Breaking Boundaries

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BREAKING BOUNDARIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:

NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING NON-FORMAL

EDUCATION INNOVATIONS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This presentation is based on my work at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) in Kenya, and my recent PhD study on *"Alternative Education Provisions for "Street Children" in Kenya"* (Gathenya, 2003).[1] The study examined education policies and provisions through the lives and experiences of children (aged 6-18 years) who live/work on the streets and those from the informal urban settlements (colloquially known as "slums"). In this paper, I draw extensively from my long experience, working within Kenya's education system (over two decades), first as a secondary school teacher and later as an administrator with the Ministry of Education (now Ministry of Education, Science and Technology-MOEST). My voluntary work and other interactions with different communities add useful practical data sources, as do the literature sources I referred to during my research work and in the course of duty thereafter.

The PhD study covered three urban settings in the Capital City of Nairobi and two rural districts towns, Kiambu and Embu. The study drew views from a sample of children (selected on a request/volunteer and availability basis), their service providers (mainly in the non-formal education sector) and education and other policy makers, in particular those involved in planning for and provision of basic education.

In this paper I highlight some of the different models of NFE programmes, including the successes and challenges as Kenya reforms her education system in attempts to reach the out-of-school and hard-to-reach children, including special needs children, towards the goals of Universal Primary Education (UPE), gender and regional parity, and education for all (EFA). For a country where more than half the population are below the poverty line, breaking conventional boundaries may be the only way to reach the un-reached and retain those already in. Issues of equitable access, including non-formal alternative or complementary delivery "third channels", are central even as Government and other providers recognize the need for improving quality and relevance in the education sector.

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[1] Gathenya, T. Wambui (2003). *Alternative education provisions for "street children" in Kenya.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto

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1. INTRODUCTION

Like many developing countries, Kenya has set specific education goals within the first two decades of the new millennium. The overall goal is to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015, adopted during the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender parity by 2005 are two key strategies of attaining the EFA and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One success story in this endeavor has been the "Free Primary Education" initiative operating within international human rights-based frameworks that call commitment by governments to provide basic social services such as education, health, water, sanitation and a safe environment. At the practical level, in the education sector, this translates into initiatives to enhance existing formal and NFE programmes to allow for flexible complementary education delivery channels that take into account diverse needs and environments of the learners and capacity of local communities.

Primary Education Sub-sector objectives:
(i).   To enhance access and participation
(ii).   To reduce the high cost of education to households
(iii).   To implement the rationalized curriculum, and
(iv).   To enhance the quality of primary education

In this context, Kenya is one among those countries that have embraced the idea that formal school models reach only a fraction of the target groups. For instance, despite the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative that brought back approximately 1.3 million additional children to the formal schools within less than two months, it is estimated that another 1.5 million children are still out of school. Serious regional, gender, socio-economic and ability gaps have not been eliminated, be it in terms of access, participation, retention, completion, transition rates or quality and relevance of publicly, privately or community-funded educational programmes.

> The Free Primary Education Initiative: triumphs and remaining challenges
>
> i. In less than two months from January 2003, Free Primary Education intervention helped to increase enrolments from 5.9 million children (in 2002) to 7.2 million, excluding an estimated 300,000 who remained in NFE programmes
>
> ii. An estimated 300,000-600,000 primary school age children (6-14 years) are still out of school, majority of them in the ASAL migratory pastoral communities and others in the informal urban settlements. Others are on the streets, at home or engaged in child labour.
>
> iii. It is estimated that that over 1.5 million children and adults, including those with special learning needs (especially the handicapped) have no access to basic education
>
> iv. More than 70% of children (more than 80% for girls) in North Eastern Province are still out of schools (various MOEST information sources)

My interest is the transformation in the Government of Kenya (GOK) and other providers' approach to education delivery that break away from conventional formal school model. This is not just in terms of access but the shift includes planning, programming which includes informal, non-formal, open learning and distance basic education programmes. Government ascribes to the 2000 Dakar Framework, that it is not possible to realize EFA and other goals through the formal delivery channels alone, hence the need for the "third channels" or informal and non-formal approaches. Though there were signs of political change and flexibility (thanks to local and international pressure to honour basic human rights for all), it is doubtful that the Kenya I left in 1997, when I went to study in Canada, would have reached outside the box the way the new Government that came into power in December 2002 has done.

