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Education Policy Formation in Uganda: Continuity Amidst Change

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Continuity Amid Change

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The development of policy for education takes place on many levels, from the official pronouncements of national commissions to informal local decisions at the district or school level. This case provides an initial look at the official policy formation process in Uganda with an emphasis on the large-scale, public processes involved. The case will examine the interaction between government, government appointed policy commissions, the international donors, and internal forces within Uganda. A table of the key policy events in the history of education in Uganda is attached to provide a summary skeleton of that history for the reader.

In order to improve the policy-making capability and process in Uganda, one must begin by understanding education policy formation as it has proceeded in the past and what the outcomes have been. Which approaches have been effective and which are in need of change or reform? What actions of the government or donors have had undesirable consequences? What alternate approaches to policy formation might be used? What alternate forms of policy creation have been used and in what combinations—popular participation, central decrees, consultant studies, national commissions, donor agency studies and project plans, sector surveys? Uganda has 40 years of policy-making experience for education; what lessons for the future are embedded in that history?

The Colonial Era (1925-1962)

Providing education for Africans in the pre-independence period was largely in the hands of missionary organizations. They not only determined policies but were responsible for all implementation within their respective organizations and the areas in which they operated. An early public suggestion that this state of affairs was inadequate came from a 1925 report by the Phelps Stokes Commission which visited colonies in eastern and southern Africa. The commission noted that education was controlled solely by missions in cooperation with local chiefs. Their report advocated for government participation in education through supervision and financial assistance to strengthen and control missionary efforts. Concomitant with the publication of their report the government of the Uganda Protectorate established the first Department of Education and appointed a director responsible for African education.

This commission was the first in a long line of advisory commissions that would investigate education in Uganda and make recommendations for creation or reform of education policies. The Phelps Stokes Commission was completely external, having been appointed and financed by the Phelps Stokes Fund in New York and charged by them with assessing education in much of British Africa. There was no direct linkage to the colonial government, but their report had
substantial influence on thinking about the colonial government responsibilities for the education of Africans.

Government policy was subsequently influenced by the 1928 Hilton-Young Commission which studied the relationship between the educational activities of the missions and the government. The de la Warr Commission on Higher Education in 1938 made recommendations that led to the setting up of Makerere College as an interterritorial, postsecondary institution with independent financing. In 1940 the Thomas Education Committee was created to review the guidelines for allocation of grants-in-aid and draw up a development program for 1941-1945, although its implementation was hindered by the war. Immediately after the war, the Worthington Development Plan was published which set criteria for expansion of education and linked the provision of education to the capacity of teacher training institutions to produce trained teachers. This plan was subsequently revised again and in 1950 the government decided to change the method of assisting self-governing schools by providing staff salaries and a fixed capitation grant, rather than picking up annual budget deficits.

All of these bodies were appointed by the colonial government and drew their membership from the British civil service or distinguished expatriate educators. They were charged with reviewing policies relating to the provision of education to the Africans of Uganda. Presumably they drew their inspiration from prevailing norms and beliefs about education in England and their viewpoints about the desirable goals of education for a colonized people. Yet, the colonial government did appoint to these committees Europeans with extensive Ugandan experience and not infrequently sympathetic views toward Uganda and its future. This was certainly the case with the de Bunsen Commission.

An East African Study Group sponsored jointly by the Colonial Office and the Nuffield Foundation toured East and Central Africa in 1951 to study education. Subsequently a committee chaired by Mr. De Bunsen, the principal of Makerere College, was formed to provide more detailed recommendations for the future structure of education in Uganda, using the work of the study group as a basis. Members of the de Bunsen Commission attended an education conference in Cambridge, England in 1952 prior to writing their report. The commission recommended substantial expansion of educational capacity in Uganda with the goal of preparing Uganda for self-rule—a significant policy shift from the past. In the decade before Uganda’s independence the de Bunsen report provided the policy framework for the many changes that took place in the education system. The recommendations of the commission were mostly followed with the exception of the proposed lengthening of primary education to eight years. Although strongly influenced by outside forces, the commission showed both foresight and faith in the capability of Ugandans to make effective use of educational opportunities. The relatively strong educational structure that existed at the time of Uganda’s independence can be traced to the vision of Ugandan education set out by the report of the de Bunsen Commission. The policy framework in existence at independence was based firmly on that vision.
Phase I - Independence and Setting a Path for the Future (1963-1971)

Uganda celebrated its independence on October 9, 1962 at a time when worldwide interest and faith in education as an instrument of national development was burgeoning. The United Nations had just declared the 1960s to be the "Development Decade" during which the majority of mankind was to be released from poverty, disease, and ignorance. The Ashby Commission on higher education in Nigeria had just published its report on investment in education. The Princeton Conference on Education in East Africa led to the initiation of the Teachers for East Africa Project (TEA) to strengthen the supply of secondary school teachers for Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda. In 1960, the Ford Foundation sponsored a conference in Massachusetts of African educators, which initiated a series of far-reaching curricular reforms in mathematics, science, and social studies education throughout Africa.

The first UNESCO-sponsored conference of ministers of education of independent states in Africa held in Addis Ababa in 1961 declared that:

*The citizens of Africa see in education a means by which their aspirations may be met. They are willing to sacrifice for the attainment of this means for gaining economic and social development and wish to provide for more and more of their people education suited to their desires.*

The enthusiasm and optimism which the ministers felt at the time are indicated by the ambitious targets which they set for their countries to achieve by 1980:

- free compulsory universal primary education;
- universal adult literacy;
- education at secondary level to be provided to 30 percent of primary school leavers; and
- higher education to be provided to 20 percent of those who complete secondary education.

Meeting again in 1962 the education ministers set goals for African universities including the responsibility to "develop human resources for meeting the manpower needs of their countries and to ensure unification of Africa."

The Castle Commission 1963

*Terms of Reference.* In this heady atmosphere of enthusiasm for education and in the aftermath of Uganda’s independence, the Castle Commission was appointed in January 1963. The education policy framework in place at Uganda’s independence was determined largely by the recommendations of the de Bunsen committee, which met 10 years earlier. The chair of that committee, Sir Bernard de Bunsen was still the principal of Makerere and in fact facilitated the work of the commission by making available the meeting and office rooms needed for their work. The commission was given the following terms of reference:

*To examine in the light of the approved recommendations of the International Bank*
Survey Mission Report and Uganda's financial position and future manpower requirements, the content and structure of education in Uganda; to consider how it may best be improved and adapted to the needs of this country to submit recommendations accordingly.

The context of the commission was set by the challenge of Uganda's newly acquired independence, but constrained by the immediate economic conditions and their implications for education as reflected in the opinions of the World Bank's recent report. The continued influence of the colonial power and external donors is reflected in the explicit reference to the World Bank study and in the international membership of the Commission. Yet, considering the enthusiasm of the times, the Commission was to produce a remarkably focused and practical document in a timely fashion.

The Commission. The historical context in which the Commission was appointed is reflected in its membership which included nine Ugandans and eight non-Ugandans: three Englishmen, one Indian, one Nigerian, one American, and one UNESCO representative. Three of the members were women. The nine Ugandans included two members of Parliament, one representative of the Uganda Teachers Association. The rest were educators appointed because of their experience with education in Uganda. The four regions of the country, Buganda, Eastern, Western, and Northern had representatives on the commission, but religious organizations were conspicuously absent with the exception of Reverend Mother Mary Dominique who was a co-opted member. The commission was chaired by Professor E. B. Castle who had long experience with education in East Africa. The commission was supported by two joint secretaries, one English and one Ugandan.

During its deliberations, the commission received over 350 memoranda, and interviewed about 400 witnesses in its travels around the country. Members of the commission visited every part of Uganda including the remoter districts. The commission met twice daily, either in plenary or in working parties, for approximately two months, producing a finished report in less than six months. All members of the commission signed the report and there appears to have been remarkable consensus, with only three relatively minor instances of disagreement noted in the report itself.

The problem that faced the commission in trying to formulate an education policy for Uganda at the time of independence is captured by the following question:

When over half the nation is illiterate and the people rightly clamor for education, when teachers are in short supply and inadequately trained, when government and industry demand trained recruits, when unemployment is widespread and increasing, when the nation is poor—what policy should the government pursue?

If the government concentrated on universal primary education and adult literacy, to the neglect of secondary and higher education, it would fail to produce the high-level manpower needed to staff the government and teach in the schools. On the other hand, the country could not afford
to make all the needed improvements in a general advance on all fronts.

The Report. After a careful analysis of the country's educational needs, the commission recommended a 10-year development program that gave priority to providing trained manpower by expanding secondary school enrollments and the capacity to train teachers for both primary and secondary schools. The focus at the primary level was on improving the quality and relevance, and improving access in more remote areas. The commission also sought to improve the standards of technical and agricultural education, to expand the access of girls, and to provide more adult and literacy education. No recommendations were made concerning higher education because at that point the planning of higher education was an interterritorial responsibility.

