical training and to provide outlets into the production side of industry and agriculture' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 56). 'All the existing trade schools should be closed or transformed into the new type of secondary school with a vocational bias' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, chapter VI). 'A workshop . . . is a necessary part of the equipment of any secondary school . . .' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 74).

In Tanzania, '. . . secondary education vocationalization is to be realized so that each secondary school leaver will have a useful skill to the economy' (Tan-

zania 1980: 24). 'The general aim of education ... is to ... prepare the young people for work ... Secondary education is terminal and aims at equipping the pupils with skills ... To achieve this, secondary education is diversified and vocationalized into commercial, technical, agricultural and home economics biases' (Tanzania 1980: 3-4). Yet a recent evaluation of the diversification policy in Tanzania revealed that it failed to achieve the above objectives: one year after graduation, for example, only 12 per cent of the agricultural bias graduates were employed in agriculture, and only five per cent followed further studies related to agriculture. (Psacharopoulos and Loxley 1985, Tables 6-35 and 6-37). And '... many employers do not recognize the level of competence in skills acquired ... in the diversified schools' (Tanzania Ministry of Education 1984: 23).

In Kenya also, a tracer study of industrial school graduates did not reveal any employment advantage over a control group of academic secondary school graduates (Narman et al. 1984, Table 3).

Better Links to Employment
The Addis Ababa Plan (Unesco 1961b: 22) recommended that the first step in the educational planning process should be 'an estimation of forward manpower requirements under the dual system of occupational and educational classification ... undertaken by each country with the help of Unesco'. Most countries followed this recommendation. In Kenya, for example, 'from the manpower figures we calculate a ... requirement of Form I entries of 66,000 ..., but ... believing that this is an underestimate ... we approve to provide facilities for about 87,000 pupils ...' (Kenya Educational Commission 1964, paras. 664-666).

Ethiopia introduced a system of comprehensive secondary schools in 1962 'designed to meet the ... middle-level manpower demand in technical and commercial fields ... [but] by 1969 the system was found to be defective ... when tools stand idle for two to six years or more' (Kiros 1986: 67). In spite of the manpower orientation of development plans in Ethiopia, as early as 1973 shortages and surpluses were reported for key occupations (Kiros 1986: 71). By 1981 the situation had become worse (Kiros 1986: 123).

In Uganda also, in spite of a long tradition of manpower planning, there is a growing gap between the educational programmes offered in schools ... and the actual employment available (Odaet, 1986). And in Botswana, 'manpower shortages persist, and the country remains over dependent on the skills of expatriates' (Botswana 1980: 99).

It should be noted that fifteen years ago Jolly and Colclough (1972) surveyed over thirty manpower plans in Africa and concluded that these '... manpower plans ... inadequately served the planners' (p. 254). Yet in many African countries today, such plans continue to be elaborated.

Vocational Education Policies

Vocationalism had a long tradition in Africa. The 1961 recommendations of Unesco's Plan for Action already mentioned were echoed in the policy documents of many countries. In Swaziland, for example, '. . . the content of education must be work-oriented from the primary to the highest levels' (Imbokodvo National Movement 1972). Swaziland's second development plan (1973-78) sets the objective 'to reorient the curricula at both primary and secondary levels so as to . . . enable school leavers to move naturally into the employment sectors' (cited in Magagula 1986: 17):

> A permanent machinery should be established to ensure an adequate link between the supply and demand for trained manpower on the one hand, and to relate school curriculum to national employment prospects. A comprehensive National Manpower Survey should be conducted to identify manpower requirements at all levels and feed back the information to the school system. (Swaziland National Education Review Commission 1984 as cited by Magagula, 1986: 18)

In Zambia, 'The main method of providing technical education in . . . institutes under the Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training should be . . . full-time pre-employment training in contrast to the apprenticeship method' (Zambia 1977, chapter 9, para. 4).

In spite of such manpower orientation, unemployment is still very high in Africa today, while there are severe scarcities in some skills. In Zambia for example, 'estimates range between 1 and 1.5 million unemployed . . . school leavers . . . . The government has responded . . . by trying to popularize the agricultural sector . . . The . . . efforts have, however, produced marginal success because of a strong negative attitude towards farming . . . . Distaste for manual work on the land is deeply rooted in Zambia . . .' (Achola 1986: 44-45). And in spite of the early emphasis on vocational secondary schools in Ethiopia, 'many more students went to academic secondary schools . . . many more opportunities were offered in academic secondary schools than in vocational ones' (Trudeau 1964, as cited by Kiros 1986: 36). And 'it is quite clear that the manpower planning exercise in Tanzania has been counterproductive, leading to a worsening of the fit between the supply of and demand for high- and medium-level workers . . .' (Cooksey 1986: 200).