The local political climate seems right for radical reforms and local and international development partners, and civil society, are in favour of or demand such changes. The political and administrative environments are more conducive now than a few years ago, for both formal and non-formal education innovations. No doubt, there are many challenges, but what is observable is that there less bureaucratic barriers encountered by those trying to be innovative in addressing the problems.

In terms of Government policy, most of the ongoing work Non-Formal Education is focused more on basic education for children and adults, which for the time being means eight years of primary education or equivalent. For the school age children, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology proposes to extend basic education to 14 years. This would providing Government subsidized education to cover two years of pre-primary (early childhood development), eight years of primary and four years of secondary education or post-primary skills training for all aged below 18 years. Adult education/literacy is in the hands of the Department of Adult Education outside the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and for purposes this paper, school education rather than adult education, is the focus.

1.1. Kenya's Education Goals

Currently, Government's efforts are geared mainly towards achieving Education for All (EFA) by2015 and universal primary education (UPE) and gender parity by year 2005. The "Free Primary Education" (FPE) is a key initiative that not only has had so much impact on improving access to primary education, but also has reshaped the NFE and other alternative or complementary programmes. Within this primary education sub-sector, I hope to capture the impact of these rapid reforms by highlighting a few examples of innovative education delivery models being tried out in Kenya. Chief among these are the attempts by Government to mainstream emerging formal and non-formal programmes, for example, in terms of policy formulation, quality improvement and public funding, in particular extending FPE and other Government support to children in the NFE programmes.

1.2. Information Sources

For this discussion, besides my experience in education, I draw mainly from the related findings of my research work on *"Alternative Education Provisions for "Street" Children"* (Gathenya, 2003). I make reference to post-research education developments including two of Kenya's recent education policy documents, *"The Education Sector Strategic Plan"* (Republic of Kenya/MOEST, 2003)[2] and *"The National Plan on Education for All"* (Republic of Kenya /MOEST, 2004)[3]. As

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[2] Republic of Kenya/Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (September, 2003) Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2003-2007 (Draft-limited circulation)
[3] Republic of Kenya/Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2004). *National Action Plan for All 2003-2015: From commitment to action: expanding opportunities for quality education to all Kenyans.* Nairobi: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Launched in October 2004)

coordinator of the NFE programmes in the MOEST, I have contributed to the development of relevant sections within these policy frameworks.

1.3. Research to Policy Formulation to Programme Implementation

It is within such context, and for the purpose of this paper, that I briefly analyze Kenya's current reforms that include mainstreaming NFE delivery channels comparing emerging scenario to my 1997-2003 study findings on related issues and trends. In doing so I continue my study reflections on the positioning of the researcher within the policy formulation arena and the local communities, and the implications these have in terms of policy reforms and programme implementation. Since my study focused on the education, or lack of education, for children living or working on the streets or in the urban informal settlements, in this discussion I ask myself questions such as,

- *So far has the research experience contributed to the changes in education and related policies for these and other children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDCs)?*
- *Are any of the reforms working: what lessons could be drawn from the successes and challenges of translating research into policy or contributing to policy reform after related research?*
- *What is the way forward for NFE and other alternative or complementary approaches to education?*

While acknowledging the limitations of generalizing from one country case study and individual's experience, I still hope that this input will provide useful insight into how policy-based research could inform major national education policy reform and relevant programme implementation, mainly by having the right people and political commitment at the right time. For meaningful discussion, I first provide operational definitions of NFE in the context of my research (between 1997-2003) and now within the ongoing education policy reforms (from January 2003 to date). This is followed by a recap of the relevant research findings (from my study), which I compare with ongoing NFE mainstreaming initiatives including existing and emerging models, articulated within current policy documents. I then make brief analysis of some of the challenges facing

Kenya in trying to reach outside the box to the marginalized groups towards EFA by 2015, UPE, inclusive education, regional and gender parity by 2005.