The main comments and recommendations of the commission were summarized in a list of about 130 statements which covered the full range of educational activities in the country. The commission did make an attempt to indicate the need for phasing and to assess the financial implications of their recommendations. Neither were done in a detailed systematic way, but their awareness of resource limits constrained their recommendations. They wrestled with the competing needs for large-scale expansion of primary education and the demands for high-level manpower brought about by independence and came down in favor of expanding postprimary education. The report contains a chapter that addresses the financial implications of their main recommendations, seeking to provide rough estimates of savings and added costs which would result from them. No attempt at detailed costing or of projecting enrollments was made. They were aware that the cost implications of even their modest recommendations would exceed the budgetary capacity of Uganda and that substantial external assistance would be needed. Their report ended with an exhortation to the people of Uganda: "...if the people of Uganda want education for their children, it is they who will have to work and pay for it."

The Outcome. The government responded quickly and favorably to most of the commission's recommendations, first by issuing a sessional paper and subsequently with a circular (see Key Events in Education Policy Formation in Uganda) which set forth an implementation plan. Both of these were issued in the latter half of 1963 and reflected the fairly close agreement between the government, the commission, and presumably the major political forces within the country at that time. This set of events formed the foundation on which Uganda's educational system was built during the first decade after independence.

The Castle Commission can perhaps best be understood as the culmination of a process of withdrawal and preparation for self-government undertaken by the British with varying degrees of support from Ugandan political forces. The Commission was strongly influenced by two factors: the policy framework set by the de Bunsen Committee whose recommendations had been largely accepted by the colonial government, and the considerable penetration of the corpus of beliefs and values of the international donor community at that point. The international membership and influence on the commission was clearly dominant, beginning right from the terms of reference which explicitly drew their attention to the World Bank Survey and its recommendations. It is to the commission's credit that they explicitly chose to make their own recommendations rather than merely comment on those of the Bank.
At this early stage in the “Development Decade” the viability of the confident prescriptions so freely offered by international experts had yet to be tested in the soil of newly independent states. Africans and Europeans alike were caught up in the expectation of abundant harvests from these investments—the failures and shortcomings of these ideas were not yet visible to any of the participants.

The dominance of external forces also resulted in part from the lack of experienced Ugandan leadership in the field of education. The ministry and most of postsecondary education in Uganda was still largely staffed by expatriates immediately after independence. While many capable Ugandan leaders existed, they were just beginning to feel their way in the new atmosphere of independence and still depended heavily on the old expatriate staff for technical support. Notable for their near total absence from the commission, were representatives of the missionary bodies which had created and still operated most of the educational institutions in the country at the time of independence. However, all the Ugandan members of the commission had been trained in missionary schools and likely provided some representation for that perspective. Nevertheless, the membership clearly reflected a signal that education was to become a state-controlled activity dedicated to supporting the creation of a unified nation of Ugandans of all denominations.

**Phase II - Turmoil and the Downward Spiral (1972-1979)**

During the 10-year period following the report of the Castle Commission, most of their recommendations were implemented by the government. Policy formulation focused on implementation within the economic capabilities of Uganda. Education policy was guided primarily by the five-year Development Plans, and at the university level by University Grants Committee Reports. Each of the five-year plans contains a chapter devoted to education that was typically produced by the efforts of the planning section of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Central Planning Bureau which later became the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. Negotiations between the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Education determined the final version of the chapter and the enrollment and budgetary targets that it normally contained. During the period between plans, individual education projects undergo more detailed analysis and revision. This process leads to decisions to implement as is, revise, postpone, or cancel specific projects as conditions and priorities shift during the plan period. The resultant decisions also frequently reflect the tension between the technical economic rationale of the planners, and the social and political realities which politicians must accommodate.

*The First Five-Year Development Plan (1961-1966)*. This plan was published several years before independence and reflected the priorities of the outgoing colonial administration. Its overall emphasis was on preparing Uganda for independence. The education system was charged with providing the high-level manpower needed to Africanize the government administration and meet the demands of a growing economy. As a result, the plan stressed secondary and technical education, and left primary education to continue pretty much as it was. These recommendations were largely parallel to those of the World Bank Survey Mission whose results were available to the government planners responsible for the five-year plan. By 1966, the plans targets for
secondary education, both budgetary and enrollment, were substantially overfulfilled. In contrast, primary education targets were not achieved. The pressures to staff the government, provide high-level manpower, and provide opportunities for primary school graduates supported the government’s beliefs in the priority value of secondary level education.

The Second Five-Year Development Plan (1966-1971). Following in the footsteps of the first plan, the second plan also emphasized growth in postprimary education to produce high-level manpower. This justification largely supplanted the focus on Africanization from the first plan. Priorities in social development were explicitly determined by two criteria: contribution to economic growth and impact of the service on a large proportion of the population. For the first time, the plan included specific enrollment and financial targets for postsecondary education as well. The result was a continuation of the trend of an increasing share of education expenditure being devoted to postprimary education. The continued fascination with high-level manpower reflected the prevailing strategies of the international agencies and educational development experts of the time—many of whom were employed as expatriate officers in the technical departments of government. Education policy was shaped by this larger policy environment with its emphasis on education as an investment in high-level training for economic development. The plan takes some pride in noting that their recommendations will “give Uganda an educational system as developed as many of the systems in ... Latin-American countries, and far ahead of most countries at Uganda’s stage of economic development.” By 1971, substantial increases in secondary and tertiary education had been achieved, again overfulfilling the targets. Enrollments in primary education fell far short of even the modest targets set by the plan.

The education chapter of the plan was drawn up by a working party on education and manpower, one of 12 working parties. The education party consisted of five members from the Ministry of Education—including the chief education officer who chaired the party, three from Makerere—including the only woman, three from the Central Planning Bureau—who acted as secretaries to the party—and one from the Uganda Teachers’ Association. They were assisted by 10 additional advisors, mostly drawn from the Ministry of Education. Four of the members were expatriates, all planners or economists. The strong emphasis on manpower production and linkages to the economy reflect both the terms of reference given to the party and the technical and economic focus of most of the members of the group.\(^1\)

The Third Five-Year Development Plan (1972-1976). The third plan for the first time expressed concern about the neglect of primary education (which is still reaching less than 50 percent of the age group) and proposed a more vigorous expansion policy to help overcome the deficits created by the emphasis on postprimary education during the previous decade. Long-term objectives were to make primary education available to a rapidly increasing proportion of the age group, aiming at universal primary education (UPE) by 2000, and providing sufficient manpower of the kind needed by the Ugandan economy. Secondary education was to be strictly limited to manpower needs until the target of UPE had been reached. Substantial increase in primary teacher training capacity was used to insure that the proportion of primary leavers going on in the system would be maintained, without having to expand the size of the cohort entering secondary school. Notwithstanding, the priority given to primary education, the proportion of the recurrent
expenditures to be spent on primary education over the plan period, was projected to decline slightly to about 41 percent. The only significant expansion (about 5 percent) is for teacher training for both primary and secondary teachers, both of which were forms of post-primary education. In short, while enrollment targets for primary education were substantially increased, the financial allocation patterns remained largely unchanged in the plan.

Ministry of Planning and the Planning Section of the Ministry of Education. The fourth five-year plan was under consideration in 1975 when a UNESCO/UNDP planning project got underway. Ultimately, this plan was a casualty of the increasingly difficult economic and political situation brought about by the “Economic War” and its consequences. No new five-year plan has been produced since then, although a series of rehabilitation plans and a 10-year development plan for the 1980s were produced. Development plans are largely dominated by economic analysis and reflect their genesis in the Ministry of Economic Development Planning. The education components of the plan originate in the planning section of the Ministry of Education, sometimes in connection with inter-ministerial working groups. The emphasis is on the linkages with the manpower needs of the economy and capital expenditures. In the education sector the plans typically focus on the structure of the educational system, the rates of expansion of the different levels, and capital budgets to support that expansion. The planning section of the Ministry of Education concentrates on compiling statistics, planning capital expenditures including the annual presentation of capital expenditures to the Ministry of Finance, and the supervision of capital development projects.

Policies relating to the goals, content, and operation of the education system are mentioned only in passing, although they are given noticeably more attention in the third plan than in the previous two. These issues are reflected in education goals, curricula, methods and content of teacher training, and in the structure of the examination system. Policy relating to these “softer” aspects of education is left in the hands of the ministry which operates within the general framework of recommendations handed down by the most recent commission report, which may have been a decade or more ago. Periodic national conferences on education supplement and expand on goals set forth by national commissions. These conferences are much more likely to discuss the content and relevance of the curriculum to national aspirations and to make recommendations for revision of both curriculum and examinations. While such deliberations and recommendations usually don’t have any official status, they can be an influential force in shaping subsequent actions of the Ministry of Education.