Higher Education Policies

These have been dominated by attemps to meet high level manpower needs or to Africanize the higher civil service. For example, 'The . . . University . . . will be strengthened to meet future skilled manpower requirements in those disci-

plines for which the manpower study ... shows it to be necessary' (Lesotho 1975, para. 7.22). Or, 'To expand facilities for tertiary education in order to meet the manpower requirements of both public and private sectors' (Swaziland Second Development Plan, 1973-78, as cited by Magagula 1986: 17), and 'To provide technical skills through education and training to meet the high level manpower requirements for the economy' (Uganda 1981, para. 22.13m, (a)).

But in spite of such orientation, severe shortages are reported in some fields in Africa today, while there are surpluses in others (Hinchliffe 1986). And although Zambia has almost completed Zambianization within the administration, 'the country has continued to rely on expatriates to fill many technical and professional jobs' (Achola 1986: 53).

Other Policies

Beyond the above set of policies referring to the respective levels of education, a host of other policies were formulated to serve various objectives that cut across levels.

National Unity
For example, 'the purpose of education is to produce an enlightened and participant citizenry .... The policy ... is that all education should ... inculcate love for the land, loyalty to the King and country, self-respect, self-discipline, respect for the law accompanied by the highest degree of knowledge and the building of character' (Swaziland Imbokodvo National Manifesto, as cited by Magagula 1986: 5).

Teaching in a national language has been a common policy for cultural unity. For example, '... Kiswahili should be the main vehicle for literacy work ...' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 104). Or, in Zambia '... the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction ... has promoted a sense of national unity .... The national motto of "One Zambia, One Nation" could hardly make sense without a unifying language ...' (Achola 1986: 54). But in Lesotho, 'officially the medium of instruction is Sesotho until the 4th grade .... In reality a mixture of languages may go on .... This is partly blamed for the low standard in English ...' (Thelejani 1986: 26).

Political Ieology
In Tanzania, soon after the Arusha Declaration on Socialism and Self-Reliance, Nyerere issued a major paper on Education for Self-Reliance. (For a superb analysis of ESR see Morrison 1976, chapter 11.) This paper became the basis of all major educational changes in the country, implemented by the

1969 Education Act. (Tanzania 1980: 2). The 1974 Musoma Resolution demanded '. . . that education be integrated with work', in order to develop 'in each citizen . . . an Ujamaa or socialist outlook' (Tanzania 1980: 3).

In Ethiopia, Proclamation No. 11 of 1974 setting out the objectives of the Development Campaign gives as one of its objectives 'to rid the people of self-seeking individualism and instill in them a spirit of co-operativeness for the common good' (*Negarit Gazeta* 1974: 41). 'The Minister of Education shall . . . ensure that the educational curriculum is prepared on the basis of Hebrettese-bawinet (socialism)' (*Negarit Gazeta* 1977, article 11).

According to the Zimbabwe Minister of Education 'The curriculum in our education system should be seen and considered as a vehicle towards the establishment of a socialist society' (Mutumbuka 1984, as cited by Maravanyi-ka 1986: 26).

> However, . . . educational policies in Zimbabwe appear to be adversely influenced by an inherent dichotomy in the country's ideological orientation. On the one hand are the politicians bent on introducing Marxist-Leninist ideology which is unfamiliar to most people . . ., and on the other hand is the more . . . entrenched capitalist infra-structure bequeathed by the colonial administration. This is more familiar and people are prepared to take a chance with it as they see others around them who have suc-ceeded by it . . . . The majority of Blacks appear to be more interested in the kind of education they had been denied than on something new and unfamiliar. (Maravanyi-ka 1986: 30)

Financing

Although every educational reform must have substantial financial implica-tions, this issue is only rarely addressed. Or if it is addressed, it is remitted for further study or to third parties. For example, it is a mistake to think that the ambitious programme set out in the 1961 Unesco Addis Ababa Conference did not consider the financing aspect of the programme. However, it delegated it to others: '. . . invites Unesco to approach the competent international organizations, governments and public and private institutions capable of pro-viding large-scale assistance with the request that they contribute to the financ-ing of such programmes recommended by the conference as are beyond the present normal resources of the African countries concerned' (Unesco 1961a, Chapter 8, Resolution No. 1).

In the Plan for Action that followed the Conference it was stated that 'it must be possible to finance both the recurring and non-recurring costs of education . . . from loans as well as taxation' (Unesco 1961b: 10). And later, 'that an increase in national education budgets required use of new financial sources, both public and private, national and foreign, material and human' (Unesco 1961b: 20).