In conclusion, I propose what I see as the role and way forward for NFE and other alternative or complementary education delivery approaches in the achievement of EFA and related goals. I acknowledge that although NFE cuts across other sub-sectors (from early childhood development to secondary and to post-secondary), this paper's central concern is the primary education sub-sector. I also acknowledge the limitations of this paper in terms of depth of discussion and wish to point out that these are only highlights.

2. THE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION INTERVENTION

During a recent official visit to one NFE centre in Nairobi's informal settlements ("slums') the Minister for Education, Science and Technology turned to the Permanent Secretary and asked,
"Why is this school called non-formal?" to which none of us had a ready answer. This particular school had 940 children aged between 5-17 years, all in uniform and singing their hearts out for "their Minister" and his visitors. The school is built in one of the most congested "slums" of Nairobi on five-acre land that the community bought with assistance from local and foreign donors. The classrooms were built through the same *harambee* ("let us all pull together") spirit while volunteer teachers and other workers complete the picture. Yet by being classified non-formal such a school was not eligible for the Government support even through the Free Primary Education Support Programme. In 2002, and as highlighted in my study, most such NFE schools did not even exist in the MOEST database. In fact the purpose of the visit was to extend such support for the first time to the school and 60 others that had been identified for piloting of Government support to NFE centres offering the 8:4:4[4] curriculum. This school, and others in similar circumstances, exemplifies the reality on the ground that echoes the diverse models of NFE and the complexities involved in current attempts by Governments to mainstream NFE programmes as apparent in the following discussion.

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[4] Eight (8) years of primary: Four (4) years of secondary and minimum four (4) years of post-secondary degree programmes

2.1. What is Non-Formal Education?

The Kenyan education context adds to the evidence that, in practice, diverse programme environments place NFE anywhere on a continuum from informal, through non-formal to formal education. In some cases, what policymakers describe as NFE is a model that operates almost parallel to the formal public and private education while in some cases it is difficult to differentiate between the two. This is not just true of Kenya as, for instance, in my research (Gathenya, 2003) I cited James Lynch who explains that in many instances,

> There is no clear-cut definition of non-formal education, and indeed some educational activities may stride formal and non-formal modes of delivery. It is very diverse in its substantive and pedagogical dimensions and its organizational arrangements and locations…The term "non-formal education" is sometimes used as a synonym for non-state or non-institutionalized provision of basic education or training for adults or over-age youth (Lynch, et. al, 1979, p. xi)5

In Kenya's 1998 NFE Draft Policy Guidelines (currently under revision), non-formal education is defined as:

> Any organized systemic learning activity outside the formal school system. It provides selected types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population, including adults and children. Examples of such learning activity include agriculture and farmer training programmes, adult literacy, occupational skills training for youth outside the formal system, family planning and cooperatives (and any other learning activity deemed necessary according to the demands of the environment in which a particular population lives (Republic of Kenya/MOE6, 1998, p.6, cited in Gathenya, 2003)

In this earlier definition, for adults and children, the focus is on basic skills training, particularly geared for survival in learner's own environments. Within Kenya's current basic human rights approach to education provision, and further building on ongoing education policy reforms towards EFA goals, the 2004 Draft NFE Policy Guidelines defines NFE (for school age children) as,

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5 Lynch, J. (1997) *Education and development: A human rights analysis*. London: Casell
6 Republic of Kenya/Ministry of Education (1998*) Policy guidelines: Non-formal education* (final draft). Nairobi: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