National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). In 1973, the NCDC was created with centralized responsibility for developing and implementing curriculum for primary and secondary education throughout Uganda. This would provide for the first time an institutional home for systematic thinking and implementation of decisions about curriculum content, teaching methodology, and the needed textbooks and supplementary learning materials.

In 1975, the NCDC sponsored a well publicized national conference attended by 350 people. The report, titled The Inaugural National Curriculum, incorporated a number of resolutions and recommendations for the aims and structure of both primary and secondary education, including
the extension of primary education to eight or nine years. This recommendation led to the appointment of a committee on the Structure of Education, which generated its report in 1976. For primary schools and primary teacher training colleges, the report endorsed the approach known as Basic Education for Integrated Rural Development (BEIRD), developed at the Namutamba TTC with the assistance of UNESCO during the first half of the 1970s. The “Namutamba” model was to become national policy and be extended across the country. At the secondary level, the chief inspector of schools issued a directive to all heads of secondary schools, (Circular, August 5, 1975) instructing them to implement a new curriculum. The goals of the new curriculum were increased emphasis on science, math, and practical subjects so that school leavers could be immediately productive in commercial and industrial endeavors. The deliberations of this conference were a major factor in stimulating the need for thinking about Ugandan education and helped to set the stage for the appointment of a new national commission.

The Educational Policy Review Commission (EPRC) 1977

Context. By July 1977 when the Kajubi Commission was appointed, Uganda was experiencing almost complete isolation from the rest of the world as a result of the excesses of the regime of Idi Amin. The expulsion of the British Asians, the devastating decline of the economy, and massive human rights violations, produced a mammoth exodus of high-level personnel, including civil servants, secondary school teachers, and university faculty. External assistance for education from traditional sources was cut off as many countries suspended diplomatic relations with Uganda.

The education system had to cope with new problems such as severe shortages of secondary school teachers (since the majority of post-primary teachers had been expatriates), scarcity of instructional materials, the rising cost of equipment, and crippling shortages of “essential commodities,” all of which had to be purchased in cash from international markets.

There was, however, a great feeling of and need for self-reliance instead of a feeling of deprivation and helplessness. Minister Brig. Barnabas Kili expressed this feeling during his speech at the inauguration of the commission:

*In the past, education commissions were chaired by non-Ugandans. Our basic education policies were recommended for us by others. Today we are embarked, under the leadership of our Life President, on a policy of self-reliance in which we ourselves will chart the course and the direction of our development... Ugandans today are the masters of their own destiny, no longer do those from outside the country define our objectives, manage the schools, businesses, and other institutions of the country. This very important fact must be reflected in the training and education of our people...*

The government and the commission, however, took cognisance of what was going on elsewhere in the world through, for example, UNESCO publications such as *Learning to Be* (1972), with its focus on out-of-school education, life-long education, and the learning society. The minister
also explicitly charged the commission to heed the resolutions of the UNESCO/OAU conference
of ministers of education held in Lagos, Nigeria in December 1975, which reviewed the progress,
or lack there of, made by African countries in achieving the goals set by the Addis Ababa
Conference of 1961.

The Castle Commission had completed its report 14 years earlier, shortly after independence.
Since then education policy had been based on that foundation as interpreted by a series of three
five-year development plans and several ad hoc conferences and various ministry directives and
circulars. Economic hardship had substantially undermined the inherited educational structure.
There were ample signs of lack of fit between the products of the system and the needs of
society; and there was a new sense of national desire to create a Ugandan system of education
that reflected the new ideology of the government. There was also a general feeling that a new,
comprehensive review of policy was needed to reflect the substantially changed circumstances
and goals of Uganda.

The Commission. The Education Policy Review Commission was appointed by the minister of
education on February 8, 1977, and began work on July 11, 1977. The commission was drawn
from government, educational institutions, and the public sector, including: finance, planning and
economic development, culture and community development, provincial administration, labor,
health, agriculture and forestry, defence, education, Makerere University, parastatal bodies and
the private sector: industry. It is significant to note, however, that apart from the headmistress
of girls secondary school, there were no women and there were no representatives of religious
or voluntary agencies. Two of the 18 members were from the private sector, with the remainder
representing either government ministries or education institutions. The commission was chaired
by W. Senteza Kajubi, the vice-chancellor of Makerere University and a well-respected Ugandan
educator. Kajubi was also the only member of the commission who had served on the Castle
Commission. As the minister noted, this was the first time in the country’s history that such a
commission had been chaired by a Ugandan.

The planning unit of the Ministry of Education served as the secretariat to the commission.
Planning contained three UNESCO experts who provided technical support to the commission
and one of them was a co-opted member of the commission, one of two non-Ugandans on the
commission. The existence of the UNESCO project to some extent was a factor in promoting the
idea of having such a commission. The planning unit had sought a means to contribute to the
process of education policy and planning in the difficult circumstances that existed at that point.
The idea of a national commission to review the situation and set goals for the future when more
normal circumstances had returned, offered a constructive way to invest in the long-term future
of education in Uganda.

The Terms of Reference. The terms for this commission were much more extensive than those
set out for the Castle Commission earlier. They reflected the need for an examination of the goals
that Uganda had for its education system in the light of nearly 15 years of experience with the
colonial model, inherited at independence and maintained pretty much intact. The goals are as
follows:
• to review established policy documents and statements, and existing recommendations concerning objectives, structure, content, and policy for education;
• examine education and training in terms of capacity to promote economic, social, and cultural development;
• consider the aims and objectives, structure, examinations, curriculum, scope, organization, and financing of education;
• propose long range objectives for human resource development for each level of education reaffirming those that exist where appropriate;
• recommend curricular, administrative, and financial policies to facilitate effective implementation of objectives and programs by institutions, regions, and communities; and
• recommend a procedure and mechanism for periodic review of education policies in the context of changing social, economic, and administrative conditions.

Commission Activities. To carry out its task, the commission adopted procedures that included widespread consultations, formation of a number of study groups, and extensive deliberations. The planning unit prepared a set of background papers in advance for members of the commission. One paper analyzed the recommendations of the previous commission in terms of the extent to which they had been implemented and the factors that had influenced the degree of implementation. Another sought to assess the current state of education development in the country and the economic feasibility of alternative proposals for the future development of education. Others summarized and described the education development experience of selected African or Asian countries—India, Kenya, Nigeria, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania. Planning documents from these countries were also made available. Part of the commission also traveled to Kenya to meet with senior education officials and to study Harambee schools and village polytechnics, two alternatives to traditional schools that were unique to Kenya.

As had happened in 1963, members of the Castle Commission visited the provinces in groups. However, by the late 1970s the government’s policy of “taking services to the people” had resulted in the country being divided into 10 Provinces and 33 Districts instead of the four provinces and 16 districts which had previously existed. The visits were preceded by advance meetings organized by the provincial commissioners for education with various planning teams, parents, educators, religious leaders, and other interested people. During the visits the members toured educational institutions to study local conditions. At sessions held in Kampala, the commission received representatives from the major educational institutions as well as teachers’ associations and religious bodies. More than 650 people presented their views to the commission and 123 written memoranda were received. Throughout this process, the planning unit, acting as the secretariat, prepared agendas, wrote minutes and provided summary accounts of oral and written submissions.

In addition to the 18 original members and four co-opted members, the commission set up 11 subcommittees with almost 100 additional members to study various topics and report back to the commission. Each subcommittee focused on one area of education: finance, administration, teacher education, private education, or language policy. Terms of reference and background notes were prepared for each of these working groups by staff of the planning unit, who also
served as secretaries to the groups. The groups met during the first five months of 1978 and each prepared a report that was discussed by full commission and made into a series of chapter drafts.

The commission had the benefit of views of educationists and experienced individuals from outside Uganda. Discussions were held with a visiting American expert on education planning, and subsequently the commission spent two weeks working with a three-person team from UNESCO which provided a critique of the existing draft and made suggestions about policy issues and ways to improve the organization of the final report.

The Report. Although given only six months to do its work and report its findings, the commission successfully concluded its efforts in December 1977, and approved a final draft report at the end of January 1978. The report was submitted to the minister of education in February 1979. Unfortunately, Uganda was soon to be engaged in the “Liberation War” with Tanzania. The findings of the report had to be shelved. The commission made a deliberate decision not to submit the report to the Cabinet or the public, feeling that it could not be implemented. They nursed the hope that it could be used later when order was restored in the country. The commission report was never given a final editing or printed for wider circulation. Copies were given to members of the commission and some of the more active members of the subcommittees (As a result few copies are available today except those kept by individuals.) The planning unit drafted a shorter summary statement as a possible basis for a government White Paper, but it was never used. (UNESCO, 1979. p. 36)

The full report was more than 400 pages and contained 279 recommendations. The report examines not only formal education, but a wide range of education activities undertaken by other ministries and their potential for contributing to development and ways in which they could be linked to the school system. The recommendations were categorized into four groups which combined criteria of time and cost: short-term, two to three years with limited costs; medium-term, during the period of the next development plan with significant cost implications for new activities; long-term, after the next development plan and requiring long-term preparation for fundamental changes in education with correspondingly high financial demands; and continuous, for changes that have already been implemented or express a general intention or orientation. Their recommendations are couched in the context of an articulate analysis of the way in which education has evolved and the desired roles that it should play in a self-reliant Uganda. The final chapter sets out a strategy for implementing its proposed policies, beginning with an interim period of several years when only minor administrative changes will be made until stability returns and a new development plan can be implemented.

