




**SCALING UP BY FOCUSING DOWN:
CREATING SPACE TO EXPAND EDUCATION REFORM**

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*Revised for inclusion in the publication resulting from the
Biennial Meeting of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Arusha, Tanzania, 7–11 October 2001*

23 January 2003



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I. SUMMARY

Start small but think big. That is an attractive approach to innovation and reform for education in Africa, where available resources often cannot meet expanding demand, schools are under-equipped, well prepared teachers and effective instructional materials are in short supply, and quality remains uneven across the country and among different segments of the population. Begin with an initial effort in a particular school or district. Prepare the ground well, with careful planning, extensive communication among those involved, and adequate funding. Monitor and assess the results. Modify the practice to respond to local settings and in light of preliminary outcomes. Then, as it becomes clearer what has worked and what has not, expand the pilot to other settings. “Go to scale.” Eventually the entire education system becomes the site for the reform.

“Going to scale” has been the advice and the injunction in African education for several decades, both within and outside the continent. For national educators, enlarging an effective small scale innovation is an attractive strategy for broader reform. Beginning with a pilot focuses attention and energy, provides a controlled testing ground for trials and assessment, limits the risk should an initiative prove unviable, and establishes the pattern that can subsequently be replicated throughout the country. The challenge of scaling up, however, has proved difficult to achieve. There are apparently few documented cases of pilot education reforms in Africa that have been effectively scaled up to become nation-wide programmes. Indeed, some very promising initiatives have proved difficult or impossible to sustain, even at their small scale, after the departure of their initial leaders or the end of their initial funding. Accessible systematic empirical research on scaling up promising education initiatives in Africa is unfortunately quite limited. Most of the literature is normative and anecdotal. One result is that contemporary discussions of scaling up are eerily repetitive, with little apparent attention to *why* more than two decades of insistence on the importance of scaling up has not led to more and more effective scaling up.

Addressing efforts to scale up requires recognizing that some initiatives may be viable precisely because they are small. Responsive to local needs and demands, well adapted to a local setting, and guided, managed and perhaps funded by the local community, reforms of that sort flourish where they are nourished and wither where they are not. Attempting to enlarge their scale would be like scattering seeds on sun-baked hard unyielding soil that has not been loosened by rain and plow or planting a crop that requires strong sun in the perpetual shade of a hillside forest.

It is timely, therefore, to review efforts to enlarge the scale of education initiatives and reforms in Africa. Our primary concern in this review is not to suggest a right path or correct course of action but rather to contribute to resolving the many contested issues of education reform and scaling up by reporting findings, highlighting major themes, and framing issues for discussion and negotiation.

As we have reviewed reports on enlarging the scale of education reforms in Africa and elsewhere, three important themes have emerged that frame an agenda for future action. The weakness of the knowledge base is problematic. Scaling up promising reforms requires a holistic approach and vibrant social networks. The major challenge is to nurture innovation.

Research on education reform in Africa is both rich and poor. It is rich in that it is voluminous, often imaginative and insightful, and continuing. It is poor in that once completed, research on education in Africa tends to disappear from view. Consequently, even though many people in many places, both African and non-African, are involved in studying education in Africa, it is difficult for anyone anywhere to develop a clear broad picture of that research. It is even more difficult to focus

on a particular cross-cutting issue like scaling up. The conditions associated with effective education reforms and with successful efforts to enlarge their scale are especially poorly documented. If much of the empirical research quickly becomes invisible and inaccessible, there can be little productive link between research and policy.

Clearly, education reform and scaling up are processes that require a holistic approach, effective and timely communication, and a coordinating strategy that does not strangle local initiatives. That must be a shared responsibility. Local communities, central and local government, non-governmental organizations, external funding and technical assistance agencies, and others have important roles to play. Since local circumstances vary and since reform is best understood as a process, those roles will differ from place to place and time to time and will likely change over time within a particular setting. That will be difficult to accomplish. Large institutions and their decision makers prefer certainties to ambiguities. Clear and consistent plans are often deemed more important than responsiveness to local needs and flexibility. Effective networks of interconnections that link organizations, people, and activities are difficult to establish and maintain, especially in settings where war, drought, flood, and illness (HIV/AIDS is a particularly striking example) are corrosive of shared values and cooperative practices. Effective scaling up therefore requires systematic and sustained attention to developing and nurturing those networks.

Scaling up in education is intended to expand access and improve quality for more people over a wider geographical area, and to do so in ways that are efficient, equitable, and sustainable. Since education is central to development, the strategies adopted to promote reform by enlarging the scale of effective pilots must address the broader development objectives of empowerment, equity, social transformation, and sustainable change.

Both the general literature and the studies of African experiences emphasize that scaling up success stories rest on both systemic and specifically local elements. The initial reform addresses a well-understood local need and responds to significant local demand. The reform itself is largely locally derived and is led, nurtured, and often protected by leaders who are charismatic, forceful, inventive, and able to build political coalitions to support and shelter the reform. The reform is adequately financed, which means either a long-term commitment by government or other agency or, more often, significant continuing local funding. Most important, there is significant local ownership of the reform.

National initiatives are also important tools of education reform. The national coherence of the education system is surely a reasonable objective. Local communities and their leaders, however, as well as teachers, students, and parents, can and do oppose change. Thus, for national initiatives to survive, they must develop local advocates and supporting constituencies. Only in the most authoritarian settings can external agents sustain reforms that find no local support.

The importance of the local roots of this process suggest that replicating the specific elements of the reform in other settings will only rarely lead to a viable and sustainable outcome. *Accordingly, rather than replicating the specific elements of the reform, what must be scaled up are the conditions that permitted the initial reform to be successful and the local roots that can sustain it.* That challenge involves finding ways to generate widespread and locally rooted demand for the reform and to support an informed and inclusive locally-based deliberation over the content and form of the reform. That challenge also requires finding ways to make political space for the reform and to protect it from vested interests who perceive it as a threat and a bureaucracy whose efforts to routinize change often smother it. At the same time, those directly involved in the reform must understand reform as a continuing process rather than a specific outcome and must structure it to embed learning at its core.

II. INTRODUCTION: “GOING TO SCALE”

Start small but think big. That is an attractive approach to innovation and reform for education in Africa, where available resources often cannot meet expanding demand, schools are under-equipped, well prepared teachers and effective instructional materials are in short supply, and quality remains uneven across the country and among different segments of the population. Begin with an initial effort in a particular school or district. Prepare the ground well, with careful planning, extensive communication among those involved, and adequate funding. Monitor and assess the results. Modify the practice to respond to local settings and in light of preliminary outcomes. Then, as it becomes clearer what has worked and what has not, expand the pilot to other settings. “Go to scale.” Eventually the entire education system becomes the site for the reform.

Go to scale. That approach has strong support within the development community as it has become increasingly critical of a long history of development strategies characterized as top-down and government-centered. That orientation seemed only rarely to meet its stated objectives. Even when it did, the outcomes were projects and programmes that had shallow local roots, that could be sustained only with external expertise, funding, and pressure, and that did little to reinforce or extend local knowledge and capacities. Several additional factors favor a more locally-focused orientation. Local sources for investment and continued funding became increasingly important during the economic and financial crises of the 1980s. That coincided with critiques of the capacities and integrity of national governments. Combined, the search for local funding and the critiques of government supported calls for decentralization of authority and responsibility. As well, especially since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the world socialist bloc, the dominant global ideology strongly supports privatization and reduced government role. By the 1990s a somewhat revised development model was emerging, again recognizing the importance of a strong government role, but now situating government as a coordinating agency, responsible for creating a supportive environment for community, organizational, and individual initiatives. This evolution of thinking about development more generally has reinforced the notion that effective reform must begin small with a pilot that is well supported locally and that when shown to be effective can be scaled up.

In some countries, local circumstances have also fostered a scaling up approach to education reform. Apartheid in South Africa, for example, had no room for adult education programmes that addressed the root causes of community problems, or that sought to promote community empowerment, or that linked literacy to citizen participation. In that setting, numerous local organizations, some with external funding, created many small adult education programmes with limited regional or national coordination. With the achievement of majority rule came the demand to enlarge the scale of the most effective of those programmes. Similarly, in other countries where war, or flood, drought, or other catastrophe, or national politics precludes effective national programming, small initiatives that are created, funded, and led locally may nonetheless flourish. Once the national crisis has passed, they too become candidates for going to scale.

“Going to scale” has thus been the advice and the injunction in African education for several decades, both within and outside the continent. For national educators, enlarging an effective small scale innovation is an attractive strategy for broader reform. Beginning with a pilot focuses attention and energy, provides a controlled testing ground for trials and assessment, limits the risk should an initiative prove unviable, and establishes the pattern that can subsequently be replicated throughout the country. In an early and influential paper, Myers explained why going to scale had become of interest to international agencies.¹ Those agencies, Myers argued, had committed themselves and thus their public image, to nationwide programmes that reached the poorest of the citizenry and were frustrated that the small scale demonstration or pilot projects they funded seemed to have limited impact on education policy and programming, “often despite their successful outcomes” (p. 2). The challenge, therefore, was to scale up. That thinking persists. Nearly two decades later, a United

1. Robert G. Myers, “Going To Scale” (Paper prepared for UNICEF for the Second Inter-Agency Meeting on Community-based Child Development, New York, October 29-31, 1984, 1984).

Nations panel on girls education included among the critical next steps “understanding the importance of scaling up.”²

That challenge has proved difficult to achieve. As we shall see, there are few documented cases of pilot education reforms in Africa that have been effectively scaled up to become nation-wide programmes. Indeed, some very promising initiatives proved difficult or impossible to sustain, even at their small scale, after the departure of their initial leaders or the end of their initial funding.

Evidence is problematic here. Anecdotes abound. But determining success requires both reliable evidence and time. Until an initiative has survived the departure of its initiators and perhaps a change of government, it cannot reasonably be judged successful. Accessible systematic empirical research on scaling up promising education initiatives in Africa is unfortunately quite limited. Uvin and Miller point to the paucity of empirical research on scaling up more generally. Most of the literature, they argue, is normative and anecdotal.³ One result is that contemporary discussions of scaling up are eerily repetitive, with little apparent attention to why more than two decades of insistence on the importance of scaling up has not led to more and more effective scaling up.

Much of the current debate on going-to-scale turns out to be a repetition of earlier, readily available information, without reference to lessons learnt in the first round of replication efforts more than a decade ago.⁴

As well, some initiatives may be viable precisely because they are small. Responsive to local needs and demands, well adapted to a local setting, and guided, managed and perhaps funded by the local community, reforms of that sort flourish where they are nourished and wither where they are not. Attempting to enlarge their scale would be like scattering seeds on sun-baked hard unyielding soil that has not been loosened by rain and plow or planting a crop that requires strong sun in the perpetual shade of a hillside forest.

It is timely, therefore, to review efforts to enlarge the scale of education initiatives and reforms in Africa. Our primary concern in this review is not to suggest a right path or correct course of action but rather to contribute to resolving the many contested issues of education reform and scaling up by reporting findings, highlighting major themes, and framing issues for discussion and negotiation. We begin with an overview of the general literature on “going to scale” and a clarification of the key constructs and ideas. Next, we consider recent African experiences and what they suggest for this approach—start small, think big—to reform in African education. We turn then to the links and tensions among different development objectives, including going to scale, participatory development, and local ownership and to other dimensions of development that provide the context for efforts to enlarge scale. We conclude with attention to the challenges of nurturing innovation and with the understanding that like “appropriate technology,” “appropriate scale” in education may be large, small, or somewhere in between.