> Flexible complementary delivery channels of quality basic education to children in especially difficult circumstances, in particular those in need of special care and protection, or those who live or work in circumstances which make it impossible for them to access education through existing conventional formal school arrangements in terms of time, space, and entry requirements (Republic of Kenya/MOEST 2004, p.3)

The rationale behind this relatively new approach is that in majority of cases, all eligible children should be able to access primary education through formal schools, particularly now that the main barrier of high education costs to the households have reduced considerably through Government's Free Primary Education intervention. The "affordability" factor that was found to contribute substantively to poor access to education for many marginalized children was the main thrust of this single intervention by the Government with additional support from education development partners and other stakeholders. However, almost two years down the road, it is becoming clear that even with these impacting interventions, some children, because of their unique circumstances, are still not be able to access the publicly funded education through conventional formal primary schools. In fact, many in NFE programmes who had flocked to the formal schools in January 2003 are slowly finding their way back to existing and new NFE centres. A number never left the NFE centres even after FPE.

This is a major reason why the MOEST has adopted flexible approaches that allow children to attend NFE and other complementary programmes, where they, because of their unique circumstances are not able to access formal schooling. Within enhanced collaboration with development partners, community and faith-based organizations, civil society, as well as other with stakeholders, Government has committed to extend their support to children learning within these "third channel" programmes. As indicated elsewhere in this discussion, such programmes target marginalized groups for example, children living or working on the streets, in informal settlements, arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) pastoral and migratory communities, children engaged in child labour, refugee children, adolescent mothers, young offenders, orphans and other vulnerable children.

2.2. Flexible Education Delivery Models

The aim is to flex the education system to accommodate diverse children's needs so that no child is left out because of structural or funding barriers. The enactment of the Children's Act in 2002, which makes basic education *free and compulsory* for all children, has helped in the implementation of existing and other innovative, more inclusive, interventions and in enhancing parental, community and political commitment for the benefit of the child. It is not possible, within the limitations of this paper, to discuss all education delivery models that have emerged in Kenya as Government and communities strategize towards achieving EFA by 2015. Here I only list some of these innovative education delivery models:

- The *Mobile School* for nomadic pastoral communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL), e.g., Wajir District in North Eastern Province: involves moving "the school" on camel or by other means as the learners and their communities migrate in search of greener pastures and where learning takes place in the open or in makeshift shelters

- *Shift System* for nomadic pastoral communities and children who have to balance school work and family and other socio-cultural obligations: some children attend school in the morning while their siblings look after livestock or after younger siblings, then they swap roles in the afternoon when the animals are brought back near homes from the fields. The *Lechekuti* of Samburu District in Rift Valley Province is a working example

- *Feeder or Clusters Schools*, targeting young children, e.g., Standard 1-4 practiced in places where schools are to far from home: such as the ASAL or in the inner informal urban settlements of Nairobi and other major towns

- *Other FBO/CBO/NGO-Based Schools*[7] in the urban informal settlements: in most cases, such schools are registered by other Ministries as NGOs, Women Groups, Businesses or Faith-Based Organizations, mainly because

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[7] They are variously referred to as private, community, faith-based or Ngo schools/centers

they would not meet the registration criteria in terms of, e.g., land size and ownership, organizational management, class sizes, age limits and entry points.[8]

> ### *Street Mobile School[9]*
> "…When and wherever we meet children on the streets, **w**e do counseling, health education and non-formal education on the streets. Because there are those who do not want to come here [at a NFE center that caters for "street" children within Nairobi's Central Business District]. That is why John was telling you we have a daily [street] program."
>
> …We have points where the children go…like Jevanjee Gardens…Aga Khan Walk…Uhuru Park [and] Bus Station…you will find our street education staff sitting down with a bunch of children. They [staff] give them [the children] papers, discuss things, talk about things, play and then after an hour or two they walk away, they go to the next point (NFE instructor in Nairobi).