The commission was explicitly concerned with the financing of education and sought to be both fiscally and politically prudent in the timing and extent of its recommendations. The report makes clear that its major recommendations for primary and secondary education are dependent on the economy achieving at least a 3 percent growth rate. Their concerns for financing however, did not extend to costing implications or explicitly linking them to assumptions about revenue availability. They had sufficient understanding to see the limitations but presumably felt the details should be left to the then active and competent planning unit of the Ministry of Education.
The Education Policy Review Process. The commission, as requested in their terms of reference, also sets out a plan for ongoing policy review which had four components: 1) creation of a permanent advisory committee on education policy composed of senior education officials and representatives of related ministries to monitor progress and provide advice during the annual budget process; 2) a systematic monitoring and evaluation of commission recommendations which would form the basis for interim reviews of implementation at the end of each phase, about every three years; 3) a comprehensive review of education policy should take place every 10 years with a national commission; and 4) active public participation in the making of education policy should occur regularly by means of a large national conference about once every three years.

Outcome. Taken as a whole, both the consultative process used by the commission and the quality of the final report are noteworthy. The phasing categories for recommendations and the way in which they are linked to larger economic situation are realistic and would provide some clear guidelines for decision-makers charged with implementing them. Their recommendations for ongoing education policy-making were unusual and potentially very effective. Part of the reason for the effectiveness of the commission lay in the systematic and extensive preparation and support provided to the commission by the planning unit of the Ministry of Education. The planning unit was able to draw upon the resources and personnel made available by an ongoing UNESCO project to provide strong technical assistance to the commission.

Another source of strength for the commission was provided by the sequence of educational reform activities that proceeded it. The Namutamba experiment, which began as a pilot project in 1968, led to a tested and generally well regarded approach to primary education that had succeeded in generating wide understanding and support, partly through a series of national conferences. Complementing the Namutamba approach were the recommendations resulting from the large national conference which inaugurated the National Curriculum Development Center. The commission report builds on these activities and solidifies those outcomes by giving them shape and legitimacy. The commission served to culminate a participatory education process that had occurred in the recent past and laid the foundation for consensus. The result was a clear and generally accepted set of recommendations which had high potential for guiding future educational development.

Unfortunately the Commission report and many of its recommendations were overwhelmed by the turmoil of the war and the successive governments that occurred as the commission finished its work. For example, when Professor Wandira, a well-known educator, took over briefly as minister of education, he initiated weekly sessions to discuss the philosophy and major recommendations of the commission. But before going through much of the report, he became the vice-chancellor of Makerere and the process ceased under the new minister. After that, the report was never formally referred to again, although ministry officials occasionally consulted it from under their desks. The experience of the commission did live on informally to resurface again, 10 years later when the next commission was appointed with Senteza Kajubi once again in the chair.
Phase III - Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reforms (1980-1992)

The first half of the 1980s was a period of constant political and military instability which had a devastating affect on an educational system already much weakened by the turbulence of the Amin regime. The war of liberation lasted six months and caused extensive destruction to all parts of society, including the schools. It was followed in swift succession by the short-lived administrations of Luwe, Binaisa, and Muwanga. The second Obote government came to power in December 1980. However, almost from the beginning, his army was fighting a war against Museveni's guerilla forces. This continued struggle frequently resulted in schools being attacked and looted with pupils and teachers killed or forced to flee. Managing to keep any sort of an education system functioning represented a significant achievement under the circumstances. Ministers of education came and went in rapid fashion; resources available for education were very limited; the administrative structure needed to provide supplies and learning materials and effective training and support for teachers functioned only sporadically.

In this atmosphere, education policy-making was largely a matter of ad hoc management for survival. No new policy formation initiatives were undertaken, although the various plans for rehabilitation and reconstruction put forth during this period all contained provisions for the rebuilding of education, mostly at the secondary and tertiary levels. The Ten-Year Development Plan of 1981 reflected many of the ongoing themes in education policy, most of which were fully articulated in the report of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) of 1979. The Africanization of the curriculum along the lines of the Namutamba model continued with the revision of the primary school curriculum by the NCDC supported by changes in the primary leaving examination under the newly created Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB).

The early 1980s also saw a rapid expansion of secondary education, somewhat contrary to the emphasis of the EPRC report, which had given priority to primary education and suggested a variety of mechanisms for creating alternatives to absorb the great demand for secondary education. External support from Canada and the third International Development Association (IDA) education loan from the World Bank enabled a large increase capacity of secondary education to take place. The traditional emphasis on expensive, boarding secondary schools was dropped and a rapid expansion of community-based day secondary schools occurred. In the early 1980s, several hundred of these schools were established, often by taking over existing premises from primary schools. Government undertook only to provide teachers' salaries and small additional grants for recurrent costs. These changes were complemented by the introduction of a new secondary curriculum which replaced the one in use since 1972. The new curriculum moved away from the old core subjects in favor of a variety of marketable skills in agriculture, technical, and vocational areas. In reality, the extreme scarcity of any kind of texts, learning materials, or even basic equipment, meant that few schools were able to implement the changes, with most offering only some agriculture and principles of accounting.

These de facto implementations of policy changes in education were largely taken without the benefit of an approved policy framework, although many of the changes were congruent with long-term trends in Ugandan education. The rapid expansion of secondary education, although
contrary to the recommendations of the 1979 EPRC report, in fact continue the trends that were apparent throughout the 1960s when secondary enrollment targets were consistently over-fulfilled at the expense of primary enrollments. The Ten-Year Development Plan does provide support for some of these changes in secondary education, but there appears to have been little consultation or participation by those outside of government in the formulation of the education policies contained in that document. The effect of these changes at the school level was limited by the severe deprivation that existed. The daily reality of what happened at both primary and secondary schools depended heavily on the extent to which local communities, through parents’ associations, were willing and able to provide support for individual schools. Institutions like technical schools and teacher training colleges fared badly because they did not have a local base in the community from which they could get additional support.

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) finally came to power in 1986, after the brief reign of the Okellos who had overthrown Obote in 1985, they inherited a school system that was more a skeleton than a functioning educational enterprise. On paper, substantial progress had been made in increasing secondary enrollments, Africanizing the curriculum, and developing management and teacher training structures during the previous five years. In reality, the system was near total collapse with most institutions being empty shells where little viable education was taking place.

The Educational Policy Review Commission (EPRC) 1987

**Context.** When the NRM government came to power in January 1986, Uganda was near total disarray. Social services, including education and the physical infrastructure of the country, were a shambles. To break the cycle of vicious dictators, coups, and armed forces terrorizing the populace, the NRM sought to bring about not just a change of guards, but a fundamental change in the moral leadership and quality of life. The cornerstone of the NRM’s political policy and economic thinking was a commitment to “man, his security, freedom, dignity, quality of life, and happiness.” As part of this commitment, the NRM realized that to bring about a real change, the population would have to be provided with basic education and socialized into the new ideals embodied in the philosophy of the NRM.

*Our schools and colleges must play an important role in uniting our people. The curriculum and content of education and the various sporting and cultural activities in these institutions must be revitalized to reflect the national character and constitute the beginning of a genuine mutual respect and understanding.*  
(1985 NRM)

In the belief that it was possible to produce fundamental changes in all aspects of life in Uganda, the NRM government instituted a series of committees and commissions to investigate the situation in all areas of government. Groups were appointed to study corruption, abuse of human rights, Makerere University, the restructuring of Kyambogo National Training College, the Constitution, the structure of local government, economic adjustment and long-term development in Uganda, and of course education. In this larger context of reform and setting new directions,

The Commission. The 27 members of the commission were drawn from a cross-section of people including educators, educational administrators, and others. There were nine university professors from five faculties at Makerere, three heads of secondary schools, two principals of tertiary education institutions, seven senior officers from the Ministry of Education, representatives from the ministries of labour, planning, water, local government, and youth and culture. The private sector was represented by the general manager from a brewery and the chair of the Export Promotion Council. One representative of the NRM secretariat completed the roster. An education officer from the planning unit of the Ministry of Education served as the secretary to the commission.

