

[Speaker Presentation]

Governance for Quality of Primary Education in Uganda; The role of international cooperation.

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2.0 PRIMARY EDUCATION IN UGANDA

2.1 Meaning and place of Primary Education in Uganda

Although there are several alternative forms of basic education in Uganda, Primary Education is the main segment with an overwhelming majority. It covers a seven year cycle from P-1 to P-7 with a standard age cohort of 6-13 years. Primary Education has been made compulsory with the enactment of the new education Act 2008.

In terms of resources, primary education sub sector takes the biggest share of the education sector budget (i.e. 60%) and employs the biggest human resource. It is also big in terms of numbers of primary schools.

2.2 Policy Thrusts and Implementation

In Uganda, the basic objectives of the education sector are derived from the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP 1998-2003) which has been succeeded by the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) (2004-2015). Both ESIP and ESSP policies and strategies are consistent with broader national policies as spelt out in the Government White Paper on Education (1992), Uganda Vision 2025 and the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) 1997.

A key feature of ESIP (1998-2003) was the implementation of the UPE programme which has been carried on in the revised Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2007 - 2015. The main goal of the first plan was to get all children into primary school. Later, the MoES recognized that children were not learning basic skills and that it was necessary to invest more in the quality of education.

Between 1998 and 2002, external support funded between 54% and 61% of the recurrent costs of primary education (Berry et al., 2003, p. 19). Currently, expenditure on primary education as a percentage of total government education sector budget is about 60%.

2.3 Institutional Arrangement for governance and delivery of primary education.

Governance for quality primary education is the process of formulating policies within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP), and laying down strategic plans to attain high standards of achievement. It requires effective systems in place to monitor progress and to provide the evidence of outcomes. It also requires; good leadership, a well-planned and realistic curriculum, a creative and enabling teaching environment.

At national level, the overall responsibility for governance and delivery of primary education lies with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), under the leadership of a full Minister of Education and Sports. The Minister is helped by the Commissioner for Pre-primary and Primary Education who coordinates activities of primary education and acts as focal point person between the MoES and the districts.

At district level and school level, the governance and delivery of primary education is the role of the district education officer assisted by the inspector of schools.

At Primary school level, the School Management Committees (SMC) play a significant role in the governance and delivery of primary education through the provision of guidance and support to the school head and staff in the delivery of services in the school.

2.4 Financing of Primary Education

Financing of Primary Education was mainly influenced by the education reforms in 1997 mainly the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme. This reform of the UPE policy therefore resulted into the waiving of the tuition fees in government-aided primary schools, the training and recruitment of more teachers (including building capacity of those already in service), the development of the learning curriculum, provision of instructional materials and the construction of more classrooms. These reforms increasingly attracted funding to the primary sub sector, there by relieving parents that had been thitherto been burdened.

3.0 RECENT REFORMS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

3.1 Adoption of the decentralization policy

As early as 1996, the Ministry of Education and Sports identified the need to improve operational mechanisms, structures and processes for planning effective design and management of a policy based Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP) as well as associated programme framework.

The education sector therefore pursued the decentralisation policy to achieve the following goals; to accelerate the reconstruction and reconciliation process following the civil unrest of the 1970s and early 1980 and to contribute to national development; to reduce marked regional disparities; and to achieve local engagement and sustainability, particularly in education and health sectors through the development of capacity at the local levels.

The above is in congruence with the donor support objectives of improving responsiveness, transparency and local reliance in service delivery as well as improving the quality and efficiency of resource allocation through closer links between resources and local needs.

The law governing decentralization requires the centre to mentor and provide policy guidance while the local governments undertake the implementation based on the agreed implementation modalities. The GoU decentralisation policy is found on the devolution of responsibility for planning, resource management and service delivery to the districts and other administrative setalite units at the county and sub county, parish and village level (Joseph Eilor 2004).

3.2 Adoption of the Primary Education Reform Programme

The Primary Education Reform Programme (PERP) was adopted in 1993 following the publication of the government white paper which contained all the approved reforms on education system.

The Primary Education Reform Program (PERP) was created and launched with the overall goal to improve the quality and equity of primary education. Its objectives included the following;

- (i) Improving access and equity to basic education;
- (ii) Enhancing quality through training teachers;
- (iii) Strengthening capacity for education training and management;

In order to implement the PERP, the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project (PETPP) was designed as a trailblazer for achieving UPE, which was to be implemented later. The Primary Education and Teacher Development Programme (PETDP) mainly focused on improvement of school governance and management among other things.