What are common in these innovative out-reach programmes are their flexibility and non-conformity in terms structures, registration, curriculum design and implementation, learning/teaching times, staffing norms and qualifications and community involvement (see e.g., Okwach for CARE/Kenya 2000).[10]

2.3. Challenges in Mainstreaming NFE

> **NFE as one of Kenya's Strategies for realizing EFA by 2015 including:**
>   i.   Free Primary Education by 2005
>   ii. Mainstreaming gender by 2005
>   **iii. Mainstreaming alternative education approaches including, NFE and OL & DE- [no time line]**
>   iv. Reducing adult illiteracy by 2010
>   v.   Structural and management reforms- [ongoing]
>   vi. Strengthening and harmonizing legal and regulatory frameworks- [ongoing]
>   vii. Establishment of operational education management information systems (EMIS)- [ongoing]
> viii. Development of sector-wide approach to planning (SWAP) and strengthening partnerships- [ongoing]

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[8] In practice, the picture is more complex with some institutions opting for multiple models as per their "clientele"

[9] The number of children on the streets had reduced considerably after FPE but now increasing numbers are finding their way back to the concern of Government and communities

[10] Okwach, A. for CARE/Kenya (June 2000) Situational Analysis of The Education Sector in Kenya. Nairobi: CARE/Kenya

According to the National Action Plan on EFA (Republic of Kenya/MOEST, 2004, p. 19), though NFE is a crucial means of achieving EFA goals, there are serious challenges to be addressed first, including,

- Lack of clear policy framework to guide and regulate various players in the sub-sector
- Shortage of qualified and competent teachers
- Inadequate [and quite often substandard] teaching/learning materials and physical facilities
- Negative societal attitudes towards NFE
- Lack of [assessment] monitoring and evaluation mechanisms [and capacity]
- Accreditation
- Inadequate accurate data on out-of-school children [and those attending NFE programmes]

The MOEST acknowledges these and other challenges are complex and at times conflicting. For example, in the National Plan of Action on EFA, it is stated that,

> Due to the heterogeneous nature of the programme, which involves a multiplicity of providers, it is difficult to cost the NFE [part of the] EFA Plan. In addition, under Free Primary Education programme, the Government is committed to ensuring that the majority of school age children are enrolled in formal schools

This has created tensions between a few NFE providers and Government where the former are suspicious that Government support might mean closure of their programmes because they do not meet the minimum institutional requirements to operate legally. There are those in Government who strongly believe that with FPE support the rationale for NFE for school age children no longer holds. The support has also attracted a number of "briefcase schools", a local description of schools that exist only in name, and are registered purely for attracting donor support. The majority, however are feeling in an important gap by reaching out to the marginalized in a holistic child need-based approach that the public system has yet to develop.

In the meantime, the Ministry (see, for example, Republic of Kenya/MOEST 2004), in consultation with other Government and Non-government partners, has drafted policy guidelines (reviewing the 1998 guidelines) that await official approval (hopefully by the time of presenting this paper the guidelines will be official). The Education Act (revised in 1980) is currently set for amendment to provide legal

recognition of NFE, its funding, relevant teacher training and employment, and NFE institutional management. The MOEST, with critical input from, for example, the Department of Adult Education, Children's Department, and Ministry of Local Government, has enhanced the desk that coordinates NFE and other alternative education delivery approaches trying to build bridges to the formal education and training sub-sectors and to the world of employment. Government funding is being piloted in Nairobi and will soon extend to other districts in terms of Free Education support, staffing, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. A pilot NFE curriculum, that allows such transitions and linkages, has been implemented in pilot districts, including Nairobi. The monitoring and evaluation report on the pilot is due before the end of 2004.