Although intended to be a diverse body and self-described as such, the commission was composed predominantly of people directly involved in education as either senior administrators or professors at Makerere. There were only four women, two of whom were headmistresses of girls' secondary schools. There was no explicit representation of religious bodies—although one of the headmistresses was a catholic nun—nor of the Uganda Teachers Association or parents. There was some overlap with the 1977 commission, most notably in the role of the chair who had served on both of the previous commissions, but two others also served on the 1977 commission. The overall impression of the membership suggests that the commission was intended to function primarily as a body of professional educators who knew Uganda’s education history well and could interpret the demands of both society and the new government for a more relevant and responsive education system.

Terms of Reference. The terms of reference set out 10 specific tasks for the commission. They included recommending policies at all levels—primary, secondary and tertiary—for the aims and objectives of education, the structure of the system, integration of commercial and technical subjects, improved management, cost reduction and financing, location, assessment and examination, and the role of the private sector. The terms refer explicitly to a resolution from UNESCO’s 40th International Conference on education with regard to integrating academic and practical subjects into the curriculum. They also explicitly charge the commission with addressing the issue of the structure of the system, the number of years for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Both of these reflect long-standing education policy issues in Uganda which continued to be matters of debate. With regard to structure of primary education the wording “having regard to the tender age at which pupils leave primary schools...” strongly suggests that pupils are too young to do productive work when they leave primary school and hence a lengthening of the primary cycle would be desirable.

Unspoken, but clear in the minds of the commission were the goals of the new government and of society for the education system. In the preface to the commission report, these are expressed clearly as a sense that “education is failing...to promote a sense of national unity, self-reliance, social justice and equity, scientific and technological knowledge, cultural values, literacy and a sense of mutual social responsibility to a degree that society would like to see.” Everyone in Uganda was desperately seeking to avoid a continuation of the chaos and violence that had
dominated the past 15 years. The new NRM government and its relatively moderate policies were offering a ray of hope that this commission sought to keep alive by serious reforms of the education system.

A member of the planning unit of the Ministry of Education again served as secretary to the commission, in fact he had been part of the secretariat for the 1977 commission. In contrast, however, by 1987 the unit was much less able to provide a substantive base of data and documentation for the commission, than had been the case in 1977. A decade of war and decay had rendered the collection of education statistics nearly impossible and the production of thoughtful policy papers based on field investigations very difficult. As a result, their ability to support the commission was much more limited.

Commission Activities. The commission began its work by creating 10 subcommittees and co-opting 16 additional members from outside the Ministry of Education to work on these committees. Secretaries to the subcommittees were selected from within the Ministry of Education. With support from an ongoing IDA loan and from Oxford University Press, members of the commission visited education institutions in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, India, and the United Kingdom. The commission invited special resource papers from knowledgeable persons, solicited memoranda from individuals and institutions, receiving a total of 507 papers. In addition the commission visited and held public sessions in the major towns and almost all of the districts and important educational institutions in the country. The origins of all the memoranda received are listed at the end of the commission’s report. They represent an amazingly diverse and extensive range of people and institutions which certainly provided the members with access to a considerable range of opinion and facts.

During the course of its work, the commission received inputs from an expatriate consultant supported by the fourth IDA education loan. The consultant provided suggestions on structuring the commission’s draft; articulating the recommendations of the commission in operational terms; prioritizing the major recommendations and policy options; identifying appropriate implementation strategies; and assessing the resource implications and costing the various proposed strategies.

The commission had access to and was cognizant of the contents of a number of documents from international donors or conferences. The commission had access to the World Bank’s 1988 policy document on *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* which called on each African nation to:

*...embrace the task of formulating and implementing an internally coherent set of policies that reflects the nation’s unique history and aspirations and that effectively addresses its own recently exacerbated problems in the education and training sector.*

Another influential document was the Four-Year Rehabilitation and Development Plan (1988-1991) which articulates as the major goals of national education development: intensifying efforts to restructure the education curriculum with a view to producing responsible citizens; restoring
education facilities destroyed by the war; expanding technical and commercial education; and expanding education opportunities for the growing population, including the establishment of another university. The commission also consulted the Makerere University Visitation Committee Report (1987) and the Ministry of Education’s 1986 policy statement regarding the establishment of the Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo (ITEK) as an autonomous institution.

The commission also felt it necessary to constantly assess the economic and political feasibility of the various education proposals put forward by the new government. The declared policy of the NRM government, for example, was at that time more concerned with rehabilitating the productive sectors of industry, agriculture, and transport which would then generate income for future investment in education and other social services. This meant that limited resources would be available for education in the short run. In addition, the preceding years of turmoil had accentuated religious, ethnic, and regional differences. These feelings had affected the distribution and establishment of new education institutions, and produced strong reactions to issues such as the choice of language for elementary education, the political content of education, and access to post-primary education. Conditions during the past decade had led to education development that was largely the result of uncontrolled social demand. Government’s financing of schools declined as costs escalated, and the burden of constructing and maintaining schools was progressively left to parents and communities. The commission was very much aware of the fragility of the political situation and that an important aspect of its task was the building of an acceptable consensus in Uganda about the future of education.

The Report. The commission’s report was not finished until January 1989, 18 months after their appointment. The lengthy gestation reflected both the extent and complexity of the issues with which they had to contend, and the limited resources available to the secretariat. Unlike previous commissions, this one was operating in a context where the old consensus about education had been largely destroyed, and the process of creating new, shared visions for education had to be undertaken. The commission’s process of public hearings and deliberations were intended to assist in the development of a new consensus, which realistically would be built on a combination of memories of the old, high quality system which Uganda had in the 1960s and the current realities as espoused by the ideology and goals of the NRM. This was a task that the commission could only hope to initiate and as a result its recommendations would reflect a process that was still very much in progress and had yet to reach final conclusions.

This ambiguity is reflected to some degree in the 220 recommendations, spread throughout the commission’s 236-page report. The report’s summary reduces these to 68 major recommendations grouped under the headings of general recommendations, and eight specific headings which deal with each education level or component. Each of these recommendations is categorized as being short-term (1990-1992) or medium-term (1993-1996). Two additional recommendations, the creation of two more universities and the abolition of tuition for P7 and P8, are to be delayed until the 1996-2000. In general, the recommendations reflect an emphasis on: values, national goals and objectives of education; curricular reforms to impart practical skills which will foster national development and close the gap between schooling and life; and the critical need to improve the motivation and capability of teachers through improving their training and support.
The report provides some summary estimates of the costs of their recommendations, with the two phases together estimated to cost nearly 700 billion shillings. The bulk of the costs are for building new primary and secondary schools, and much of that expense is to be incurred by communities and local governments that have responsibility for primary education. An appendix prepared by the planning unit indicates estimated costs for the major recommendations, broken down annually (1990-1995) for development expenditures, and an estimate for additional annual recurrent expenditures for the period. The estimates are supported by a detailed set of notes indicating the assumptions made and the way in which the estimates have been calculated. The appendices also contain a fairly detailed attempt to estimate unit costs for primary and secondary education—an essential part of assessing the cost implications of recommendations for enrollment increases. Although the estimates are rough, their presentation and documentation are more detailed and thus more useful than those in previous commission reports. However, the enormous size of the total estimates is so improbable in Uganda’s current economic circumstances that the lack of any prioritization by the commission leaves a substantial political and planning task to the ministry charged with translating the commission report into a workable set of investment strategies.

Outcome. The EPRC report was produced at a time of gradually increasing internal and external confidence in Uganda’s future. Three years of relative stability, the generally moderate policies and actions of the NRM government, and increasing evidence of life in the economy all were contributing to a cautious raising of hopes. Donors that had withdrawn from assisting education in Uganda in the 1970s were returning or sending exploratory teams to assess the situation and identify possible investment options. Donors expected that the report would be quickly followed by a government White Paper endorsing most of the recommendations of the commission. With the publication of an official statement of government education policies, hopefully accompanied by clear statements of priorities, the stage would be set for donor-government dialogue leading to the design of specific education assistance packages.

At this point, the general disintegration of shared visions for Uganda as a nation and about the role of education in that nation prolonged the process while continued dialogue took place around national ideology and its implementation within the education system. Instead of a relatively quick process of publication of the commission report followed by government review and promulgation of a White Paper, a series of protracted discussions were begun. The commission report has never been officially published or distributed, although copies were generally available to senior officials, commission members, and to the various donor teams which visited during this period. The lack of a publicly available version, however, meant that there was no opportunity or forum for public reaction to the recommendations and a general cloud of uncertainty about government’s reaction to the contents.

The Government White Paper. The response of the government to the EPRC is perhaps best described by the minister’s statement that introduces the March 1991 version of the White Paper.

*Government, therefore, adopted an innovative and democratic approach, and appointed a White Paper Committee consisting of eleven members... to examine the*
Report of the EPRC and to identify the recommendations which are acceptable and feasible to implement, and to make amendments where necessary...The committee co-opted 40 more people...it carried out consultations as extensively as possible...before writing the White Paper...(for) presentation to the Cabinet. This White Paper deliberately departs from the established traditional approach whereby a White Paper is prepared to be read side-by-side with the commission's report....The White Paper makes revolutionary innovations and, therefore, simplifies the reading process...it is easily readable and adequately intelligible on its own.