3.3 Adoption of the Sector Wide Approach

During the early 1990's, majority of the donor funded interventions failed to deliver accessible and equitable quality education in the country. Consequently, SWAp was introduced during the preparation of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESIP 1998 - 2003) as a response to address issues of access and equitable quality education in the country. SWAp was adopted as an alternative modality of cooperation to bring a shift from donor driven project assistance approach that included fragmentation of policy development and allocation of resources; poor ownership and sustainability of new initiatives; and inadequate institutional capacity building to rather a more holistic approach to planning; participation by

stakeholders, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

3.4 Adoption of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)

In an effort to eradicate poverty, Government through the Poverty eradication Action Plan (PEAP) earmarked funding for priority programs in the social sector that have a high impact on poverty alleviation. At the macro-level, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) of 1997 mainstreamed the key elements of Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP). It incorporates a framework for elaboration of detailed sector plans and investment programmes as well as district plans and the budget processes.

With the strengthening of primary education being the central element of the PEAP, it forms the foundation for implementation of UPE as well as guiding the formulation of the SWAp. It is important to note that cooperation with the development partners also works within the PEAP framework where Donor support is only provided for programmes that are within the PEAP.

3.5 The Quality enhancement Initiative (QEI)

The quality enhancement initiative (QEI) was introduced to improve the instructional processes at school level to enable pupils to master basic literacy (reading and writing), numeracy and basic life skills. In addition, the initiative was introduced to strengthening accountability of stakeholders for children's learning outcomes; enhancing school level supervision; and instituting / revitalizing relevant policy/ legal positions that directly impact on the teaching and learning process in schools.

3.6 Restructuring of the MoES

Following the restructuring of the MoES in 1998 as part of the public service restructuring exercise, the staff at the center were reduced and some departments merged. New autonomous and semi autonomous institutions were created. Specialized training institutions were also transferred to the MoES. The restructuring of the MoES was in line with the expectations of the ESIP framewok to improve the Ministry's capacity to manage a sector wide programme. These changes along with other internal sector wide capacity building exercises have generated a sense of continuous capacity enhancement at national and local levels.

The Central Ministry of education and Sports has been restructured and ensure efficiency in the delivery of education service. The restructuring has seen the creation of Directorates like the Directorate for basic education headed by a Director. The department for Special Needs, Career Guidance and Counseling has been divided into two new departments (i.e. Special Needs and Counseling and guidance).

3.7 Formation Education and School Management Committees at district level.

Following the decentralization of education sector delivery, both districts and schools were required to form the District Education Committees and the School Management Committees. The District Education Committee is responsible for the planning and budgeting for education in the district, monitoring and evaluation. School Management Committees are also involved in school activities like planning for and managing of UPE funds, a situation that greatly enhances governance for quality education.

4.0 THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The introduction and implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda in 1997 with a view of enrolling more children of primary school going age, addressing inequality concerns and augmenting quality outcomes came as a precursor to the transformation of the relationship between external support agencies and the Government of Uganda.

4.1 Enhancing Policy Dialogue

Prior to 1996, this cooperation tended to be on a one - to ? one affair, and it was not located within an overall

strategic education policy framework. In order to facilitate this incipient dialogue process, the key external agencies constituted themselves into the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) while in parallel, the MoES established the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC). These structures have together with the Education Sector Review (ESR) process contributed to the enhancement of collective and co-ordinated multi-stakeholder involvement in policy dialogue, planning, management and monitoring of Education sector activities.

4.2 *Improving management and Coordination*

The creation of ESCC and EFAG in particular has led to better management and co-ordination of both financing and technical assistance to the sector. The budget support modality already talked about which has been emphasized as the main mechanism for funding sector programmes under SWAp, has strengthened strategic planning and deployment of financial resources across the sector in a much more equitable and effective manner.

The creation of EFAG also resulted in the highest degree of harmonization of donors approach to sector support that has hitherto not been experienced. Donors are more accessible and willing to work with government counterparts thus facilitating the work of the ministry.

The establishment of structure under SWAp therefore has made it easier for both GoU and donors to have meaningful dialogue on overall sector policy, strategy and approach to its development.

4.3 *Improving Planning and Budgeting*

This is done through the planning and budget workshop which is held at the end of March each calendar year. Its main purpose is to review budget performance for the current financial year as well as agree on budget shares for the coming financial year through negotiated trade offs. This is a highly consultative activity involving participants from EFAG (donors); line ministries, Civil Society Organizations, District Local Governments, schools/colleges/Universities and the MoES itself.