3. BREAKING STRUCTURAL AND COLLABORATION BOUNDARIES

Since the reforms that began in January 2003, the MOEST has established a NFE database. For the first time (with effect from November 2003), annual data collection instruments include sections on NFE programmes. In addition, key education policy-planning documents include sections on NFE (a whole chapter in the National Action Plan on EFA 2003-2015). Strategies now in place address the special needs of various marginalized groups. For example it is planned that formal and NFE approaches will help increase access for girls by removing barriers that hinder their learning (Republic of Kenya/MOEST, 2004), including,

- Early marriages
- Traditional practices (such as Female Genital Mutilation-FGM) and stereotyping
- Early pregnancies
- Child labour (including plantation and domestic workers and child prostitutes)

Besides education, there are issues of protecting the children and ensuring they live, learn, and where necessary, work in safe and clean environments. As a result, there are new and expanded collaboration within and outside the MOEST addressing the multiple needs of the children. For example, I represent the Permanent Secretary in two National Steering Committees, handling policy matters in terms of Orphans and

other Vulnerable Children-OVC (under the Office of the Vice President and Ministry of Home Affairs). The second handles matters related to the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (under the Ministry of Labour and Human resource Development). To maximize on these partnerships Government has adopted a **Sector-Wide Approach to Planning-SWAP** where collaboration with stakeholders and beneficiaries begins right at the needs identification stage. This is expected to strengthen programmes sustainability, ownership and effectiveness and avoid duplication at the expense of some groups being marginalized.

In terms of NFE, the following statements from the National Action Plan on EFA best illustrate the "breaking of boundaries" in planned and ongoing reforms:

> [The Government] will give legal recognition to the non-formal education centres through the Education Act so that they can benefit from the services that those in the formal education get.
>
> Increased Government support for NFE initiatives shall be enhanced so as to encourage greater participation and open doors for more children who have been to school to acquire education.
>
> The Government will take the lead in the provision of quality inputs in these [NFE] programmes through providing professional support in curriculum development, training of teachers, monitoring and evaluation as well as facilitating the sharing of resources between formal and non-formal systems (Republic of Kenya, MOEST, 2004, p. 120)

Perhaps, more than others, my thesis supervisors, committee members and study group, understand how all this is like quality music to my ears. However, I must point that this has not been an individual effort but a lot of teamwork and support, at times from the most un-expected sources. For example, the Minister for Education, science and Technology is from an ASAL nomadic community while the Permanent Secretary is a product of the NFE model. To quote the cliché, in terms of major reforms, it helps to have "the right people at the right place at the right time."

However, some groundwork had started much earlier. As I discussed in my study, for example, a desk on NFE had been established, by the then Ministry of Education, as

early as 1994 and the curriculum development wing of the MOEST, had already designed the NFE pilot curriculum by the time I returned from my studies in 2003. Rather, the pleasure is carrying out research work in the related and then being given an opportunity to head the National NFE Coordinating Desk, giving the researcher a wonderful opportunity to try out some of the research recommendations and meet new challenges. The job entails working with others involved in NFE and other flexible education delivery models, to mobilize resources and identify best practices that help to reach out to the out-of-school and other marginalized children. The local and international NGOs, Faith and Community-based organizations, and entrepreneurs have years of experience in working with these children, in particular those living or working on the streets, in informal urban settlements, those from nomadic pastoral and other migratory communities, special needs children, over-age entrants and adolescent mothers.

One of the challenges is finding a " home" for the NFE desk because of the cross-cutting nature of the programme and the absence of support systems in other departments and in the field. Structurally, and mainly due to current focus on FPE and UPE, the Directorate of Basic Education,[11] houses the NFE desk. At the national level, there are no deployments of officers to deal with NFE matters at secondary and post-secondary level, in the Quality Assurance and Standards (formerly Inspectorate) or in the Policy and Planning Directorates. For the moment, in the field most human resource support comes from the Department of Adult Education, which has handled adult NFE for decades, and the Local Authorities under the Ministry of Local Government.

