Chapter 12

Policy Coherence for Development:
A Case Study of Uganda's Primary Education Sub-Sector

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ABSTRACT

The elimination of school fees at Uganda's primary education level was accelerated by the 1996 first direct presidential elections. Since the inception of the universal primary education in 1996 and its actual operationalization in 1997, universal primary education is synonymous with primary education. Because school fees were eliminated before infrastructural improvements in the school system had been undertaken, the access shock created by the elimination of fees resulted in a substantial initial decrease in resources available per pupil and a large increase in the pupil-teacher ratio. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the policy incoherencies as well as research or knowledge gaps relating to Uganda's primary education. Nevertheless, what happens in other sectors outside the education sector has strong implications for the realization of the universal primary education objectives. Uganda's universal primary education policy is being undermined by policies within the education sector and policies in other sectors. As such, there is need to mainstream universal primary education into all relevant sectoral policies using the Education-In-All-Policies Approach, which would be in the nature of the Health-In-All Policies Approach as well as the Gender-In-All-Policies Approach.

INTRODUCTION

The achievement of poverty alleviation requires more than effective development assistance and focused development policies. This is because domestic and foreign policies are interconnected and interchanging at many levels and their scope and consequences are often difficult to trace and identify. Consequently, the effects of a policy in one sector may easily be undermined by policies in another, both intended and unintended, and no issues can be solved in its entire isolation (Concord Danmark, 2012). This paper attempts to find out whether policies in other sectors are well aligned to ensure the realization of the goals and objectives of the universal primary education programme.

The elimination of school fees at Uganda's primary education level was accelerated by the first direct presidential elections, which took place in 1996. The eventual winner of these elections, made a campaign promise to provide free primary schooling to four children per Ugandan family. In December 1996, after being elected, the president announced that school fees would be eliminated in January 1997, coincident with the new school year. An enumeration and advertising campaign was undertaken, and the new school entrants began learning within two months of the presidential announcement. In practice, school fees were waived for all primary school students, regardless of how many siblings were also attending school (Grogan, 2006).

Grogan (2006) further notes that the announcement of universal primary education in late 1996 committed the government to paying the tuition fees at the rate of 5,000 Ugandan shillings per pupil per annum in the first three years of schooling, and 8,100 Ugandan shillings for the fourth to the seventh classes. To put these fees in the context of local salaries, in 1999 a teacher in a government-aided school in Uganda earned about 75,000 shillings per month. Other costs of schooling, such as transportation, and uniforms, remained the responsibility of families. Because school fees were eliminated before infrastructural improvements in the school system had been carried out, the access shock created by the elimination of fees resulted in a substantial initial decrease in resources available per pupil, and a large increase in the pupil-teacher ratio. The textbook to pupil ratio in Ugandan schools was 1:4. Although the sectoral budget allocation increased from 20.6 billion Ugandan shillings at the start of universal primary education to 46.7 in 2003, this increase has not resulted in a proportional improvement in the pupil teacher ratio, or the quality of education.

Since the inception of the universal primary education in 1996 and its actual operationalization in 1997, universal primary education is synonymous with primary education. Molyneaux (2011) notes that in January 2007, Uganda embarked on a strategy to implement a nationwide universal secondary education policy. This study's findings have implications for the universal secondary education program. The purpose of this study is to identify the policy incoherencies as well as research or knowledge gaps relating to Uganda's primary education sub-sector. The study is organized in five sections and unfolds as follows. The next section covers the literature review; followed by the methods; findings; and the final section, concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Policy coherence is the systematic promotion of measures across government departments and agencies, to have consistent approaches towards the achievement of agreed objectives. The principle of coherence has been enshrined in the European Commission's treaties and, in 2005, the Commission identified policy coherence for development as a pioneering concept for attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, in September 2007 the Commission published its first biennial progress report on policy coherence for development (CONCORD, 2009).

Barry et al. (2010) note that policy coherence for development is achieved when policies across a range of domestic policy areas support, or at the very least do not undermine, the attainment of overseas development objectives. Policy coherence for development seeks to represent the interests of the poorest developing countries within developed country policy-making processes and seeks to ensure that investments in overseas aid are not undermined by damaging non-aid policies. Issues of policy incoherence are most obviously seen in agricultural, trade and environmental policies but also in policy areas such as finance, science and technology, security and migration policy. While some progress towards coherence has occurred in recent years as the European

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