III. PERSPECTIVES ON “GOING TO SCALE”

Our first task is to clarify the terminology. Definitions and typologies abound. The profusion of terms and categories reflects both different meanings and, more important, different perspectives on scaling up. Let us review some important distinctions.

2. The ECOSOC High Level Segment on Africa: Girls Education Panel, convened on 1 June 2001, included senior officials from UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP and the former Executive Director of the Federation of African Women Educationists. <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know_sharing/flagship_initiatives/ecosoc.shtml> [2001.08.22]

3. That is the premise of their instructive overview, which they characterize as “a first scientific look at scaling up.” See Peter Uvin and David Miller, “Scaling Up: Thinking Through the Issues.”

4. Nico van Oudenhoven and Rekha Wazir, “Replicating Social Programmes: Approaches, Strategies and Conceptual Issues,” Management of Social Transformation, Discussion Paper Series, No. 18. Note 3. Paris: UNESCO. URL: <http://www.unesco.org/most/dsp18.htm> [2001.08.12]

“Going to scale” is of course not the only approach to innovation and reform in education. Some reforms begin not as small pilots but as nation-wide initiatives. The education ministry, for example, may adopt a new curriculum at all teacher education institutions throughout the country, or modify the examination system in ways that affect all learners in particular courses of study, or alter the constitution and responsibilities of school boards or committees at all schools. Initiatives of that sort, which may be an effective strategy for expanding and improving education, generally have a guiding philosophy and management structure that differs sharply from reforms begun as limited pilots in selected locations. Since we are concerned with the challenges of enlarging scale, simultaneous nation-wide initiatives are not our primary focus here, except to the extent that they are informed by prior, smaller scale experiences.

“Scale” has multiple senses and uses in this literature. Harrington and White point out that scale may refer to the level at which a reform is undertaken (village, district, region), to the analytic perspective from which reforms are assessed (a nation-wide reform may be assessed from the perspective of the village), to the investment strategy (small vs. large investments), to the breadth of the impact of a reform (a reform begun in a village may have an impact throughout a district, while a nation-wide reform may in practice have an impact in only a few villages or may affect particular segments of the population), or to the extent of community involvement (a village-level initiative may have limited or broad community participation).⁵ Even for a single organization or institution, “going to scale” can have several meanings, including expanding the number of people affected (what some authors term organizational scaling) and expanding the number of activities (functional scaling). Some authors understand “going to scale” to involve changing the focus of a reform, from project replication (undertaking the same activity at multiple sites) to building grassroots movements and community organizations to influencing the policy process. Accordingly, the ostensibly very simple question, what is the scale of that reform?, can in practice be several different questions. A reform focused at the village level, for example, can have large scale investment. That same reform could have large or small scale participation by the local community and could have larger or smaller impact on the society, whatever its primary locus.

In his early paper, Myers developed a typology of scaling up that is widely used and that he has subsequently refined.⁶ One strategy for increasing scale Myers termed *scale by expansion*: starting small, increasing gradually, and building on success. Often termed *replication*, this has become the most common model for enlarging scale. Drawing on Korten,⁷ Myers associates this strategy with a *learning process approach*. From that orientation, scale by expansion begins with learning to be effective (efficiency and coverage are initially low and problems and mistakes high), proceeds to learning to be efficient (reducing the input requirements per unit of output), and then progresses to learning to expand (recognizing the importance of local fit and pacing the expansion to match organizational capabilities).

A second strategy for increasing scale is *scale by explosion*. In this approach, the reform bypasses the pilot stage and instead develops a model to serve the entire country simultaneously.⁸ Modifications and adaptations to accommodate diverse local settings generally follow rather than precede the initial implementation. The underlying premises of this approach are that it is possible to mobilize substantial energy, resources, and individual involvement through a high profile national reform and that stimulating demand will fuel and fund subsequent expansion. With the visible and

5. Larry Harrington and Jeff White, “Taking it Higher: Thoughts on Scaling up within Problem-Solving Approaches to Research on INRM,” CIMMYT Natural Resources Group; Center for International Forestry Research <<http://www.inrm.cgiar.org/Workshop2000/abstract/Larry%20Harrington/LHarrington.htm>> [2001.08.14].

6. Myers, “Going To Scale”; Robert Myers, “Going to Scale: Expansion vs. Association,” in Judith L. Evans, Robert G. Myers, and Ellen M. Ilfeld, *Early Childhood Counts: A Programming Guide on Early Childhood Care for Development: World Bank Institute Learning Resources Series* (Washington: World Bank, 2000), Electronic tip, p. 79.

7. David Korten, “Community Organization and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach,” *Public Administration Review* (September-October 1980): 480-511.

8. In practice, this approach is similar to a national reform rather than a scaled effort. As we indicated above, our primary focus here is on efforts that begin small and then expand.

forceful support of the national leadership, the reform is communicated widely. Local leaders quickly understand that their own status and influence are dependent on supporting and implementing the reform. As the momentum builds, the elements of the reform are institutionalized, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be sustained once national attention turns to other issues. Generally successful literacy programmes in Cuba and Nicaragua were organized in this way. Several African countries have pursued this strategy, for example mounting national literacy drives and campaigns to reach or accelerate universal primary enrollment. Myers is more critical of this approach in his recent analysis, highlighting its lack of firm local roots. At the same time, efforts to address HIV/AIDS seem to reflect a renewed use of this strategy.

A third strategy is *scale by association*. This approach seeks to combine several distinct though not necessarily coordinated efforts, each responding to a particular local setting. In practice, the association may be more a function of chance than planning. The introduction of teacher support centers in one district may be linked through practice with a modified curriculum in particular teacher education institutions and with new teacher recruitment patterns in another district to constitute a more general reform of teacher preparation that can be implemented more widely. Similarly, experiences in one setting may influence conceptions and practices in other settings, thereby enlarging the scale of the reform. In contrast with replication, this approach can be more readily responsive to the needs and demands of diverse local settings.

Rather than asking *how scaling up is accomplished*, Uvin and Miller characterize *what is scaled up*.⁹ In their typology, scaling up may focus on *structure*: organizations expand in size or constituencies (*quantitative scaling up*); on *programmes*: organizations expand the number and type of their activities (*functional scaling up*); on *strategy*: organizations move beyond service delivery towards empowerment and change in the structural causes of underdevelopment, including its contextual factors and its socio-political-economic environment (*political scaling up*); or on the *resource base*: organizations increase their financial and institutional base (*organizational scaling up*). These are of course not exclusive categories. Quantitative scaling up, for example, may rest on effective functional and organizational scaling up.

They note that quantitative scaling up, the dimension that corresponds most closely with the common use of “going to scale,” can have several paths. Effective local initiatives may *spread* to new sites. The national government or other organizations may seek to *replicate* a promising initiative in other settings. This path, they argue, is particularly attractive to governments and non-governmental organizations. It offers the possibility of testing a pilot and permits a combination of community-based activity and rapid expansion, since the managing agency need not wait for the development of strong community organizations in all prospective sites. Governments or other organizations may stimulate expansion by using incentives and rewards to *nurture* promising initiatives on an increasingly large scale. Another path is *aggregation*: separate organizations combine their resources to expand their activities. Along this path there seem to be few cases of organizational fusion. More common are cooperation, collaboration, joint representation, and joint programmes. Still another path is *integration*: small programmes are incorporated into existing structures and systems. Most common on this path is the government’s assumption of responsibility for schools or successful community initiatives. This path is especially attractive to both governments and external funding and technical assistance agencies because it promises both rapid expansion and sustainability.

Let us now ground these typologies by exploring efforts to enlarge the scale of innovations and reforms in education in Africa.

9. Uvin and Miller, “Scaling Up: Thinking Through the Issues.”

IV. INNOVATION AND REFORM IN AFRICAN EDUCATION: ENLARGING SCALE

As we have noted, there have been many imaginative, exciting, and sometimes dramatic innovations in education in Africa. But apparently relatively few of these reforms have been successfully expanded into national programmes. Indeed, many have not survived beyond their enthusiastic initiation or beyond their initial, often externally provided, funding or beyond the departure of the initial leader.

We sought, therefore, to survey the literature on education reform in Africa, concentrating on empirical research on scaling up education reform. That turned out to be a far more difficult task than we had anticipated and itself a problem for scaling up education reform in Africa. Broad and energetic searches of several sorts, including databases developed by UNESCO, the International Institute for Educational Planning, the World Bank, and the Educational Resources Information Center identified few empirical studies explicitly focused on enlarging scale in education in Africa.¹⁰ There have of course been numerous studies and evaluations of education reform in Africa. The World Bank maintains a Global Education Reform web site, though enlarging scale is neither a Key Issue nor a Type of Reform.¹¹ There have also been reviews of education sector studies and similar documents for Africa and for particular countries.¹² Some, perhaps many, of those studies and evaluations, which are often difficult to secure, address enlarging scale, more or less systematically. In practice, however, researchers find it difficult to determine which of the many studies address “going to scale” empirically and critically. That search is even more challenging for the many studies of education reform commissioned and undertaken by African researchers that circulate locally and often remain unpublished.¹³ Where it is so difficult to find relevant research and to compare experiences in different settings, there can be little productive link between research and policy.

As Maclure points out, even where research, or more often evaluations, focus on activities that are intended to be scaled up, the study or assessment concentrates largely on the pilot phase, with little or no attention to the process of enlarging scale.

10. An important exception that focuses explicitly on the issues addressed here is Jack Schwille and Martial Dembélé, “Teacher School Improvement and Professional Development Projects in Guinea: Lessons Learned From Developing a Nation-Wide Program and Issues in Going to Scale” (San Antonio: Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society, San Antonio, March 2000).

11. URL: <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/globaleducationreform/> [2001.08.22].

12. Joel Samoff, with N'Dri Therèse Assié-Lumumba, *Analyses, Agendas, and Priorities for Education in Africa: A Review of Externally Initiated, Commissioned and Supported Studies of Education in Africa, 1990-1994* (Paris: UNESCO, for the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 1996); Cowden E. M. Chikombah, Boniface R. S. Chivore, Obert E. Maravanyika, Levi M. Nyagura, and Isiah M. Sibanda, *Review of Education Sector Analysis in Zimbabwe 1990-1996* (Paris: UNESCO for the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 1999); Tilahun Workneh, Tirussew Teferra, Ayalew Shibeshi, and Malcolm Mercer, *Studies of Education in Ethiopia: An Inventory and Overview of Education Sector Studies in Ethiopia 1994-1997* (Paris: UNESCO, 1999); E. M. Sebatane, D. P. Ambrose, M. K. Molise, A. Mothibeli, S. T. Motlomelo, H. J. Nenty, E. M. Nthunya, and V. M. Ntoi, *Review of Education Sector Analysis in Lesotho 1978-1999* (Paris: UNESCO for the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 2000); D. K. Agyeman, J. J. K. Baku, and R. Gbadamosi, assisted by E. Addabor, K. Adoo-Adeku, M. Cudjoe, A. A. Essuman, E. E. K. Gala, and C. Pomary, *Review of Education Sector Analysis in Ghana 1987-1998*. (Paris: UNESCO for the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 2000); K. Ernest Ilboudo, M. Compaoré, B. Ouédraogo, P. Somda, O. Kaboré, A. Ouédraogo, F. Kinda, and B. Kaboré, *Analyse Sectorielle Du Système Éducatif: Revue Nationale des Études en Éducation entre 1994 et 1999* (Paris: UNESCO for the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 2001).

13. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) provides an important entry point into the research on education in Africa. Building on its prior work and as preparation for its 1999 Biennial Meeting, ADEA solicited reports of effective reforms in education in Africa. See Association for the Development of Education in Africa, *What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks! Report From a Prospective, Stocktaking Review of Education in Africa* (Paris: Association for the Development of Education in Africa, 2001), and Association for the Development of Education in Africa, *Partnerships for Capacity Building and Quality Improvements in Education*. Joel Samoff, Compiler and Editor. (Paris: ADEA, 1999) For an overview of education in Africa more generally that highlights problems and challenges, see Joel Samoff, “No Teacher Guide, No Textbooks, No Chairs: Contending with Crisis in African Education,” Robert F. Arnove and Carlos Alberto Torres, editors. *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 393-431.

Regardless of variation on the relative success or failure of reform efforts, evaluations tend to focus mainly on the pilot phases of reform programs.¹⁴

Many of the innovative education programmes and projects in Africa have been lauded as success stories. Relevant cases have been collected, for example within UNESCO's Cooperative Action Strategies in Basic Education in Africa (CASE AFRICA) project. In 1999 the Association for the Development of Education in Africa solicited national reports and studies in its Prospective Stock-Taking Review of Education in Africa, with special reference to breakthroughs in relation to access, quality and capacity building.¹⁵ One would expect that all or most of these reform efforts have been taken to scale. As of the report, that does not seem to have been the case. While some indicate plans to do so, others do not.

A. The Challenge of Evaluating Outcomes in Education

Evaluating human activities is always a daunting challenge. People and institutions simply refuse to hold still. Nor should we expect them to. We value adaptation and accommodation, flexibility and responsiveness, self-reflection and self-critique, and the ability to use experience to modify conception, structure, content, and practice.

That flux is often in tension with the standard evaluation model, which presumes a reasonably orderly progression from initial assumptions to goals and objectives to indicators to measures to observations to findings to recommendations, relying generally on the manipulation and analysis of quantitative data. Distinguishing independent from dependent variables, that approach seeks to identify the factors (inputs) of greatest consequence for observed behaviors (outputs). To the extent possible it does so in a natural (as contrasted with a laboratory) setting, by isolating the elements of primary interest, separating them from confounding influences—other factors, environmental characteristics, and the evaluators' own role. Although a clean dissection is not always possible, that is the goal.

For education that is particularly problematic. Education is at its core contextual. Learning is the result of connections, interactions, responses, shared experiences, and empathy, not clinical detachment. Consider, for example, curriculum development. There can be no good curriculum independent of the context in which it is used, just as neither a pencil nor a computer is intrinsically good. The best curriculum emerges from an interactive process that involves people with different sorts of expertise and experience (from specialized curriculum developers to teachers to students), that considers, shapes, tests, and then modifies a wide range of content and ways to use it, and that continues to evolve as it is implemented. It is this understanding of *education as process*, much more than the revision of prior knowledge and the appearance of new textbooks, that requires that the curriculum be continually rewritten and that each subsequent revision not be too tightly bound to its predecessor. The wisdom that is embedded in curriculum is not created by the orderly accumulation of bits of knowledge, like collecting sea shells along the beach, but rather generated by the confrontation of perspectives, experiences, and preferences. Not scientific consensus but unresolved disagreements—about what are the core ideas, about how learners can effectively engage those ideas, about the appropriate roles for instructors, students, and materials, even about the learning process—are the stuff of curriculum development.

Let us pursue the curriculum example. Logically, it is possible to conceive of studying curriculum development by isolating it from confounding influences, exploring principal inputs and outputs, and testing hypothesized relationships. One might, for example, through observation construct a list of the two, or five, or ten factors that seem to contribute most to effective curriculum development and that can be influenced by policy decisions. That list might include curriculum

14. Richard Maclure, editor, *Overlooked and Undervalued: A Synthesis of ERNWACA Reviews on the State of Education Research in West and Central Africa*. (Washington: USAID, 1997), p. 102. ERNWACA is the Education Reform Network for West and Central Africa.

15. Association for the Development of Education in Africa, *What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks!*.

developers' level of education, the length of their prior experience, the extent and forms of teachers' (and perhaps students') participation, the locus of decision making authority, the availability of resources, and more. Having established that list, one might then create or locate curriculum development settings that were similar in most respects but different in one or more of the factors assumed to be important. And so on. Studies of that sort are undertaken regularly. Yet, collectively they prove dissatisfying and do not offer a clear guide to appropriate policy. That is so for several reasons.

First, the ground rules change frequently and unexpectedly. That is, a decision by higher authority about who is responsible for which sort of curriculum development changes the curriculum development terrain, making findings in one setting not readily comparable to those in another. Each situation becomes unique. Second, there are too many factors to track simultaneously. Simplifying assumptions about what matters may exclude from consideration what turn out to be determining influences. In many countries, for example, the interests and preferences of foreign assistance agencies—what they are and are not willing to fund—may have important direct and indirect influence on curriculum development. Third, what initially seem to be small differences may have large consequences. Initial differences that escape observation can have profound impacts. Note that better measurement techniques cannot solve this problem, since there will always be differences that the measuring instruments cannot detect.

As well, education reform commonly has long time horizons, while assessment generally has a much shorter term time frame. A reform that is deemed successful shortly after its initiation may prove not to be sustainable. The early assessment, or other short-period assessments, may come to very different conclusions from a longer-term evaluation.

Those involved in education reform, as well as the broader education community and national policy makers, often have widely different understandings of appropriate evaluation measures and indicators of success. ADEA's prospective stock-taking, for example, emphasized quality, access and capacity building. Different indicators might well have been chosen. Presumably, the choice of indicators is based on what we perceive to be the state of education Africa and what measures are necessary to move it forward. Countries also differ in their priorities. For instance, those countries that achieved universal primary education some time ago will not find access as important as in countries like, say, South Africa, where apartheid effectively denied access to education for black majority.

Since education outcomes always have multiple origins and causes, it is difficult to determine whether scaling helped, hurt, or made no difference. While the effort to increase scale can itself have direct and indirect consequences, to isolate and declare categorically that scaling up has been responsible for an observed outcome is potentially very misleading, since other factors could have played a part as well. As we have suggested, causality is difficult to establish in education reform, especially over a long period where observed outcomes are likely to have multiple causes.

These caveats are important to our effort to explore attempts to enlarge the scale of education reforms. They caution us that the determination of "what works" and what is "successful" is in part, perhaps a very large part, contextual and contingent. Consequently, we must be careful not to generalize beyond the reach of the empirical analyses of scaling up and to recognize that the generalizations that seem well grounded must be interpreted in the context of specific initiatives and settings.

B. Observations from the Cases Reviewed

What do we learn from a review of the few studies that link innovation and reform with enlarging scale? The proliferation of innovations in education policy and practice in Africa may make

it difficult to monitor programmes and projects, and their implementation strategies.¹⁶ Injecting too many innovations into the education systems leads to a phenomenon commonly termed as “innovation overload.”¹⁷ When a reform initiative does not seem to produce desired results immediately, the tendency is to introduce a new change, often without adequate implementation and monitoring of the previous initiative. There are also pressures to come up with quick rather than long-term solutions to education problems, a situation sometimes encouraged by demands of the funding agencies. As Shaeffer (1992) puts it, “Such pressure can make it difficult to adapt to local circumstances and therefore tempt a ministry to finish a project, declare it a success, and move to yet another rather than reinforcing the operations, maintenance, and sustainability of the first.”¹⁸

In this scenario, the indicators of success of the education system are sometimes determined by the number of projects completed and the funds invested. This leads to short-lived programmes. The impact of some educational activities is delayed while for others it is relatively immediate.¹⁹ Reform is a process that takes time and needs to be internalized by those it is intended to affect. It is therefore necessary to take stock regularly, through systematic monitoring and evaluation, of the performance of innovative strategies. More important for this consideration of “going to scale,” that stock taking should facilitate understanding better what works and what does not work. Those understandings could in turn be used in scaling up the activities, should that seem appropriate and desirable. It should be stressed here that monitoring and evaluation should be built into the implementation plan, and should involve local expertise as much as possible in order to ensure popular participation.²⁰ It may further be argued that sometimes reform measures in education Africa are put in place primarily because it is fashionable or politically expedient to do so. Politicians and policy makers may use the innovations to win the hearts (or at least votes) of the electorate. There are often complaints that politicians impose these initiatives on the education systems, particularly schools that are already under-resourced or overburdened with other activities. All too frequently, teachers and others learn of major changes on the radio news or by word of mouth from colleagues at the school house door. Obanya notes that policies and intentions are often regarded as successes because of the failure to monitor the implementation of the systems.²¹ He argues that this is one of the causes of the failure of educational reforms.

Some educators suggest that before locally based initiatives are expanded, they should be reconceptualized. This was the case, for example with the experience gained from one adult basic education programme of the University of Natal in South Africa. The programme dealt with the training of literacy teachers and development of teaching materials for English as a second language.²²

The issue of prohibitive costs constitutes one of the main barriers in attempts to expand innovative initiatives in education in Africa. Cobbe addressed this issue in relation to a South African based interactive audio instructional programme, “English in Action.”²³ The author looked at various

16. E. M. Sebatane, “Monitoring of Educational Developments in Southern Africa: Past Experiences and Future Prospects,” (Paper presented at the 8th Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society, 1999).

17. D. Hopkins, M. Ainscow, and M. West, *School Improvement in an Era of Change*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1994), p. 12.

18. Sheldon Shaeffer, *Collaborating for Educational Change: The Role of the Teacher, Parents and Community in School Improvement*. IIEP Studies Programme: Increasing and Improving the Quality of Basic Education (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning, 1992), p. 16.

19. F. J. Nieuwenhuis, “Can Research into the Development of Education in Post-Colonial Africa Shape Education Policies in South Africa?” *International Journal of Educational Development* 17,2(1997):129-43.

20. Joel Samoff, “The Reconstruction of Schooling in Africa,” *Comparative Education Review* 32,2(1993):181-222.

21. P. Obanya, “Going Beyond the Educational Reform Document,” *Prospects* XIX,3(1989):333-347.

22. Elda Lyster, “Adult Basic Education in a Rural Development Project: A Micro-level Case Study,” *Convergence* 24,1-2(1991):32-38.

23. James Cobbe, *The Economics of Interactive Instruction; The Case of South Africa*. LearnTech Case Study Series (Washington: 1995).

factors involved in running such a programme, including costs for taking it to scale. Of relevance here is the fact that prediction of costs will have to incorporate both economic and political conditions.

As we have noted, it often proves difficult or impossible for African countries to sustain programmes originally funded externally. Commonly there are no in-built mechanisms to ensure sustainability, including capacity building. One example cited by Jenkins is the in-service teacher training programme at the William Pitcher College in Swaziland in the 1970s.²⁴ Once the specified number of teachers had completed the programme, it was terminated. Although this initiative had generated substantial interest and enthusiasm for other potential trainees, the country was unable to continue the programme following the phasing out of external funding.