Much of the rationale for this unusual procedure is couched in terms of the need for financial prudence in the context of the still very limited resources available for social services and therefore postpones the implementation period for phase one into 1992/93-1996/97. Supporting this rationale are the substantially reworked cost estimates contained in the March 1991 version of the White Paper. The paper rejects the cost estimates calculated by a team of consultants shortly after the completion of the EPRC report, and substitutes a quite detailed set of assumptions and costs of its own which are contained in a 20-page annex. The White Paper indicates that the new estimates are more thorough, including many costs omitted from the earlier version, take into account inflation in the intervening period, use a variety of cost-saving and austerity measures throughout, and reflect increases in the payments to teachers which have already been implemented. The result is a substantially higher set of cost estimates, that are nevertheless felt to be attainable with substantial inputs from local communities and help from external donors.

The White Paper has several other notable additions from the perspective of policy formation. Section 599 recommends the creation of a standing planning and monitoring committee to continuously watch over the implementation of the policy elements of the White Paper. The committee will be reporting directly to the minister who is advised to consider a list of 19 organizations or categories of individuals when appointing this committee—including representatives of industries, trade unions, NRM organizations at all levels, and journalists in addition to a wide variety of educators. The committee is to provide regular advice, including a more thorough review every five years, and recommend the appointment of a commission every 10 years. This section fills a vacuum in the EPRC report which doesn't address ongoing policy formation as directly. Finally the paper also directly addresses the use and management of foreign assistance with a goal of improving efficiency, simplification of aid procedures, and insuring that the such aid will not endanger the national policy of self-reliance.

In addition to strengthening the technical aspects of the report, the White Paper process also reflects an underlying tension between some of the ideological goals of at least part of the NRM leadership and the recommendations of the EPRC which are largely derived from the perspective of professional educators. The NRM is committed to revolutionary reform of the psyche of Ugandans to build a new and viable basis for a nation. In this context, the education system must play a critical role in socializing Uganda's youth into these new values and attitudes. Any official statement of goals and investments for education must be congruent with these objectives.
The need to deal with these issues at length after the completion of the commission's report is in part a reflection of the composition—with little representation of the more ideological components of the NRM—of the EPRC Commission and an apparent feeling on the part of government that their priority concerns were not adequately represented in the recommendations. It is also a reflection of the inability, or perhaps inappropriateness, of the commission to resolve certain issues on which no general consensus in the larger society had been achieved. Topics such as the language of instruction in primary school, the degree of vocationalization of the curriculum, and the extension of primary education to P8 are all contentious to varying degrees and reflect different conceptions of the role of the education system. The chairman of the EPRC commission felt strongly that the choice and use of a national language was not an appropriate topic for an education commission. Such decisions were political and should rightly be made by government directly, not through the an advisory commission on education. Putting such unresolved political issues on the agenda of the commission jeopardizes its ability to reach consensus on education issues and creates potential conflicts between the commission and the government.

Once the EPRC had presented its report, the government embarked on an internal debate, which finally led to the appointment of what was in effect another commission to redo the work of the first and produce its own report, which was intended to stand on its own (the 1991 draft contained more than 400 pages), thereby effectively replacing the report of the original commission. This process took more than two years, and by the end of 1992 had not led to an officially approved (by the Cabinet and the National Resistance Council) or published White Paper (a first draft was produced in April 1990 and a second draft in March 1991). During this period, the drafts of the White Paper were circulating unofficially among donors and senior officials, but everyone was strongly cautioned not to refer to them in any written documents.

**Five Year Education Sector Investment Program.** Concurrent with the White Paper process, the Ministry of Education, through its Project Implementation Unit, commissioned a series of pre-investment studies in education. Ultimately, there were 16 of these studies, most written by teams of Ugandan and external consultants. The studies covered a range of topics including: supply and demand for teachers, financing of education, science and technical education, examinations, texts and instructional materials, management, instructional radio, and an enrollment projection model. At the same time the planning unit undertook a school census in 1989 and finished summarizing the results in 1991. In addition, some initial results from the national census of 1991 were available by mid-1991.

After three years of intensive effort, with all these components available, the groundwork had been laid for the government to produce an investment program for the education sector. The program was intended to revitalize the education sector by implementing the recommendations that emerged from the EPRC and White Paper process. The investment program went through a series of drafts and the process included a detailed review of each project by a large group of
senior officials in the Ministry of Education. The final version was ready in mid-1991. The program contains a general overview and a series of project profiles grouped by priority into three categories. The projects are linked to policy objectives derived from the EPRC and the White Paper. In all there are 39 projects, winnowed from a much larger set of suggestions in the preinvestment studies. For 24 of the projects, priorities are also assigned to project components indicating the order or extent to which they should be implemented if resources are not sufficient for the complete project. The priorities are intended to insure that a balanced package of complementary investments will occur even if the full program can’t be funded.

The total package amounted to nearly U.S. $700 million in development costs. The investment program was intended to provide a basis for negotiations with external donors by providing a prioritized list of investments from which they could choose. In theory, this would promote coordination and control of investment in education so that the government’s goals and priorities would be maintained through a series of separate activities by different donors.

So far, the effectiveness of the investment program has fallen short of what was hoped for. Lack of experience and capacity prolonged the process and made the results indicative rather than definitive in terms of investments. And, as in the case of the White Paper, the process was somewhat overtaken by concurrent activities of donors driven by their own development timetables. The investment program is notable because it was predominantly a Ugandan initiative in which the ministry took direct responsibility for planning investments in education, and because it produced a prolonged discussion of education priorities by a large group of officials. The learning aspects of the process were substantial, although the results were less influential than expected. While not a complete success, nevertheless, the investment program represents an impressive achievement and an experience that could portend increasing capacity and resolve on the part of the government to manage the development of their education system.

The Role of Donors in Policy-Making. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education was faced with the urgent need to proceed in its discussions with external donors who were ready and in some cases eager to make substantial investments in the reconstruction of Uganda’s education system. The ministry recognized that there would be a relatively short-lived window of opportunity when the donor’s attentions were focused on Uganda. Donors needed to get significant commitments from the ministry within the framework of some coherent national policies for education. Both the donors and ministry were trapped in the void between an unpublished set of EPRC recommendations and the absence of a White Paper. As the delay dragged on with no signs of early resolution, the donors and the ministry began to proceed with a tacit understanding that actions would have to be taken without an officially approved set of policies. Both groups tried to work generally within the context of the unpublished EPRC report without being too explicit. Plans were floated on several occasions to have a conference of government and donors where the White Paper would be presented and both donors and government could come to some shared understandings of how they could best work together to rebuild education. After several postponements, the idea was finally dropped—although a small one-day meeting for information sharing was organized by the World Bank with local representatives of donors and Ministry of Education officials in July 1991.
Lacking any formally approved plans, the Ministry of Education quietly proceeded to implement selected recommendations including certain aspects of cost sharing at secondary and higher education institutions, and guidelines controlling fees and their management at primary schools. While desirable from the commission's perspective, the chair commented that implementing recommendations piecemeal failed to link those actions to complementary actions that were supposed to take place simultaneously. In several instances this led to disturbances because added costs were not seen to be balanced by additional benefits for students or parents. By being forced to act on an ad hoc basis the ministry was unable to implement a coherent policy framework that would have made the changes both more productive and more acceptable.

Similarly, in dealings with the donors the government missed the opportunity to negotiate from a position of clarity and strength which would have given it more control over donor proposals. Conversely, it could also be said that the eagerness and haste dictated by the internal timetables and political forces within various donor institutions failed to allow a realistic time period for the government to formulate and agree upon a coherent set of policies. There are lessons to be learned on both sides from the experience.

During the late 1980s, the government was dealing with a number of external donors, many of whom had previous or ongoing histories of involvement in the development of education in Uganda. Two donors, the World Bank and USAID, were proposing quite substantial investments in basic education and teacher training that would inevitably have a major impact on policy and implementation. Their activities during this period became part of the de facto policy formation process.

**The World Bank - IDA Loans.** The World Bank's involvement in education in Uganda is reflected in a series of four IDA loans. The first IDA credit supported construction of secondary schools, but was hampered by the ongoing civil strife and decline in the economy. The second credit provided assistance to technical, agricultural, and medical education and some teacher training. The third credit focused on rehabilitation and provision of instructional materials, a theme continued in the fourth credit and scheduled to finish in 1992. A fifth credit with major emphasis on improving the quality of primary education and rationalizing primary teacher training was begun in 1993.