4. CONCLUSION: WAY FORWARD FOR NFE

It is an exciting time in the education and other social sectors in Kenya right now, thanks chiefly to the changes in the political system. The same party had ruled Kenya

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[11] In September 2004, the MOEST was restructured. From one Directorate headed by a Director since Independence, there are now five Directorates (Basic Education, Higher Education, Technical Education, Quality Assurance and Standards, and Policy & Planning). The 5 Directors report to the Education Secretary in the new Education Secretariat.

for close to 40 years (from 1963-2002). If the policy and strategic plans, the funding and other resource commitments, and the interest shown by local and international partners and stakeholders are anything to go by, then Kenya is going to use the "third education delivery channels", including NFE to reach the hard-to-reach children and to take the school to the child.

In highlighting the following objectives of what is described as "Non Formal Education (NFE) and Alternative Basic Education (ABEP) Sub-Sector", the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2003-2007 sums up ongoing efforts and the way forward:

NFE & ABEP Objectives:
  i.   To establish a national database and an EMIS on NFE/ABEP
  ii.   To enhance the quality of NFE/ABEP
  iii. To provide adequate teaching and learning materials
  iv.   To establish coordination and collaboration among different providers
  v.   To establish linkages between NFE/ABEP programmes and formal education system
  vi.   Legalize the Kenya Country NFE/ABEP working Group
  vii. To recruit, train and deploy adequate teachers to NFE/ABEP centres
  viii. To establish a National Commission for the education of Pastoralists and Nomadic Communities

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By including NFE in the current policy and strategic plans that cover the period 2003-2015, there is commitment by the Government that, at least for the next 10 years, to extend support to children learning in NFE programmes. Such support may be phased, as the resources, administrative and structural gaps are addressed. These gaps have slowed down interventions, even where Government and development partners had set aside funds for support. What is certain is that by focusing on EFA, it is no longer feasible to wait for dream schools, interventions must begin where the child is and education delivered in a manner that places the needs of the child at the centre.

In conclusion, I ask myself whether my research dreams been met. The answer is that reality is different from what is planned or recommended on paper. As the above discussion indicates, despite being at the centre of the "NFE reform boat" there are still many hurdles ahead. The joy is that something is happening, NFE has gained acceptance, and some children have received Government support they would not have accessed without ongoing reforms.

Below I highlight a few of my research findings, that mirrored some of my concerns during research, and that now provide such joy and challenge as one of those involved in ongoing rapid policy reforms and programme implementation towards achieving the goals of quality and affordable Education for All (EFA) by 2015 through formal and non-formal delivery approaches. Some findings and recommendations are reflected in current reforms, others are included in policy plans and strategies and a few have been proved wrong. The following is a recap of my research findings that had policy implications. (Gathenya, 2003, pp 366-373).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research was intended to inform policy in a pre-planned and sponsor / researched community reciprocal undertaking (p366).

I concluded that there is immediate need for child-based policy approaches (pg 367)

I concluded that the Kenya government would have to take leading responsibility and accountability roles in provision of education and other basic services (pg 367) (FPE went beyond my wildest dreams).

I visualized all "children" at the centre of policy planning and programme implementation framework where data collection sources are defined by children's changing location, including homes, community streets and schools, and not confined to formal schools and similar institutions (p.368).

I concluded "current teacher and other public resources allocation policies favour children attending formal schools over those in non-formal programs and those not in school (p.369).

I found that, for the most part policy planning assessment existence of traditional support systems without taking into account their reformation and putting in place social welfare agencies for children agencies for children in need." (p.371).

"……the government has an obligation to play the pivotal role in creating clear responsibility and accountability and intervention mechanisms to ensure that no child fails through the cracks." This would mean a shift from current policy where the community, the private and non-government partners are expected to initiate programmes, in most cases outside government programmed funding (p.373).

Raised issues about social labels (p.375) e.g. street children, slum children, and concluded this had implications for access to public social services.

The study established that there are no reliable figures to show the magnitude of street / slum-based children as part of out-of-school children (p.381).

That for many NFE was an inferior but perhaps the only accessible choice.