Another example was Burkina Faso's introduction in the late 1990s of results-based management in schools on a national scale, perhaps an example of Myers' notion of expansion by explosion. In contrast to the existing inspection system, this new approach called for using data on school achievement to improve quality, to support teachers by recognizing their importance, and to motivate teachers to pursue their efforts to improve quality. To this end, two instruments were developed, one for Chefs de circonscription (district officers) for supervising and supporting whole schools and the other for pedagogical advisors for supporting individual teachers. School heads and teachers were seen as key actors in this approach, expected to lead the design and implementation of school and classroom improvement action plans. In this case, both the education ministry and the external funding agency adopted an administrative approach to educational change. That led to: haste in introducing the change, downplaying the need to provide adequate training for those involved, and assuming that designing instruments at the central level and distributing them to schools, with limited input from those who were to use and benefit from the reform, are sufficient for change to take place. In the event, despite some encouraging outcomes, after three years of implementation the new approach still does not appear to have taken root.

Some of the reasons for limited or ineffective efforts to enlarge scale, particularly in the context of distance education, include the lack of imaginative adaptation of the strategies and resources of the original programme, the costs involved, and the lack of commitment on the part of politicians. Other distance education initiatives fail to expand or to be sustained because they constitute isolated events without an institutional base as well as follow up efforts at the local level.²⁵

V. ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

What do we learn from these experiences and from efforts elsewhere to enlarge the scale of innovations and reforms in education and other spheres of development? As we ask that question, we must be cautious and critical in addressing what are commonly termed "lessons learned" and "best practices." As we have noted above, assessing outcomes in education is an extraordinarily difficult challenge. Relating outcomes to a specific innovation or reform is even more difficult.

That education is inherently contextual has several implications. First, evaluating education reforms demands approaches sensitive to education's fundamentally contextual nature and to education as *process* as well as outcome. Educators quickly become uneasy with notions like "best practices," since what makes a particular practice effective in one setting is a function of both the practice and the setting. As well, from this perspective, educators find frustrating the inclination to dissect education from its context in order to study and evaluate it. In the mode of a formal experimental method, that dissection regards interaction as a source of confusion rather than understanding interaction as the appropriate focus for analytic attention.

24. J. Jenkins, "Some Trends in Distance Education in Africa: An Examination of the Past and Future Role of Distance Education as a Tool for National Development," 41-44, 46-48 (1989) URL: <http://www1.worldbank.org/disted/policy/national/diff-02.html>.

25. A. Dodds, "Distance Learning for Pre-tertiary Education in Africa," M. Thorne and D. Grugeon, editors. *Open Learning in the Mainstream*. 321-327 (Harlow: Longman, 1994).

For similar reasons, second, we must be very cautious in searching for “lessons learned.” Lessons shorn from their context are not lessons at all. Of course it is possible to learn from experiences in disparate settings. Indeed, that is the driving dynamic of this paper. But what we learn must always be understood in its context. There are many examples of context-free “lessons” that become stultifying straight jackets rather than useful guides to action. For some time, for example, many funding and technical assistance agencies active in Africa have asserted that within specified limits, education quality is affected more by the availability of textbooks than by class size and that in-service teacher education is far more cost-effective than pre-service teacher education. Simultaneously, a large volume of education research in the United States indicates that the investments with the greatest impact on education quality are those that improve teacher education and that reduce class size. Perhaps all of those apparently inconsistent conclusions are correct. Perhaps not. But their juxtaposition highlights the situational specificity of “lessons learned” and the risks of attempting to decontextualize findings and apply them in very different settings. Even crossing the border to a neighboring country may be too far.

Third, simplifying findings (“lessons learned”) in order to generalize may lead to stating the obvious rather than developing useful guides to action. For example, systematic comparative assessment may find in the reforms studied that principals or head teachers have played a key role. Drawing the lesson that “leadership matters” loses the insights gained from understanding the settings in which the original studies were done, ignores the conditions in which the finding may be deemed valid, and does not progress much beyond common sense as a guide for practice elsewhere.

Fourth, much of what matters in education—that is, that affects access, learning outcomes, and management—is continually negotiated and renegotiated. Decentralization of responsibility for education provides an important example. For a time, decentralization was promoted as a near universal remedy to many of the problems of education in poor countries. In part on their own initiative and in part with external pressure and encouragement, some education systems have significantly decentralized. Systematic study suggests that decentralization (ignoring for the moment those settings where decentralization has remained rhetoric, not practice) accomplishes different things in different places, often in very different forms. Put positively, the appropriate balance between central direction and local autonomy is specific to particular places and times and is likely to change as circumstances change. Consequently, effective decentralization reflects on-going negotiations, sometimes among changing actors, about where authority and responsibility for specific activities should lie. An effective decentralization scheme in one setting may, or may not, be applicable in another setting.

The specification of “what works” and “what is effective” are similarly contextual and negotiated. For example, a reform that is associated with improved examination results but that does not reduce, and may indeed entrench, gender or racial inequalities, may be deemed very effective by some (education quality has to do with achievement outcomes; inequalities are important and must be addressed, but in themselves are not a measure of quality) and very ineffective by others (inequality is a measure of quality; schools with high-scoring boys and low-scoring girls are not providing high quality education). Note too that since what differs here are situationally specific values and expectations, those differences cannot be resolved by advances in research methodology.

Fifth, comparing strategies for enlarging scale must avoid asserting strong conclusions on the basis of relatively short time horizon data. Education initiatives and reforms may require years for their outcomes to be reliably measured and assessed. Consider, for example, support to improving teacher education. If that support is effective, newly prepared teachers will be more competent than their predecessors. If so, then students in their classes are likely to learn more or more effectively or more quickly than learners in the classes of teachers prepared in the previous (unimproved) teacher education system. If so, then the students of the more competent teachers can be expected to score higher on appropriate achievement measures. From the time of the initial investment in improved teacher education, however, to the time when higher achievement scores become visible is likely to be several years, perhaps a decade.

Sixth, the links between a particular innovation or reform and education outcomes, especially those not visible until years after the initiation of the reform, may be difficult or impossible to establish. To pursue the example above, since many factors influence achievement scores, only very rarely can improved examination results be systematically and reliably attributed to improved teacher education (or another reform) begun several years previously.

Accordingly, as we consider what can be learned from studies, implementation reports, and evaluations of efforts to enlarge the scale of innovations and reforms in education in Africa, we must be very attentive to the situational and conditional character of our observations and conclusions and of their implications for future action.

A. Successful Scaling Up

In their critical overview of support to education reform, Healey and DeStefano argue that most school reform initiatives are in one way or another demonstrations or pilots or models.²⁶ They point out that pockets of good educational practice can be found almost *anywhere*, suggesting that what is deemed good education is not primarily a function of esoteric knowledge.²⁷ Rather, innovative teachers, initiative-taking and perhaps politically influential parents, risk-taking and non-conformist headmasters, and progressive communities can all be sources for effective innovations in education. Imaginative reforms can thus be found throughout the world, often amidst poverty and other very trying circumstances. At the same time, good educational practices cannot be found *everywhere*. Indeed, reform initiatives are pilots precisely because the mix of ingredients that lead to school improvement varies in time and place and because notwithstanding years of research and analysis, the most effective learning results from creative interactions among teachers and learners, that is, more from interactive process than from prior planning.

. . . if school reformers really did know how to create good schools, the scale-up problem probably would not exist. . . there are no magic bullets . . .²⁸

The pilot character of education reform is particularly clear in Africa, where it has become heavily dependent on external assistance. Since that assistance is predominantly focused on technical improvements (including teacher education, curriculum development, materials design and production, examination reform, assessment, education planning), and since external agencies certainly cannot provide enough capital to solve all the problems of education in perpetuity, nearly all projects are pilot or demonstration or experimental by their nature. Unfortunately, Healey and DeStefano report, evaluations indicate that at best half, or perhaps as few as one out of ten, reform initiatives have been sustained.

With that sobering statistic, let us consider what seems to work. As we have noted, success in enlarging small scale innovations and reforms may be due to elements specific to a particular setting and time and may not be readily generalized to other times and places. The common wisdom in many studies is that three factors are critical to enlarging the scale of an education reform: (1) a charismatic leader dedicated to the reform and committed to its expansion, (2) strong interest and demand in the communities at the sites targeted for expansion, and (3) sufficient funding, which may in practice be limited funding that is dependent on local sources. Many observers have concluded that in the absence of one of those factors, scaling up is far less likely to succeed.

It is useful here to extend that list by summarizing the factors that seem to be associated with successful scaling up. For that, we combine the findings of a wide range of studies, both primary and secondary,²⁹ and our own observations on the cases reviewed. Note that since unsuccessful reforms

26. F. Henry Healey and Joseph DeStefano, "Education Reform Support: A Framework for Scaling Up School Reform," Policy Paper Series (Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute, 1997).

27. Healey and DeStefano, "Education Reform Support: A Framework for Scaling Up School Reform," p. 2 (*original emphasis*).

28. Healey and DeStefano, "Education Reform Support: A Framework for Scaling Up School Reform," p. 7.

29. Sources are included in the list of references, below.

are poor candidates for scaling up, there is necessarily some overlap between factors associated with effective reform and factors associated with successful scaling up. Note as well that since the lists below are drawn from multiple sources, they include elements that may be, and sometimes are, incompatible with each other. That, too, reflects the diversity of experience and assessments.

The extended lists below are thus composites from multiple sources, intended to facilitate discussion, assessment, and future research. Constituted of findings from different sources, those lists are unweighted and unruly. Several categorizations are possible. Unfortunately, the listed factors do not correspond neatly with any of the typologies we have reviewed. The original sources differ on their relative importance and in the absence of a more solid empirical foundation, assigning weights would serve only to detach them further from their contexts. An alternative approach would be to identify the listed factors as either inputs or process. We find that approach attractive, since it might help to shift the weight of analytic attention from inputs to process. At the same time, that categorization risks further confusing the issues, and the relative roles of different factors, since any particular factor, say leadership or funding, can be an input or part of the process. Rather, we find it fruitful to address all of these factors as part of the *process* of enlarging the scale of education reforms. Accordingly for the purpose of this review, we group the factors culled from the literature by their proximity to the education reform—first those that are directly associated with the reform itself and then those that have to do with the general context.

1. Factors Associated with the Education Reform that is to be Scaled Up

- (1) Committed, dedicated, and seemingly untiring leadership, often a charismatic individual, whose persistence and stubbornness are generally assets though at times liabilities.
- (2) Clear and sustained local demand for the reform.
- (3) Local ownership of the specific elements of the reform; that is most likely when those elements are locally developed.
- (4) Clear and perhaps narrow focus on a single goal or service, with extension and diversification at a subsequent stage.
- (5) Sufficient, though perhaps very modest, funding, often from local sources. Competitive funding or challenge grants may increase the likelihood that only the most promising initiatives are supported.
- (6) Strong direct involvement, especially of the local community but also of others with important roles in the reform (including facilitators, animators, trainers, and other support staff whose participation may determine the feasible rate of expansion), coupled with effective participatory training for those involved and forums and other mechanisms for sharing experiences.
- (7) Understanding pilots as learning experiences, with room for revision and modification of the initiative and with continuing attention to the longer term and broader implications of the process of its implementation.
- (8) Flexible, iterative planning.
- (9) Competent technical analysis, including sound assessment of the feasibility of implementation.
- (10) Clear standards of practice and accomplishment, with appropriate and reliable monitoring and reporting results.
- (11) Clear accountability for the results.