4.4 *Improving Monitoring and Assessment.*

This is implemented through the joint annual education sector reviews held every October/November involving participation from GoU, EFAG, NGOs, representatives of district local governments and the private sector. The Annual Sector Reviews provide an opportunity for enhanced participation as well as avenue for discussion of key policy issues of mutual interest to partners especially the development partners.

The joint monitoring and assessment is guided by the benchmarks agreed in the previous year and are used by the partners to address the issue of outputs, outcomes and accountability for funds disbursed in the previous year. The involvement of the development partners is very key in that it provides a firm basis for them to make decisions about future cooperation. At the end of each review, new approaches to persistent problems are designed and as well as setting new agreed performance indicators and targets.

5.0 OUTCOMES OF THE REFORMS IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

The following are some of the outcomes governance for quality education and the contribution of international cooperation;

5.1 *Decentralization of the services*

The civil service structure in Uganda has been transformed from being a highly centralized traditional civil service model, into a decentralized structure with most of the authority and resources now being devolved to the districts. This has been done to provide for a more accountable and responsive provision of basic services to the population, including education.

The management and provision of basic education is now largely in the hands of the district administration, while the center remains responsible for policy control and maintenance of standards through control of teacher education,

curriculum and examinations. This enhances flexibility, transparency & accountability. It also allows local administrators to be creative in seeking solutions to problems that are unique to their localities.

5.2 Enhanced Community participation

The adoption of the SWAp in Uganda raised stakeholder participation to higher levels. The devolution of responsibilities for education service delivery to district local government was further enhanced. Formulation of ESIP and ESSP institutionalized the role of stakeholders in policy formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring for results.

5.3 Enactment of the Education Act 2008

The Education Act 2008 was enacted was a move towards improving governance for primary education in Uganda. It was enacted with the following specific objectives;

- i. to give full effect to education policy of Government and functions and services by Government;*
- ii. to give full effect to the decentralization of education services;*
- iii. to promote partnership with the various stakeholders in providing education services;*
- iv. to promote quality control of education and training;*

5.4 Enhanced Ownership programmes

There has been enhanced ownership of primary education from all stakeholders especially after the development of the ESIP (1998 - 2003) and ESSP (2004 - 2015) by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in collaboration with development partners and other stakeholders.

5.5 Harmonization and Alignment of the education policy framework

The formulation of ESIP I (1998/2003) and subsequent ESSP (2004/2015) laid the foundation for harmonized and alignment of the education sector policy framework. Both ESIP and ESSP have acted as operational structures for coordinated policy dialogue between government and donors which resulted into enhanced cooperation through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 2001 and the formation of the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG). The annual Education Sector Reviews, the annual Planning and Budgeting workshop and the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC) meeting have provided additional avenues for continuing policy dialogue thus enhancing further cooperation.

5.6 Improved accountability

The adoption of SWAp resulted into an agreement between donor agencies and the GoU to use government systems for financial management and accountability. The Integrated Finance Management System is one of the measures put in place track all public expenditure resources from Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to end users. Institutions that include Auditor Generals Office, Inspector General of Government, Internal Audit Departments, Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Criminal Investigation Department constitute the fiduciary assurance system put in place as a result of enhanced cooperation.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

A large number of developing countries have not achieved their major goals especially quality education. To achieve quality education in any nation requires cooperation with others. Linkages and cooperation are therefore very necessary for continuous development of quality Education.

Institutionalization of the SWAp process using the decentralized government structures has indeed improved education service delivery at both the macro and micro levels, increased stakeholders' participation and circumvented the shortcomings of bureaucratic tendencies.

The organizational structure of the MoES and its linkages with other line Ministries or local governments still need

further streamlining, and a number of sectoral targets have not yet been accomplished primarily because of limited resource envelope.

The partnership and cooperation arrangements between the Government of Uganda and the funding agencies have been strengthened over time. However, there are still some trances of traditionally defined donor recipient relationships between the two parties.

Because of the growing pressure of the government to broaden post primary opportunities for UPE graduates and the current policy imperative of focusing on UPE, the GoU may not be in position to substantially reduce its dependence on external financial support in the foreseeable future as there is no realistic possibility of generating sufficient local resources of ensuring the sustainability of expanded education sector programmes.

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