The activities financed by these loans were managed through a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) located within the Ministry of Education. This unit was instrumental in providing financial and managerial support to the ministry during the process of producing its five-year investment program for education. The PIU also provided an institutional framework for ongoing policy dialogue between the World Bank and the ministry, a physical and administrative location where bank personnel and Ugandan educators could meet and discuss policy issues and their implications. By making available Project Preparation Facilities (interim funds that can be used to prepare for an upcoming credit), the PIU has been able to support a variety of policy formulation activities, including much of the work of the EPRC. These funds give the ministry the mechanism and resources needed to hire local and international consultants, carry out needed studies, undertake data collection and analysis, and produce documents.
In the period following the EPRC report, the World Bank through the mechanism described above, has played a major role in the policy formation process. Their involvement has supported and encouraged Ugandan policy efforts that resulted in the investment program, and it has also influenced policy priorities as implemented with a strong emphasis on basic education. Throughout the 1980s other donors played a more minor role in education due in part to modest levels of investment and partly to the lack of ongoing structures for continual dialogue with the government.

**USAID.** The United States was actively involved in supporting Ugandan education until it was forced to withdraw as a result of the Amin regime’s mid-1970s disturbances. Their support included building a number of major educational institutions, including a comprehensive girls’ school, four large regional teacher training colleges, and a variety of buildings for central institutions. USAID began exploring a renewal of its support for education by sending a team of consultants in March 1990 to undertake a survey of the basic education subsector. This team produced a comprehensive report which outlined a number of options for consideration by USAID and Uganda. The team included one Ministry of Education official and a local Ugandan educator as a consultant. The report subsequently formed the basis for the next steps in the USAID program development process, but appears to have had relatively little visibility or impact on policy thinking in the Ministry of Education.

After the sector survey, several short consultant missions took place, but it wasn’t until November 1991 that USAID was able to begin moving ahead more decisively. By early 1992, USAID was talking seriously about a very substantial program of assistance to basic education. Initially USAID’s plans had little linkage with the reform and restructuring concepts contained in the emerging design of the fifth IDA credit, which was further along in its development. In late 1991, informal cooperation between the Bank and USAID led to a much closer relationship between the two proposed investments in which each agreed to support the overall strategy contained in the IDA loan by taking responsibility for different inputs. While the IDA design was the result of extensive dialogue between the World Bank and the Ministry of Education, the donor collaboration was largely the product of informal contacts between the two donors with little involvement of the Ugandan government.

Throughout this process USAID’s efforts involved only minor inputs from the government. Although USAID sought to consult with the government regularly and obtain their input, there were no ongoing links between the two to facilitate that kind of dialogue. USAID was hampered by the absence of a resident human resources development officer and the lack of any recent history of cooperation in the field of education. The large size of the planned investment, provisionally planned to be more than $100 million, could have significant implications on how policy for basic education is ultimately implemented.

**UNESCO/UNDP.** UNESCO has perhaps the longest continual donor involvement in education in Uganda. It is unique among the donors in creating a local commission with a permanent structure that maintains a presence and can establish long-term relationships with the government. UNESCO’s participation in policy formation is thus often greater than might be expected from
the modest resources that it has available for investment. An example is provided by the Namutamba rural education project from the 1970s which gradually evolved into a nationally accepted policy for the curriculum of primary education and is officially recognized by the 1978 EPRC report. The current White Paper continues that support, adapting it to fit within NRM policy goals. In 1992, UNESCO had a small project working on updating and testing that curriculum, seeking to finance a longer-term project.

During the late 1980s, UNESCO’s presence was modest, but did include continuing support for several experts in the planning unit of the Ministry of Education which provided the technical support for the 1987 Education Policy Review Commission. UNESCO also provides access to international thinking and trends in education through its support for Ugandan participation in regular international meetings of education officials. The result is a more diffuse kind of influence, but one which helps to shape the thinking of senior education officials about education and desirable policy goals.

Forty Years of Education Policy-Making in Uganda

The overriding impression left by the pattern of education policy-making in Uganda since the de Bunsen Committee report in 1953 is one of continuity and consistency despite periods of great turmoil and instability. Persistent themes include: increasing access, providing skilled manpower for development, providing vocationally relevant skill training, and building a complete and high quality system from primary school through university. Over the years there have been gradual shifts in emphasis, from secondary and higher levels to basic education, but these have been gradual as both internal and external beliefs about the role of education in development have shifted. The continuity is partly due to the existence of a strong cadre of professional educators who emerged during the 1960s after independence and who have continued to exert strong influences on education development since then. Political leaders and administrators have come and gone, but this cadre has remained, moving in and out of positions in Makerere University, the teacher training colleges, and overseas with international agencies. An underlying source of continuity has always been the structure and philosophy of education inherited from the colonial power. Unlike many African countries, Uganda has not made any significant changes in the structure of education since independence. Although muted, the ongoing presence of education ideas still shared with Great Britain has served as an anchor during stormy times.

Education policy-making in Uganda has always had strong ties to the larger international community of educators, first through the dominance of the colonial power, and later through active participation by Ugandan educators in a variety of international forums, where evolving understandings of the nature and function of education in Africa have emerged. A gradual shift in the directness of external influence is apparent in the functioning of successive commissions. At first, the influence was by direct membership, including the chair of commissions until the 1970s. Later, the influence is more muted, coming from technical working staff and from international policy documents and conference proceedings and the socialization of Ugandan educators. Uganda has thus broadened its contacts substantially beyond Great Britain, but has sought to integrate new ideas into the existing structure, rather than attempt radical changes.
External donors have played a significant role in education policy, particularly as implemented in specific contexts. Donors with the resources for major investments have had substantial influences on important components of the education system, such as the institutional structure of teacher education. Smaller donors have supported reforms in specific aspects of the curriculum, such as teaching English or French, new approaches to science, or revised math syllabi. The influence of specific donors waxes and wanes with their own priorities and ability to carry out programs. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, USAID was quite influential, helping to restructure all primary teacher training into four regional colleges, yet since the mid-1970s they have had little influence until recently. UNESCO’s influence was strong in the 1970s, but has been modest during the 1980s. The World Bank has been gradually expanding its activities and its involvement in policy issues to the point where in the early 1990s it is clearly the most influential of the donors in affecting the direction of education investments.

The influence of any donor also depends on the strength and political support that the Ministry of Education can muster at a given point. When there is a strong minister supported by the political leaders, then the ministry can and does take greater leadership in implementing policy. When the ministry is in disarray from frequent personnel changes, political conflict, or lack of competent technical staff, then external donors, if only by default, are much more likely to be dominant in policy interpretation. Even when the ministry is not dominant, all parties tend to operate within the larger framework set out by the most recent commission, perhaps in part because the commission reports have all been largely congruent with international thinking prevailing at the time.

Policy formation in Uganda in the early 1990s is somewhat in transition, as the NRM government seeks to put its stamp more firmly on the policy framework that emerged from the most recent commission. The process of producing the five-year investment plan and the prolonged gestation of the White Paper both reflect some tension between the perspectives of professional educators, national as well as international, and alternative ideas emanating from the NRM leadership. The NRM is seeking more fundamental reforms in education which it believes must be a prime source of socialization for the new citizens needed to ensure a politically stable Uganda.

Donors, individually and collectively, indicate a desire to help Uganda strengthen its policy-making capability. Yet, the internal dynamics of the assistance process, driven as it is by timetables and forces within each donor, often works in ways that undermine or overshadow indigenous attempts to formulate and implement education policies. Initial attempts by the ministry at costing and prioritizing implementation plans have tended to produce overly ambitious and sometimes unrealistic plans, but they do represent definite movement toward taking control of the process. But as Uganda emerges from a long period of decay and disruption, the urgency of the needs often overshadows all questions of policy, leading to pragmatic ad hoc decisions that determine de facto policy. The government has demonstrated its determination to move beyond that mode and has taken some steps in that direction. Government and the donors can work together to invest in people and procedures that can move Uganda toward improved self-sufficiency in making and implementing education policy in the future.
### Key Events in Education Policy Formation in Uganda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Policy Event</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Government Department of Education first created</td>
<td>First director of education appointed - first recognition by the government of responsibility for African education.</td>
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<td>Central advisory council for African Education and district boards of education created</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Phelps-Stokes Commission</td>
<td>The commission assessed education needs and noted that education was controlled solely by missions in cooperation with chiefs. Strongly suggested the need for government supervision and financial assistance.</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>de la Warr Commission on Higher Education</td>
<td>Makerere College became an interterritorial postsecondary higher college with an autonomous governing body and independent finances provided by Britain and ultimately the three East African governments.</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Thomas Education Committee Report</td>
<td>Reviewed allocations of grants-in-aid and set out education development plan for 1941-45. In 1942 an agreement with missions led to establishment of selected schools and training colleges as self-governing institutions jointly run by the missions and the government, and with government contributions balancing their budgets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Worthington Development Plan</td>
<td>Government began taking some responsibility for teacher salaries. In 1950 the government began providing grants-in-aid to cover teacher salaries and a fixed capitation grant toward other recurrent expenses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Document Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td><em>African Education in Uganda</em>&lt;br&gt;The DeBunsen Committee Report</td>
<td>Recommended substantial expansion of education with goal of preparing Uganda for self-rule (a major policy shift). Detailed recommendations, including expansion at all levels (e.g. doubling primary enrollment), reorganizing and improving teacher training, lengthening primary education from 6 to 8 years, and shortening secondary education from 6 to 4 years (neither ultimately accepted), and the devolution of responsibility for primary education to local authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Technical Education Development Plan</td>
<td>Ambitious plan to train artisans by building a dozen schools. Ultimately an expensive failure since capable students preferred academic secondary education.</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Uganda Government Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1958-1959</td>
<td>Education policy statement that led to revised Education Ordinance (No. 13 of 1959) accepted the principle of interracial schools and further delineated responsibilities for schools between local and central authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Uganda’s Independence</td>
<td>The constitutional changes that accompanied independence shifted responsibility for administration and control of education: primary education largely placed in hands of Kingdom governments, regional administrations, and urban authorities. Kingdom of Buganda was given responsibility for most forms of secondary education. Most education still effectively managed by missionary organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Uganda’s First Five-Year Plan, 1961-1966</td>
<td>Major objectives: Africanization of the administration and high-level manpower pro-</td>
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duction for economic growth. At the end of the plan primary-level targets were underfulfilled and secondary-level targets, both budgetary and enrollment, had been substantially exceeded.