2. General Supporting Factors and Conditions

- (1) The ability of the leadership to re-focus attention to expansion and its requisites.
- (2) Significant and sustained local involvement in decision making as well as implementation, especially parents; informed and democratic deliberation.

- (3) Clear, explicit, visible, and reiterated political commitment, important at both local and national levels. That is often difficult to achieve, since reforms may challenge or may be perceived as threatening to important vested interests.
- (4) Important intangible commitments, including (a) belief in the value and importance of the reform; (b) belief that teachers and other professional staff can assume greater responsibilities, notwithstanding the limitations of their education and preparation; (c) confidence that others can do what they have not done previously or have seemed incapable of doing; (d) commitment to proceeding, even when resources are insufficient, other tasks demand attention, and personal circumstances are distracting; (e) willingness to select and reward staff based on reasoned judgments about competence and accomplishments; (f) willingness to risk what has already been accomplished in order to extend the reform to other areas; (g) recognition that no one will be completely satisfied with the results without permitting that recognition to halt or stall further progress.
- (5) Scaling up is most likely to be successful when it was envisaged from the outset.
- (6) Effective integration of pilots and community initiatives into national education programmes. (Note, however, that some commentators point to effective reforms that began outside the formal education system and argue that they flourished because of that external location and its explicitly or implicitly critical posture.)
- (7) A strong network that links community and other organizations and that provides a supportive framework both for the initial reform and enlarging its scale. That network must be organized around a collaborative culture, notwithstanding the different goals and styles of the organizations involved.
- (8) Simple information systems that are likely to provide more rapid, more focused, and more useful feedback than more complex information systems that are vulnerable to breakdown and disruption and that require more extensive resources and staff to maintain.
- (9) Ways and moments for those involved in the reform to reflect and to celebrate accomplishments as they scale up.
- (10) A stable supporting infrastructure, which in practice means not only formal institutional support but also individuals and groups who work to assure that the reform occurs and is maintained.

B. Why Scaling Up Fails

As we have noted, Healey and DeStefano estimate that at most half, or perhaps only one out of ten, education reform initiatives have been sustained. Scaling up apparently has a similar record. Why is that?

Seeking to explain unsuccessful efforts to enlarge scale, nearly all commentators point to the absence of one or more of the three major factors we identified earlier: leadership, local interest and demand, and funding. The common stories are that while particular activities could be replicated in new sites, the dynamic leadership that made those activities effective in the pilots was not available and could not be replicated in the new sites, that the perceived local need that mobilized and energized participation in the pilots did not emerge in the new sites, and that funding, often available for the pilots from external sources, was not sufficient to sustain the expansion. That is, the energy, intensity, and resources focused on the initial setting are not accompanied by corresponding attention to efforts to expand the successes to new sites.

None of the research reports covered in the ERNWACA papers provides any indication of fundamental reforms that have been disseminated and institutionalized effectively in national education systems. Instead, educational reform appears as a parade of piecemeal innovations that often create a flurry of activity for short periods of time in a limited number of schools within fairly restricted geographical areas. Unfortunately, as the ERNWACA documents attest, without strong institutional and resources bases, efforts to reform and innovate are usually abandoned or relegated to perpetual pilot status.³⁰

30. Maclure, *Overlooked and Undervalued*, p. 102.

That may well be a function of the combination of the reliance on external funding to support education reform and the preference of external agencies for pilot programmes. That in turn is a reflection of the relatively short time horizons of their funding cycles and their policy that their role is to provide seed money but not to support the continuing expenditures of the education system.

It is important to note that in dealing with unsuccessful reform and scaling, research and evaluations tend to focus on antecedents and inputs, with much less attention to the process of implementation and almost none to the longer term effects, whether positive or negative, of the efforts to innovate and enlarge scale. As Maclure notes in his synthesis and review of education research in west and central Africa,

In terms of content, ERNWACA research has focused heavily on the antecedents and conceptual weaknesses of reform policies and on the contingencies that result in less-than-expected outcomes. Yet there is little analysis of the *process* of implementation. Likewise, there appears to be little understanding of the impact that educational innovations and reforms have on the key actors charged with implementing them, and on the school populations and local communities that are the targeted beneficiaries of educational change. The residual effects of *efforts* to generate positive change, and perceptions of relative success or failure at different levels of educational bureaucracies and in local communities, still remain largely undisclosed.³¹

Some observers go farther, arguing that scaling up, especially in the form of efforts to replicate or reproduce effective reforms in multiple settings, is an inherently flawed approach. Malvicini and Jackson develop that critique forcefully.³² First, they address the specific experiences of the Swedish Working Life Fund:

The Swedish Working Life Fund (SWLF) invested more than one billion US Dollars in over 25,000 local projects. Between 1990 and 1995 these projects touched over half the country's workforce supporting significant changes toward popular empowerment and increased productivity. Surprisingly, *no blueprint approach* was applied here—just the opposite. The theory underlying the effort refuted the effectiveness of replicating pilot projects, successful models, or what Gustavsen et al. (1996) call *star-cases*. . . . The role of the fund's staff was to support the projects (organizations) internal "infrastructure of change," opening up space, an *environment where people create their own change*. . . . It was only after the project began that the key idea of *learning networks* emerged. [*original emphasis*]

They then address scaling up more generally:

Pilots rarely go to scale. While designers hope that government or local people will replicate successful model programs, scaling up remains rhetoric particularly in large donor-funded initiatives, where there is little budget or interest after the donor withdraws. Why? Communities with thriving pilots usually have a great measure of social capital invested and created by program processes. There are high degrees of local creativity, enthusiasm, pride, and trust present in the process of designing and implementing innovative programs. After the "awards are given" or the "book is published" or the "conference held" to celebrate the accomplishments of the pilot, it is perhaps *less likely* to be replicated. [*original emphasis*]

We need not adopt such a despairing view. Still, we need to explore why efforts to enlarge scale fail. Like successful efforts, failed attempts to enlarge small scale innovations and reforms may be largely due to elements specific to a particular setting and time. Here too, however, it is useful to summarize factors that seem to be associated with unsuccessful scaling up. For that, as above we combine the findings of a wide range of studies³³ and our own observations on the cases reviewed. Note that since unsuccessful reforms are poor candidates for scaling up, there is necessarily some overlap between factors associated with ineffective reform and factors associated with unsuccessful efforts to enlarge scale.

31. Maclure, *Overlooked and Undervalued*, p. 105 [*original emphasis*].

32. Peter Malvicini and John Jackson, "Emerging at Scale: Breaking the Star-Case Monopoly," CGIAR-NGO Committee and Global Forum for Agricultural Research. *Going to Scale: Can We Bring More Benefits to More People More Quickly?*, who cite Björn Gustavsen, Bernd Hofmaier, Marianne Ekman Philips, and Anders Wikman, *Concept-Driven Development and the Organization of the Process of Change* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1996).

33. Sources are included in the list of references, below.

- (1) The demand for the services to be provided by the reform is weak. Correspondingly, there is little or not public engagement with the reform.
- (2) Resources are insufficient, even with significant local voluntary contributions and very efficient management of limited resources.
- (3) Political commitment is insufficient at local and/or higher levels.
- (4) Programmes may be hijacked, or commandeered, or redirected by local or national governments or other institutions.
- (5) Organizational, management, and implementation problems undermine the initial reform and/or impede or block extending it further. Laws, statutes, regulations, and contracts can function to constrain or impede reform.
- (6) Communication, cooperation, and collaboration among organizations and communities are insufficient or inadequate.
- (7) Relevant knowledge—about education, about education reform, and about the details of specific reforms—is inadequate.
- (8) Citizens' expectations of how education should function, commonly based on their own experiences, become obstacles to reforms that envision dramatic changes; educators' own expectations may play a similar role.
- (9) Policy and decision making focuses on immediate crises at the expense of attention to longer term consequences, is oriented around distributive politics at the expense of education and learning, and is more concerned with regulating behavior than encouraging change.
- (10) Attention to results is inadequate; often there is little or no accountability for outcomes.
- (11) Standards embedded in the reform do not correspond to widely used assessment systems (for example, examinations).

C. Observations on Efforts to Enlarge Scale

Let us summarize. With the caveats about locally specific factors and the risks of generalizing noted above, we combine the findings of a wide range of studies and our own observations on the cases reviewed. Here too there is necessarily some overlap between factors associated with the initial innovation or reform and factors associated with efforts to enlarge scale.

- (1) There is no general blueprint. Success depends on responsiveness to the local setting and strong local organization.
- (2) Successful transition from project to programme is associated with a learning process. That requires organizations that (a) embrace error, (b) plan with the local community, and (c) link knowledge building with action.
- (3) Some education reforms are much more amenable to national initiation and management than others. Reforms that are seen as largely technical and that do not threaten local interests (for example, modifying the curriculum and pedagogy for teaching basic science) can be more readily led by education officials than reforms perceived as potentially destabilizing and threatening to the local community (for example, increased access for girls or religious or ethnic minorities), which may be initiated by national officials but are ultimately more dependent on local leadership and community involvement.
- (4) Scaling up is most effective where the roles of planner, administrator, evaluator, and researcher are combined in a single individual or closely-knit team.
- (5) Scaling up is most effective when the organizational capacity developed in pilot projects is preserved and used as expansion occurs.
- (6) Resolving the tension between teacher autonomy and close-to-school assistance is not achieved once and for all.
- (7) Decentralized management has a dual edge. On the one hand, local management and control may be essential for a reform to take root and expand. On the other hand, local management and

control risk (a) strengthening the influence of local opponents to the reform, (b) encouraging programmes in particular areas to lose sight of the larger goals of the reform, and (c) permitting orientations in different settings to diverge so widely that they overwhelm central management and support capacities.

- (8) Scaling up, especially in the form of replication, may be, and perhaps often is, in tension with participatory development and local ownership of development initiatives and programmes. (We return to this point below.)

VI. WHEN IS SCALING UP INAPPROPRIATE OR LIKELY TO BE UNVIABLE?

We began with the notion that scaling up—start small, think big—is an effective strategy for experimenting with new ideas and extending the reach of education reforms. In some circumstances, that is surely so, though perhaps far less often than has been anticipated. In other circumstances, however, scaling up is inappropriate or likely to be unviable.

Scaling up may so increase costs or reduce revenue that the reform becomes unsustainable. It is often assumed that enlarging effective pilot programmes will be associated with economies of scale. Yet, the evidence on that is unclear.

While many planners ‘intuitively feel’ that economies of scale exist with respect to their particular projects, there is no conclusive evidence on this topic.³⁴

Initial economies of scale may be superseded by rising unit costs as expansion includes those who are more difficult to reach. As well, the communities involved in the pilot efforts may be unwilling to fund activities elsewhere, while at the new sites there may be insufficient local support or involvement to generate needed funding. Consequently, exploring the longer term cost implications of scaling up, and thus the sustainability of the reform, must occur early and must be based on sound cost projections.