According to the Uganda Ten Year Development Plan, 'an education tax will be introduced to augment the resource base of educational institutions ... Public, parastatal and private organizations will be encouraged to provide a training fund that will finance training ...' (Uganda 1981, para. 22.6).

It is interesting to note changes in the financing policy of schools, even within a few years. For example in Swaziland, the first development plan (1969-73) states that primary and secondary education should be free. In the second development plan (1973-78), however, the word 'free' is dropped. (Magagula 1986: 20). In Botswana, '... a proportion of the costs will be shared by the community ...' (Botswana 1984: 3).

In Tanzania, the 1982 Presidental Commission on Education watered down the earlier strict manpower forecasting criterion for the expansion of secondary education: 'Both the "Social Demand" and "Manpower Needs" approaches will be used in development plans ...' (Tanzania 1984: 10). 'Parents of pupils attending secondary schools will now be required to contribute towards part of the cost of their children's education ...' (Tanzania 1984: 17). Thus, in January 1985 a fee of 1600 shillings per year was imposed, which is equivalent to two months' salary of a clerk.

Yet, in spite of such efforts, the financing of the recurrent cost of educational investment is the main constraint to further expansion or improvement of the system's quality in African countries, as well as elsewhere (World Bank 1986).

Regulation

All African states have chosen to regulate non-government educational institutions in the name of quality control, equity or political ideology. For example, 'the control of education lies with the government of Swaziland whether it concerns state schools, subsidized schools or private undertakings' (Imbokodvo National Movement 1972). Or, 'independent technical and commercial colleges should be carefully controlled and high standards encouraged by a system of "recognition as efficient"' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 111).

In 1975, the Provisional Military Administrative Council abolished private schools in Ethiopia at the stroke of a pen: 'Private schools are hereby transferred to public ownership' (*Negarit Gazeta* 1975: 19).

Yet even in a socialist country like Tanzania, over 40 per cent of the enrolment in secondary schools in 1979 was in private institutions (Tanzania 1980: 35). In fact in Tanzania the share of secondary enrolments in private schools nearly doubled between 1970 and 1983, from 24 to 44 per cent respectively (Bellew 1986: 15).

Comparative Lessons

Are there any generalizations that can be drawn from the above examples of educational policy objectives and outcomes in a handful of African countries? Looking at the past record of educational policy making in Africa (and possibly elsewhere), there are three main reasons why an intended reform may not materialize or subsequently be seen as a failure:

- The intended policy was never implemented in the first place.
- Even if an attempt at implementation was made, it failed to be completed or achieve the minimum critical mass to have an impact.
- Although the policy was implemented, it did not have the intended effect.

Sub-reasons for failure within each of the above categories are as follows:

- No implementation
  - The policy intention was too vague, e.g., 'the quality of education should be improved'.
  - The statement of intended policy was to political lip service, e.g., 'there will be free education for all'.
- Partial implementation
  - A prerequisite factor was ignored, e.g., feasibility of financing.
  - Social rejection marred the effect, e.g., vocational schools were boycotted by parents.
- Implementation but no effect
  - The policy was based on an invalid theoretical model, e.g., educational expansion was based on manpower requirements.
  - The policy was based on insufficient information/evidence, e.g., it was not known exactly how many teachers were on the payroll in the first place.

Of course the definition of success or failure is a subjective matter, and the vague formulation of policy objectives makes evaluation even more difficult. That said, announcing a policy and exciting people's expectations of an outcome that everyone knows at the outset to be unattainable, is nonetheless a failure. To put it differently, the impossibility of full or even partial implementation of a policy negates its validity.

As an example let us revisit the report of the Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa (Unesco 1961a: 18) that set the following targets for the 1961-1980 period:

- primary education shall be universal, compulsory and free;
- education at the second level shall be provided to 30 per cent of those who complete primary education;

- higher education shall be provided ... to 20 per cent of those who complete secondary education;
- the improvement of the quality of African schools and universities shall be a constant aim.

It does not take a thorough investigation to conclude that none of the good intentions put forward in this, and many other documents, has been achieved. It is true that great progress has been made in African education in the last twenty years, especially regarding increased coverage (Bellew 1986). Yet the outcomes are nowhere near the expectations. Table 1 shows how the Addis Ababa quantitative plans compare with their realization.

Table 1. Enrolment ratios in Africa: Planned versus actual (per cent).