The first major education policy event after independence which set the guidelines for the development of a national educational system for Uganda.

1963  Uganda Government Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1963  


1963  Uganda Ministry of Education Circular No. 66 of 1963  

Sets out government’s implementation plan for the recommendations in the Castle Commission Report.

1963  Education (Amendment) Act No. 83 of 1963  

Amended the Uganda Education Ordinance to explicitly give government the power to plan future shape of education. Charged education committees with preparing a development plan for approval by the minister of education.

1966  *Work for Progress—Uganda’s Second Five-Year Plan, 1966-1971*  

Primary emphasis placed on high-level manpower development for economic growth, including for first-time targets for postsecondary education. Education to get 17.5 percent of central capital budget, up from first five-year plan. Share of postprimary education also continued to rise. Again, targets for primary level underfulfilled and those for postprimary exceeded by end of the planning period.
<table>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>High Level Manpower Survey, 1967 and Analyses of Requirements, 1967-1981</td>
<td>Prepared by Ministry of Planning. Bottle-necks in implementation of the Five-year plan indicated the lack of high-level manpower. To address this need, economy would have to expand to support subsequent expansion of lower levels of education. Report emphasized &quot;Ugandanization&quot; of economy by 1981, with steps needed to achieve that goal. Sought to improve on limits of previous studies done in 1958 and 1962-64. Recommended creation of inter-ministerial Manpower Planning Board.</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>The Makerere University Kampala Act</td>
<td>Established the National University at Makerere. This act was the outcome of the Visitation Committee of the same year which reported on a wide range of issues relating to the role, the internal organization, the administration, and the relationship of Makerere to the government.</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Uganda's Third Five-Year Plan, 1971-1976</td>
<td>Placed priority on primary education, seeking to provide better distribution and places for increasing proportions of the age group (53 percent of cohort entering by 1971) culminating in UPE by the year 2000. Plans major expansion of primary teacher training, nearly tripling recurrent expenditures for it over the period. Growth at postprimary strictly limited to manpower needs, emphasis placed on improving quality. However, proportion of recurrent expenditures for primary education actually projected to decrease by 1 percent over the plan period.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>Circular from Chief Inspector of Schools (August 5, 1975)</td>
<td>Instructed the heads of all secondary schools to implement a new curriculum which emphasized science, math, and practical subjects with the aim of producing students who could be more immediately productive in society.</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>The Action Programme: A Three-Year Economic Rehabilitation, 1977-1980</td>
<td>Recognized centrality of education for long-term economic development and the current scarcity of trained manpower as a barrier to rehabilitation. Focused on a crash manpower development program to provide key manpower, with emphasis on agriculture, commerce, and transportation to meet economic needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>The Rehabilitation of the Economy of Uganda. Commonwealth Secretariat Team Report (Dudley Seers, Chair)</td>
<td>International team asked to assess the task of rehabilitating the Ugandan economy by the Uganda National Liberation Front government immediately after taking power in April 1979. Focused on immediate economic needs for rehabilitation. For education recommended supplies, equipment, radios, and some expatriate staff to strengthen science and technology. Emphasis mostly on postprimary level needs and the return to previous standards while maintaining gains in enrollment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>A Ten-Year Development Plan, 1981-1990</td>
<td>Recognized human resources as the key to economic development. Education objectives were to rehabilitate education system, repair war damages, achieve UPE by 2000, revise curricula, in particular to implement the Namutamba model of Basic Education for National Development, and expand teacher training. Also emphasized a series of cost-saving measures including secondary day</td>
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</table>
The initial development plan of the NRM government. The education section emphasized the need to restructure curriculum to produce responsible citizens, rebuild schools, expand technical and commercial education, and expand access at all levels including establishing another university.

The most recent national review of educational policies. A large commission that sought to combine the professional educational perspectives with the ideologies and policies of the National Resistance Movement government. Many of the education recommendations have their roots in the first Kajubi Commission report.

1990 Uganda Education Sector Review: Issues and Option
USAID-financed sector survey that focused on basic education. Document represented the first step in USAID reentering Uganda's education sector since the mid-1970s during the Amin years when its support for the regional primary teacher training colleges came to an abrupt end. Subsequent consultant teams produced a series of documents leading to substantial support for primary education in the 1990s.

This version of the white paper was produced after several years of deliberation and revision. At the time of publication it had not been approved by the Cabinet or the National Resistance Council. In general, it supports and amplifies the recommendations of the EPRC with an eye toward making them more congruent with national ideology. Controversy continues over some policies including the use of Swahili as a medium of instruction, adding P8 to primary schools, and extensive vocationalization of secondary education.
1991
Five Year Education Sector Investment Programme, 1992 - 1997

An unusual document that reflects intensive work by the Ministry of Education over a three-year period to produce a comprehensive investment plan for coordination of both internal and external investments in education. Contains 39 project profiles categorized into three priority categories, with components of some projects also prioritized to facilitate balanced investment under conditions of limited resources. Investments systematically linked to goals set forth in EPRC and White Paper.

1992
Education Reconstruction and Development Project. World Bank Appraisal Report for Fifth Education Loan

Report culminated a two-year process of joint study and preparation between Ministry of Education and World Bank, supported by consultants, both internal and external. Project focuses on rationalization of primary teacher education system by means of a sweeping reform that integrates pre-service training with in-service training and support activities based at district-level TTCs. Loan provides funds to reconstruct 10 - 14 such TTCs and restructure their activities. Reform is jointly supported by a USAID project that will be concurrent.
Endnotes

1. For a detailed discussion of the process followed by this working group see Nicholas Bennett's article on *Educational Cost Evaluation*. The article also provides an instructive insight into the dialogue between various forces as reflected in successive estimates and targets which are considered before government makes a final decision which appears in the published plan. The membership of all the working parties can be found in Appendix D of the second five-year plan.

2. For a more detailed discussion of the role of the Planning Unit in supporting the first Kajubi Commission see Chapter III of the final project report. (UNESCO: 1979) Although written from the perspective of an expatriate advisor, the report provides useful insight into the kind of analytic documentation that is needed to allow a national commission to do its work on the basis of systematic and accessible data. Policy issues that may otherwise be vaguely perceived can be highlighted and documented in ways that promote constructive discussion.

3. These improvements can largely be traced to the introduction and use of personal computers during the decade between the two commissions. Although the basic data about schools available in 1987 was much less reliable in than in 1978, the ability to set up databases and to do cost estimates with spreadsheets substantially enhances the ability of the Planning Unit to provide technical support to the work of a Commission.

4. Donor agencies and team members commonly have much better access to a variety of documents than even quite senior government officials. The entire Ministry of Education may possess only one or two copies of critical documents, and these will be mostly inaccessible. Donor agencies routinely share unofficially among themselves so that visiting teams, even when composed of 'experts' with no previous experience in Uganda, will normally have much better access to documentation about education than local officials. The high cost of access to functioning copy machines, the awkward size and length of many documents, and the lack of any easily accessible repository for documents, means that government officials still depend largely on oral communications and personal experience. Meetings between donors and government officials are characterized by significant imbalance in access to details about the current situation and details of planned or recommended interventions by donors. The problem is compounded by lack of time and experience of many officials in working from document-based information rather than oral and personal sources. The result is often the de facto abrogation of policy-making responsibility to the donors by the government.

5. The commission chair reported little or no interference or pressure from the government during its deliberations. If the government was concerned about certain issues, it made no direct attempts to influence the commission during its deliberations. In that sense, this was truly an advisory commission which was independent of the government.
Bibliography