Scaling up risks distracting key leadership and spreading managerial and other capacities so widely that they can no longer cope. A strong and persisting thread of the education reform literature is the importance of leadership. School heads who are effective in mobilizing their communities and energizing their staffs will not necessarily do equally well with district, regional, or national responsibilities. Indeed, some of the attributes and behaviors that made them effective—ability to take the initiative in initially unsupportive circumstances, willingness to challenge authority, persistence in the face of criticism and adversity—will be unwelcome in the national education system and may be severely curtailed or sanctioned. Similarly, managerial and administrative systems appropriate to a province or a country are not simply large versions of village level oversight. Those who are competent in supervising and paying, say, ten teachers may be overwhelmed if they are expected to supervise and pay ten thousand teachers. At the same time, national managerial and administrative systems may not be sufficiently sensitive to the content and the form of the reform to sustain the initiative developed at the pilot sites.

Scaling up risks undermining the initial reform. Whether by distracting its leadership, or overwhelming its managerial and administrative capacities, or severing its ties to its local communities, or reducing its revenue base, or exposing it to new political controls, efforts to enlarge the scale of the initial reform may instead kill it. While some of those risks can be mitigated or managed, decision makers will need to assess carefully whether the promises of going to scale outweigh the risks to the initial reform.

Scaling up may outpace the expansion of the needed support infrastructure. Enlarging the scale of pilot programmes requires enlarging their support infrastructure, including the knowledge and skills not available in local communities. Where that infrastructure is not available, or cannot cope

0. K. D. Gaspari, “The Cost of Primary Health Care” [USAID, December 1980], quoted in Myers, *Going To Scale*,” p. 12.

with the demand, scaling up may collapse in a disorderly heap, discouraging all involved and perhaps depleting the fertility of the education soil for further reforms.

Scaling up may generate new and ultimately fatal political opposition. Precisely because education is so central to contemporary society, efforts to change it often challenge vested interests. The national political system may be able to accommodate those challenges when they remain localized and limited in number. Scaling up risks, indeed may require, generalizing those challenges. Feeling threatened, political elites and organizations may shift from cautious tolerance of the reform to implacable opposition. If so, then rather than extending the reach of the reform, scaling up may terminate it.

The conditions conducive to reform may be specific to its initial setting and absent elsewhere. Consider an analogy in another domain, power generation. Historically, power generation has been a story of “going to scale”: developing new ways to produce power (from small scale wood or dung burning to larger scale coal-burning steam and power generation [whose scale keeps increasing] to large hydroelectric dams, to nuclear power) and then increasing their capacity. With that history, imagine the development of a very effective strategy for producing power that has emerged in one corner of the country. Evaluation finds that strategy to be cost-effective (modest investment, low unit cost), sustainable (recurring costs can be met; limited or no negative environmental impact), and a boost to the local economy (generates jobs, encourages people to learn new skills and upgrade them, increases the demand for ancillary products and services). There would seem to be a clear argument for “going to scale,” that is, replicating that power generating strategy to other parts of the country. But suppose that the innovative power generating strategy turned out to be windmills, which require a particular sort of local setting (regular strong winds) in order to be viable, let alone cost effective, sustainable, and economy boosting? “Going to scale” might then be a very poor idea. The original innovation worked precisely because it was locally appropriate, carefully tuned to the circumstances of its setting. That very promising innovation will fail elsewhere because it will not have those local conditions. The general point here is that the *enabling conditions* of effective reforms are often not universal or universally reproducible. Indeed, an effort to spread windmills over the entire country might kill that approach entirely—failures elsewhere will drain resources and expertise, lead decision makers to reject the strategy, and lead investors (both local and foreign) to refuse to risk further investments in that technology. The diseconomies of scale could be enormous. Instead of windmills, our example could have used solar power, or power produced from the methane generated by decomposition in large refuse dumps, or other examples of innovations in power generation that require particular local conditions. Specialists in power generation refer to the importance of micro-power generation—not solely or even primarily more and larger power plants to serve a large power grid, but also and especially small scale, local power generation that requires modest investment, that is well suited to local needs, that can respond quickly to changing local circumstances, and that can be managed locally. The most useful scale may be the smallest scale. So too in education.

VII. RESOLVING TENSIONS AMONG CONFLICTING GOALS

This review of the factors associated with successful and unsuccessful efforts to enlarge the scale of education reforms in Africa leads us to a series of related issues and more generally to the links and tensions between “going to scale” on the one hand and development objectives and strategies on the other. Extended analysis of those interconnections is beyond the scope of this paper. We note them briefly here, therefore, both to highlight them and to help to frame discussing them.

A. “Going to Scale” and Participatory Local Development

The same experiences and analysis that nurtured the notion “going to scale” have also emphasized the importance of local participation in and ownership of development activities. Put sharply, programmes without significant local participation cannot be maintained or sustained, however imaginative their conception and however well funded their initiation. The development landscape is littered with withered vines and rusting hulks—good ideas and promising beginnings

that did not survive the departure of their initial leaders and the conclusion of their initial funding. Similarly, externally driven initiatives often undermine progress toward development objectives over the longer term, since their effect is incapacitating rather than capacity building, since they will at best be poorly integrated into national development strategies, and since they are unlikely to secure the political support necessary to see them through challenge and adversity. At least rhetorically, participatory local development has become the development community's order of the day.

How are these two orientations—reform by scaling up pilots or small initiatives and participatory local development—related?

How can a development initiative move beyond the local level and make a larger impact while continuing to foster participation? Can a participatory, bottom-up program, or the organization managing it, scale up while avoiding the problem of cumbersome and overstaffed organizations, detached from their grassroots bases, becoming mere sub-contractors of the foreign aid system or of the state, unaccountable to the communities who they claim to represent?³⁵

The near universal affirmation of the importance of local participation masks the multiple meanings assigned to that term. Insisting that there are many different sorts of “participation” and that it is essential to distinguish among them, Uvin and Miller propose a hierarchy of participation:

- (a) participation by the target population as beneficiaries
- (b) organizations seeking constituent participation in the costs and work of their programmes (in Uvin's and Miller's view, this is the most common form of participation sought and supported by development institutions and by many national governments)
- (c) popular participation in education and training activities that permits the transfer of organizational, managerial, and technical capacity to the community
- (d) community groups participate in the management of development programmes
- (e) direct participation in policy-making
- (f) ownership by the community and its organizations of the resources of the programme or activity

In their view, participatory rural development requires at least the three top levels of this hierarchy (at a minimum, community groups must participate in management):

The defining criterion for bottom-up development is not that there is no external funding or expertise, but rather that the people concerned are engaged in the decision-making concerning these resources.³⁶

That highlights an important tension between replication, the most common form of scaling up, on the one hand and participatory rural development and local ownership of development activities on the other. In its usual meaning “going to scale” is a strategy for replicating at larger scale and/or in more places a reform or innovation deemed particularly effective. That replication process is expected to involve planning and careful management and to produce economies of scale. Most often, there is a central coordinating institution, which may be the government or a non-governmental organization. Participatory local development and local ownership, however, assume a locally generated dynamic, which may differ from place to place and which is likely to be, at least in some places, a very slow process. Going to scale, which emphasizes planning, coordination, and management, and participatory local development, which emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and adaptability, may thus be two very different modes of fostering innovation and promoting development. While each has advantages and disadvantages, each may also undermine and impede the other.

Indeed, some of the programmes widely regarded as effective education reforms and successful scaling up began outside the national formal education system (among the most commonly cited are the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Lok Jumbish [India] and Escuela Nueva [Colombia]). Their founding mission was to address gaps in that system or to challenge its premises

35. Uvin and Miller, “Scaling Up: Thinking Through the Issues,” p. 3.

36. Uvin and Miller, “Scaling Up: Thinking Through the Issues,” p. 4.

and practices. At their inception education officials were inclined to regard those programmes as problems, not solutions. They were participatory. They met local needs. They had local support and over time local funding. They survived, in large part because they remained so local and resisted central control and direction. Poor candidates for replication, their organic connections with local communities, including strong local participation in management, enabled them to spread.

It is important to note here that just as much of the writing about going to scale is uncritical of its own core idea, so indeed a good deal of the writing about participatory local development is similarly only infrequently self-critical. Local communities are often portrayed in romantic terms as always and fully aware of their needs and very clear on how best to meet them, less affected, distracted, and confused by poverty, politics, and personality than people elsewhere. In a recent paper Abraham and Platteau challenge the current passion of the development community for participatory development and community-driven-development.³⁷ That orientation is popular, they argue, because game theory predicts and (naive) anthropologists claim that communities are the most effective agency for allocating resources, enforcing rules, and targeting the poor and because funding agencies assign high priority to disbursing large amounts of money quickly in ways that distinguish their current activities from the now discredited past of large development projects. Yet, Abraham and Platteau argue, success is rarely attained on these terms. Local communities are dominated by rent-seeking, self-aggrandizing, unaccountable local elites who can invoke a host of sharing norms and other redistributive mechanisms to ensure that their status is not challenged. Their conservative political base is protected by the shortage of change agents to work with communities over long the long term, thereby thwarting efforts to bring about lasting transformations in local organizing structures and procedures, and by the general inclination of funding agencies to judge their own success by the size and rapidity of funds disbursed, not lasting organizational change.

Clearly, there are important roles for outsiders in education reform and enlarging its scale. The infusion of new ideas and analytic tools may both fuel and sustain reform. Since closeness with practice can not only enhance understanding but can also constrain perspective and limit alternatives, informed and committed outsiders can help to analyze, critique, and thereby improve practice.

While local communities must indeed be the anchors for scaling up and the points of reference for development more generally, it is essential to understand that they too can become obstacles to reform and scaling up. Indeed, this exploration of the potential tensions between scaling up and participatory local development also shows that in addition to undermining each other, both enlarging scale and participation can themselves be obstacles to change.

B. Roles of the National Government

What are the appropriate roles of the national government in efforts to scale up education reforms? It is tempting to respond to that question in a linear and technical manner. Education reform requires planning, organization, management, and monitoring. Education reform requires knowledge and expertise. Education reform requires funding and a supporting infrastructure. Education reforms must be integrated into the national education system. Scaling up requires all of those as well as communication, coordination, and evaluation. The government can and should assume most or all of those responsibilities. After all, expanding access to education and improving its quality have clear benefits for the government. Spread throughout the country, education can be the most visible public service and therefore the clearest manifestation of what the government is doing for the populace. But a response of that sort ignores the disorderly nature of reform initiatives and their political character and adopts an understanding of reform as outcome rather than process.

37. Anita Abraham and Jean-Philippe Platteau, "Participatory Development in the Presence of Endogenous Community Imperfections" (Washington: Paper presented at a World Bank seminar held in the context of the World Bank's Annual Conference on Development Economics., 2001).

The challenge for the national government is to provide direction and support without impeding progress in a process that must have strong local roots and participation. As we have noted, that challenge may prove difficult for governments to meet.

Consider, for example, a national initiative on an issue for which there may not have yet emerged strong local demand. In many countries, efforts to improve girls' access to high quality, non-discriminatory education encounter hesitant support or explicit opposition locally. Over time, however, success in that initiative requires not only expanding access but also developing the local roots that will support and sustain the campaign. That suggests that enlarging scale involves far more than replicating in new sites specific measures designed to expand access. Scaling up requires as well reproducing, or more likely nurturing the spread of, the enabling conditions for those measures and the roots that support them.

The literature and experiences we have reviewed suggest that the appropriate roles for the national government in enlarging the scale of education reforms are:

- (1) specifying broad objectives and providing resources;
- (2) bringing programme planning and implementation together—establishing appropriate institutions, appointing key personnel, and then providing discretion to leaders;
- (3) participating in monitoring progress and performance;
- (4) providing stability (at the national level continuity and commitment may be more important than charisma); and
- (5) curbing the power of local elites, especially through institutionalizing democratic decision making, ensuring accountability, and strengthening local institutions.