Educational level	Actual 1960 (1)	Planned 1980 (2)	Actual 1980 (3)	Actual vs. planned (shortfall) (4)
Primary	40	100	76	24
Secondary	3	23	16	30
Higher	0.2	2	1	50

Source: Cols. 1 and 2, from Unesco 1961a, p. 19. Col. 3 from Bellew 1986, pp. 9-11. Col. 4 = [(Col. 2 − Col. 3)/Col. 2] × 100

The above averages of course hide the situation of individual countries. The primary enrolment ratio in the semi-arid low-income countries, for example, was only 28 per cent in 1980, and 35 per cent in Ethiopia in the same year (Bellew 1986). But why is the record generally disappointing? The degree of success or effect of a given policy is the product of two probabilities: that of the policy's being implemented in the first place, and that of its yielding the intended effect:

$$\text{POLICY EFFECT} = (\text{PROB}_{implementation}) \times (\text{PROB}_{effect})$$

At least in one African country, '... more has been achieved in enunciating new policy statements or in perfecting change rhetoric than in implementing or institutionalizing change' (Maravanyika 1986: 3-4). This statement must apply to others since Craig (1986) in reviewing 153 educational policies in sub-Saharan Africa, came to the conclusion that only a handful were implemented (Table 2). The rarely implemented policies mostly referred to educational expansion and the Harambee schools.

Of course there were moments of brilliance or pragmatism, but these are exceptions rather than the rule. For example, 'the problems of agricultural education are not primarily educational, but are bound up with economic and social

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Table 2. The record of policy implementation.

Degree of implementation	Number of cases	(%)
Unclear	28	18
None or little	113	74
Mostly	7	5
Fully	5	3
Total	153	100

Source: Craig 1986: 22

problems over which the Ministry of Education has no control' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, para. 107). Or, 'some aspects of the educational reform should be implemented while others can only be implemented over a period of time, bearing in mind changing circumstances and constraints' (Zambia, Ministry of Education 1977, chapter 17, paras. 2, 3). And rarely have performance criteria been set, such as: 'Successful agricultural education depends largely on visible evidence of successful farming' (Uganda Education Commission 1963, para. 114).

More often, instead, there have been ambitious statements, such as: 'Educational reforms should seek to improve quality without sacrificing quantity' (Zambia Ministry of Education 1977, chapter 3, para 2); or, 'to provide increasing employment opportunities aimed at eliminating unemployment and underemployment in the country; and to insure absorption of trained manpower in appropriate positions' (Uganda 1981, para. 22.13 b, c).

It is often said that educational reform alone is not possible without parallel transformations in society (Ergas 1982). Yet countries what have adopted holistic social transformations, and placed education within such transformations (e.g., Tanzania since 1967 and Ethiopia since 1974) do not appear to have shown major successes relative to other countries that have adopted some of the same policies in isolation. 'Ethiopia was probably the first independent African country South of the Sahara to introduce comprehensive development planning . . . As the evidence has shown, there was little systematic effort made to translate plans into action' (Kiros 1986: 45a).

Unrealistic policies naturally lead to reversals, even within only one year. In Zambia, for example, in 1975 a radical educational reform was announced under the title *Education for Development* (Zambia 1976). In 1977 another document, *Educational Reform: Proposals and Recommendations*, reversed the 1976 policies (Lulat 1982).

Concluding Remarks

The above record gives a very pessimistic outlook regarding the success of educational reforms that are proposed today. For, in order to avoid past pitfalls, the following conditions should be met in formulating educational policies:

- A policy statement should be *concrete* and *feasible* in terms of objectives, including a timetable, source of financing of its implementation, and institution responsible, e.g., 'the net primary enrolment ratio in rural district X will increase from 30 to 50 per cent by 1995, financed by a 2 per cent tax on beer'.
- The substance of a policy should be based on *research-proven* cause-effect relationships – not on goodwill or intuition. For example, this should exclude expanding the educational system according to manpower needs, or forcing students to enrol in types of schools and curricula for which the rewards in society are modest.

Unfortunately, concreteness is not easily observed in political statements, and the intuitive power of 'I know what the country needs' is much stronger than whatever research results demonstrate. It is for this reason that ambitious but rarely implemented and non-effect policy statements, such as those in the above anthology, will continue to be with us in the foreseeable future. Perhaps the safest course of action for the policy maker would be to remove the fireworks from educational policy and to concentrate on the documentation of cause-effect relationships – the only activity, in my opinion, that can lead to successful school reforms.

Notes

1. The views expressed here are those of the author and should not be attributed to the World Bank.
2. For at least two notable exceptions to this rule, the 1963 Uganda Education Commission (paragraph 47) states: 'Agriculture is not a suitable subject for primary schools'. Also Kenya, '... we do not recommend the inclusion of a specifically vocational element in the primary course' (Kenya Education Commission 1964, para. 27).

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