We must not be naive. Education reform, and therefore scaling up, is as much as or more a political process than a technical process. However brilliant the idea, its implementation requires creating and maintaining a supportive political environment. Its advocates will need to build coalitions, nurture allies, and find ways to deal with opponents. Vested interests, perhaps important elements of the education ministry and national government, may feel threatened by education reforms. Indeed, those in power have periodically shown themselves to be more apprehensive about a literate and articulate citizenry than about the incapacities induced by illiteracy and persisting poverty. Governments are unlikely to take actions that jeopardize their security of tenure. There are, it would seem, two important implications here. First, the general commitment to democratic deliberation, participation, and accountability, including the enabling conditions that permit all citizens to influence policy and decisions, are important for education reform at smaller and larger scales. Second, a government genuinely committed to education reform must create space for it. That includes tolerating creative deviance and periodically sharp criticism. Societies that cannot tolerate citizens who stand up and say (often in a loud voice and unpleasant tone) “The old way is wrong. Here is a better way.” cannot learn or develop.

C. Roles of the External Funding and Technical Assistance Agencies

What are the appropriate roles of the external funding and technical assistance agencies in efforts to enlarge the scale of education reforms? As we have noted, education in Africa has become heavily dependent on external finance, education reform even more so. In some African countries external funds provide most or nearly all of the development budget; in some there is direct or indirect support for recurrent expenditures.³⁸ While everyone agrees on the importance of self-reliance and sustainability, both in tension with continued dependence on external funding, it would be naive to assume that in the near future African countries will forego foreign support to education.

38. The literature on aid to education in Africa grows steadily. For an overview of the consequences of persisting reliance on that external support, see Samoff, *No Teacher Guide, No Textbooks, No Chairs: Contending with Crisis in African Education*” and Joel Samoff, “Institutionalizing International Influence,” Robert F. Arnove and Carlos Alberto Torres. *Comparative Education: The Dialectic of the Global and the Local* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), pp. 51-89.

In view of the disabilities of dependence and the persisting demand for foreign funding, it is tempting to assert that the appropriate role for the external agencies is to provide the funds and step aside. But that, too, would be naive and short sighted. It would be naive because the external agencies and the organizations and governments to which they are responsible have their own interests and agendas. International cooperation and development partnership require that all partners recognize and respect the interests of the others. It would be short sighted because even when locally rooted, and perhaps especially so, education reform benefits from external inputs of several sorts.

The challenge for the external funding and technical assistance agencies, therefore, is to provide financial and other support without dominating the policy agenda or becoming the arbiter for acceptable practice and thereby stymying local initiative and impeding national ownership and management.³⁹ That challenge may prove difficult for external agencies to meet, a function primarily of their structural roles and organizational values and styles, not of the imagination, or good will, or dedication of their staffs.

The literature and experiences we have reviewed suggest that:

- (1) since their funding carries political influence and leverage, the major challenge for agencies is to determine when it is appropriate and productive to exercise leadership and when doing so is likely to dominate or block local initiatives;
- (2) agencies should view pilot projects as venture capital investments in which all are expected to succeed but in practice only 10-20% (or even fewer) are likely to do so and to be funded for the next level of support;
- (3) pilots are likely to be staff-intensive and should not require large sums;
- (4) agencies must permit flexibility in order to avoid preempting learning;
- (5) in addition to supporting education programmes and sectors, agencies should also orient some funding around imaginative individuals with leadership abilities
- (6) agencies must be far more patient before disbursing funds (for example, willing to wait years while communities, perhaps assisted by external change agents, debate and deliberate, revise rules and procedures, decide on objectives, and adopt reform strategies);
- (7) agencies should explicitly and energetically support democratic and participatory decision making and insist on transparency and accountability to the local community;
- (8) agencies should be more concerned with developing individual and institutional capacities and with education reform as a process than with specific outcomes, though of course outcomes may be a very useful measure of that process;
- (9) different funding organizations might play different roles at each stage; and
- (10) agencies must find creative ways to deal with large numbers of small scale activities (both block grants to intermediary organizations that disburse funds more widely and small grant programmes have proved effective).

While we believe there is a continuing role for external agencies in the process of scaling up, education reform, we do not accept uncritically some agencies' claims that their development expertise and advice is more important than their funding and that their primary role should be that of a development advisory service (see also our discussion below on expanding the knowledge base). Indeed, we think there is a strong case to be made for separating the funding role from the advisory role and for locating the advisory role outside the funding institutions. Developing that case, however, is beyond the scope of the discussion here.

39. We do not address here external organizations whose explicit goal is to influence directions and priorities in the development of education in Africa. Their funding has explicit expectations and often formal conditions. Africa's education communities (and national decision makers) must decide whether or not the value of their advice, technical assistance, and funds exceeds the cost of their influence and authority.

D. Locus of Authority and Responsibility

Everyone (or nearly everyone) is in favor of alleviating the consequences of poverty and reducing and eliminating poverty entirely. Everyone—national governments, funding and technical assistance agencies, NGO, local community organizations—claims to be the most effective advocate for the poor, not infrequently as against the others. It is not uncommon for external agencies to insist that they protect the interests of the poor and disadvantaged more effectively than their own governments. So do some NGOs. Those governments of course disagree. While it is often asserted that “the poor know best”—a claim that at its core is quite reasonable but in specific circumstances may be technically incorrect and may romanticize poverty—often the non-poor who make that assertion are unwilling to accept its implications. In some circumstances, each of those claims is accurate. But in other circumstances, each of the advocates may do more to perpetuate than alleviate poverty. The point is that there is no “right answer” about where direction and control should lie. In some circumstances, central government (or even foreign agencies) can protect the disadvantaged against interests, pressures, and authorities in their own local setting, while in other circumstances central government and foreign agencies are the problem, not the solution.⁴⁰

With everyone claiming to be the most effective advocate for the disadvantaged and at the same time insisting on local initiation and local ownership, where should the locus of authority and responsibility lie? That is an especially daunting question for efforts to enlarge the scale of education reforms, since scaling up clearly requires inputs and active participation at multiple levels. Several themes have emerged from our analysis.

The appropriate balance between central direction and local autonomy is likely to vary over time and circumstances, perhaps even within the same setting. Many years of discussion about decentralization make this point. For a time, decentralization was promoted as a near universal remedy to many of the problems of education in poor countries. In part on their own initiative and in part with external pressure and encouragement, some education systems have significantly decentralized. Systematic study suggests that decentralization (ignoring for the moment those settings where decentralization has remained rhetoric, not practice) accomplishes different things in different places, often in very different forms. Put positively, the appropriate balance between central direction and local autonomy is specific to particular places and times and is likely to change as circumstances change.

Notwithstanding laws and regulations, the location of authority and responsibility are often negotiated. That is especially important where the reform objective is social transformation and where the mode of reform incorporates a learning process. Like decentralization, effective scaling up reflects on-going negotiations, sometimes among changing actors, about where authority and responsibility for specific activities should lie. An approach to scaling up that is successful in one setting may, or may not, be applicable in another setting. More generally, effective scaling up is likely to require multiple poles of activity with inclusive deliberations and periodic modifications that determine how responsibility and authority will be organized, rather unvarying adherence to a prior formal plan.

Like education reform, scaling up is necessarily a political process. At its most effective, it is also a learning process. While the documents that describe education reform initiatives and plans to enlarge their scale generally focus on inputs, systems, responsibilities, categories of participants, and expected outcomes, the practice is far more fluid. Reform advocates must construct supporting coalitions, both locally and nationally. Assembling alliances inside and outside the education system requires negotiation and compromise. Responsiveness and adaptability are requisites for learning.

40. Note the example of the era of the civil rights struggle in the U.S. For some communities—say, the rural south—the principal enforcers of segregation were local governments and police, and national government intervention was more likely to be on the side of integration. Local activists thus sought outside intervention. For other communities—say, school districts in poor New York neighborhoods—the central leadership [in this case, city and state] was the obstacle to integration and the solution was locally controlled school boards. Local activists thus opposed outside intervention. Hence, whether more or less local control was preferable was a function of the situation and circumstance, not an absolute “good” or “correct.”

When reform and scaling up are understood and implemented primarily as a technical or mechanical process—gather relevant expertise, specify the necessary activities and sequences, and then take each step in its turn, with little room for deliberation, learning, and revision—they are unlikely to proceed much beyond their infancy. As we make this point, we do not romanticize local participation. As we have noted, local communities can be serious obstacles to change, and there are certainly circumstances where strong central leadership is required to initiate and scale up a reform. But that too is a matter of politics and learning. Even in circumstances where strong external intervention seems warranted, it is most likely to be effective and its accomplishments are most likely to be sustained when it understands reform and scaling up as a process that rests on dialogue, negotiation, and learning.

While detailed prior plans and clearly specified lines of authority are attractive to national governments and external agencies, they may in practice impede education reform and efforts to enlarge its scale. Governments and external agencies are reasonably concerned with allocations and their uses and with the locus of responsibility. Planning can be organized as an opportunity for local engagement and participation. Required transparency and accountability can strengthen local participation. Clear guidelines and externally set standards and assessment measures may assure conformity to national objectives and consistency of evaluation. At the same time, planning and management of the sort commonly required by governments and external agencies can easily become so constraining that they undermine the reform or prevent enlarging its scale. As well, they can so overwhelm local capacities that only outsiders are deemed capable of understanding and leading the reform. When that occurs, the reform becomes unsustainable and certainly not scalable. The challenges here are to organize each stage in the reform and scaling as a process that engages those who must bear responsibility for it over time and to enable them to be the reformers rather than the subjects or recipients of the reform.

Non-governmental organizations can clearly play important roles in education reform and enlarging its scale. They cannot, however, replace government, external funding and technical assistance agencies, or local communities. In recent years there has been increasing attention to the roles and responsibilities of non-governmental organizations of all sorts, often termed “civil society.”⁴¹ Democratic participation depends on a healthy and active organizational infrastructure. Some external agencies have sought to nurture that infrastructure and at the same time have attempted to reduce the burden of managing assistance to a large number of small recipients by relying on selected non-governmental organizations to receive, redistribute, and manage funds. In some settings that has proved effective and efficient. But the expanded NGO role does not and cannot replace the important roles of either government or the external agencies and certainly cannot substitute for direct participation by local communities.

Cumulatively, these themes emphasize the importance of understanding both education reform and scaling up as processes rather than events or outcomes. Indeed, the most important outcome of education reform is a learning process, both within and outside schools.

VIII. WHAT NOW?

As we have reviewed reports on enlarging the scale of education reforms in Africa and elsewhere, three important themes have emerged that frame an agenda for future action. The weakness of the knowledge base is problematic. Scaling up promising reforms requires a holistic approach and vibrant social networks. The major challenge is to nurture innovation.

41. To simplify and focus the discussion, we use the term “non-governmental organization” literally, that is to include all groups and organizations that are not formally part of the government—small and large, local and foreign, nationally based and community based, multi-issue and single-issue, formal and informal.

A. Improving the Knowledge Base

Research on education reform in Africa is both rich and poor. It is rich in that it is voluminous, often imaginative and insightful, and continuing. It is poor in that once completed, research on education in Africa tends to disappear from view. Consequently, even though many people in many places, both African and non-African, are involved in studying education in Africa, it is difficult for anyone anywhere to develop a clear broad picture of that research. It is even more difficult to focus on a particular cross-cutting issue like scaling up. As Maclure notes

This underscores a common thread that links almost all of the research highlighted in the ERNWACA documents—namely, that the dissemination of African educational research, in whatever form it has been presented, has been exceedingly limited and is thus generally unknown or quickly discounted as lacking credibility.⁴²

The conditions associated with effective education reforms and with successful efforts to enlarge their scale are especially poorly documented.

Note that we are concerned here with systematic and thorough empirical research. While reports and commentaries prepared by those most involved in education reforms do indeed provide important insights and understandings, they cannot play the same role as more detached comparative and critical analyses. Equally important, since our review suggests that initial efforts often seem quite successful, careful assessment requires attention to reforms and efforts to enlarge scale after the initial bubble of enthusiasm has passed, and perhaps after the launching leadership has been succeeded and national education officials have changed.

Note too that the very effort to enlarge scale may itself obscure or devalue systematic study. Our review suggests that it is not uncommon for those involved in scaling up to be so enmeshed in their efforts and so excited by the apparent progress that they do not document carefully what is happening and cannot subsequently explain fully how they achieved their objectives. As well, national officials may move so quickly to enlarge apparently successful pilots that they ignore evaluations and other studies in progress.

If much of the empirical research quickly becomes invisible and inaccessible, there can be little productive link between research and policy. At the large scale, this suggests the importance of strengthening education research capacity in Africa, including the institutional framework for storing, retrieving, and sharing studies, findings, and recommendations. Among the strategies for addressing this problem are (1) creating and maintaining relevant databases of studies of education in Africa, including not only published work but also significant unpublished papers and student theses, (2) commissioning periodic state-of-the-work critical reviews, (3) convening regional and continental seminars, workshops, and conferences to permit sharing experiences and critical analysis of empirical research, (4) increasing collaboration among national education research institutions, and (5) facilitating exchanges and study visits for education researchers. While knowledge and communication are global, the location of the development of knowledge and its communication do matter. While exchange is and will remain important, Africans are and must continue to be creators of knowledge and determiners of its global value. Currently, the institutional infrastructure for education research does not provide adequate support for that process. In its efforts to foster partnership among Africa's education officials, funding and technical assistance agencies, and other organizations the Association for the Development of Education in Africa may have an important role to play in this regard.

We are less optimistic about the initiatives of external agencies to establish, maintain, and disseminate development knowledge databases and electronic exchanges of development expertise. To date, the process of those initiatives has been fundamentally disempowering. While a fuller

42. Maclure, *Overlooked and Undervalued*, p. 117.

discussion is beyond the scope of this paper,⁴³ it is useful to list several of the most important problems with this approach. (1) What is deemed valid and legitimate knowledge is likely to become increasingly centralized in the North. (2) The information that is collected in the South will be shaped and framed by its interpreters. (3) That powerful role in determining what is and what is not knowledge will be obscured by the mystique of science and scientific method. The recognition that generating knowledge is inherently a contested political process will be rejected in favor of the claim that knowledge generation and collection are primarily technical matters, governed by the rules of science, not politics. (4) With the rules of science as the ultimate measure and with those rules largely set and maintained by a small elite in the affluent countries, valid knowledge production will become an increasingly expensive endeavor, an effort beyond the reach of most people, including scholars, in poor countries. (5) The centralization of the determination of what is knowledge entrenches the roles of the elite education and research institutions in the world, nearly all located in the most affluent countries. A few scholars and institutions in poor countries will be integrated into official development knowledge generation and management, but with few exceptions, they will remain junior partners in this effort, observers, commentators, and as requested, interpreters, but very rarely themselves creators or managers. (6) It is far from clear that public policy will benefit from development knowledge databases or gateways in the manner envisioned, since the claims for those databases and gateways rest on an unrealistic and sharply depoliticized depiction of how public policy is made. (7) These databases and gateways assume that the knowledge that matters most is technical, which for the foreseeable future will continue to be created in the North. (8) This approach to information also reinforces global power relations. Control over relevant information, or even the claim that the initiating agencies are the major repository for and distributor of knowledge about development, entrenches and enhances their influence. For a poor community in the South, entrusting its knowledge to a remote computer in the North and its largely invisible managers is surely not a strategy for promoting either democratic participation and accountability or self-reliance.

B. Communication, Coordination, and Networks

Clearly, education reform and scaling up are processes that require a holistic approach, effective and timely communication, and a coordinating strategy that does not strangle local initiatives. As we have suggested, that must be a shared responsibility. Local communities, central and local government, non-governmental organizations, external funding and technical assistance agencies, and others have important roles to play. Since local circumstances vary and since reform is best understood as a process, those roles will differ from place to place and time to time and will likely change over time within a particular setting.

Effective communications and networks have multiple facets and levels. Linking one village to its neighbors permits sharing experiences and coordinating efforts to solve problems. Though they may both be called networking, the strategy for achieving that may differ sharply from the strategy that is effective in linking, say, teacher educators in rural Africa with their counterparts in rural Europe. As both sorts of linkage are development, it is essential to confront the ways in which access to communications and networks—increasingly involving computers and the internet—can itself promote differentiation, inequality, and ultimately conflict between communities and organizations within Africa.

Those inclined to see education reforms as emanating solely or primarily from the education ministry or other national education officials are also inclined to emphasize communications from the

43. For a recent overview of what seems problematic in this orientation, see Joel Samoff and Nelly P. Stromquist, "Managing Knowledge and Storing Wisdom? New Forms of Foreign Aid?," . 617-642. (2001); Alex Wilks. *A Tower of Babel on the Internet? The World Bank's Development Gateway*. (London: Bretton Woods Project, 2000) offers a sharp critique of the recently inaugurated Development Gateway. A current research project at the Centre for African Studies, University of Edinburgh, offers a more positive assessment of progress to date. The concept paper, Kenneth King and Simon McGrath. *Learning to Make Policy: Development Cooperation Agencies and Knowledge Management*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, Centre for African Studies, 2000), and other papers can be found on the project web site, <<http://www.ed.ac.uk/centas/fgpapers.html>> [2001.08.26].

ministry to local officials, teachers, students, and parents. Teachers should not be surprised by reforms or unprepared to implement them. Communities should be informed about reforms and their expected consequences. Communication of that sort is certainly important and its challenges and obstacles should not be underestimated. Yet education innovations and reforms, both smaller and larger scale, can and do have local roots. They may germinate and sprout far from the education ministry. Not infrequently initiatives of that sort include challenges to current education policy or practice. From this perspective, teachers and community organizations can and should initiate reforms and not simply learn of them from education ministry circulars. Regardless of the starting point, to the extent that teachers, learners, and communities are involved in implementing, supporting, and shaping education change, they initiate and do not simply receive communications. Effective communications and networking, therefore, must incorporate exchange and not simply dissemination and must flow in multiple directions simultaneously.

Though widely advocated, improved communications and network may be difficult to accomplish. Large institutions and their decision makers prefer certainties to ambiguities. Clear and consistent plans are often deemed more important than responsiveness to local needs and flexibility. Effective networks of interconnections that link organizations, people, and activities are difficult to establish and maintain, especially in settings where war, drought, flood, and illness (HIV/AIDS is a particularly striking example) are corrosive of shared values and cooperative practices.⁴⁴ Effective scaling up therefore requires systematic and sustained attention to developing and nurturing those networks and the appropriate supporting infrastructure.

C. What is to be Scaled Up?

Scaling up in education is intended to expand access and improve quality for more people over a wider geographical area, and to do so in ways that are efficient, equitable, and sustainable. Since education is central to development (let us use Julius Nyerere's shorthand: the elimination of poverty, ignorance, and disease), the strategies adopted to promote reform by enlarging the scale of effective pilots must address the broader development objectives of empowerment, equity, social transformation, and sustainable change.

Both the general literature and the studies of African experiences emphasize that scaling up success stories rest on both systemic and specifically local elements. The initial reform addresses a well-understood local need and responds to significant local demand. The reform itself is largely locally derived and is led, nurtured, and often protected by leaders who are charismatic, forceful, inventive, and able to build political coalitions to support and shelter the reform. The reform is adequately financed, which means either a long-term commitment by government or other agency or, more often, significant continuing local funding. Most important, there is significant local ownership of the reform.

National initiatives are also important tools of education reform. The national coherence of the education system is surely a reasonable objective. Local communities and their leaders, however, as well as teachers, students, and parents, can and do oppose change. Thus, for national initiatives to survive, they must develop local advocates and supporting constituencies. Only in the most authoritarian settings can external agents sustain reforms that find no local support.

44. The emerging literature on social capital focuses on the links that bind communities and that enable them to initiate change, resist adversity, and manage stress. For a recent overview, see Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin, editors. *Social Capital: A Multi-Faceted Perspective* (Washington: World Bank, 2000); other recent contributions include Michael Edwards, *Enthusiasts, Tacticians and Sceptics: The World Bank, Civil Society and Social Capital*. URL: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/library/edwards.pdf> [2001.08.12]; Ben Fine, "The Development State is Dead—Long Live Social Capital?," *Development and Change* 30,1(1999):1-19.; Göran Hydén, "Civil Society, Social Capital, and Development: Dissection of a Complex Discourse," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 32,1(1997):3-30; Robert D. Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999) and Lindon J. Robison, A. Allan Schmid, and Marcelo E. Siles, *Is Social Capital Really Capital?* (East Lansing, MI: Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1999).

The importance of the local roots of this process suggest that mechanically replicating the specific elements of the reform in other settings will only rarely lead to a viable and sustainable outcome.

. . . BASICS thinking about scaling up its community programs should go beyond the identification of specific programs that can be replicated; rather, *the focus should be on institutionalizing a system for supporting community programs at a scale appropriate for given target groups and settings.* The goal then is to implement a coordinated package of complementary strategies to achieve maximum impact on a broad scale.⁴⁵

Attempting to replicate the reform itself (i.e., take it to scale) *inevitably* violates some of the very conditions that render certain innovations successful in the first place. The fact is that people's educational aspirations, needs, and contexts differ from place to place. Accordingly, what works in one location won't necessarily work in another. And even in those instances where an 'outside' innovation addresses some of the specific needs and aspirations of a particular location, its fate is still precarious, for unless there is widespread ownership of the innovation (a factor largely engendered through the development of local solutions), chances are that it will not become a permanent feature of that location's educational landscape.⁴⁶

Accordingly, rather than replicating the specific elements of the reform, *what must be scaled up are the conditions that permitted the initial reform to be successful and the local roots that can sustain it.* That challenge involves finding ways to generate widespread and locally rooted demand for the reform and to support an informed and inclusive locally-based deliberation over the content and form of the reform. That challenge also requires finding ways to make political space for the reform and to protect it from vested interests who perceive it as a threat and a bureaucracy whose efforts to routinize change often smother it. At the same time, those directly involved in the reform must understand reform as a continuing process rather than a specific outcome and must structure it to embed learning at its core.

45. U.S.A.I.D., Basics II (Basic Support for Institutionalizing Child Survival), Chapter 3, p. 12 <http://www.basics.org/publications/pubs/CBACH/cbach_ch3.htm> [2001.08.14] (*emphasis added*).

46. Healey and DeStefano, Education Reform Support: A Framework for Scaling Up School Reform," p. 11.

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