Education Reform Support

Volume Three:
A Framework for Making it Happen

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Preface

In 1995, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Bureau for Africa published a report titled *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s.* That technical paper examined Agency experience in education in Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s and drew out several lessons for how USAID could better approach the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs supporting education reform. One of those lessons concerned the role of information and policy dialogue in improving policy formulation and implementation in the education sector. This series, Education Reform Support, is the product of the Africa Bureau's two years of effort to pursue the operational implications of that lesson.

Neither information use nor dialogue is a new idea. USAID and other donors have years of experience supporting education management information systems. Likewise, the development community has grown quite fond of the term "policy dialogue." What Education Reform Support set out to do was to distill the best knowledge about information and dialogue, to examine the development field's experience in these areas, and to systematically apply that knowledge and experience to articulating a new approach.

This new approach, however, is not really new. Financial analysis, budget projection, planning models, political mapping, social marketing, and the techniques of stakeholder consultation and dialogue facilitation have long been available for use in education projects. These tools and techniques, however, have not been systematically organized into an approach.

Similarly, arguments abound for participation and for better—or more informed—decision making. The Education Reform Support series depicts realistically what those terms mean. Further, Education Reform Support identifies how capacity can be built within countries for broader, more effective stakeholder participation at the policy level, and, how that participation itself can contribute to better informing the policy process.

There is an ultimate irony to education. Good schools and good teaching can be found in any education system, sometimes under very adverse conditions. The problem is that they cannot be found everywhere. The challenge confronted in supporting education reform is exactly that: how to help good practice occur on a larger scale.

The inability of education systems to adapt and spread innovation is a result of poor policy and management environments. The policy environment is deficient for political as well as technical reasons. In most countries, the education of children is an issue of direct and personal concern to all sectors of the population, as well as to a number of large interest groups; as a result, education reform is a delicate and highly charged political force field.

To wade into the politics of reform we must focus on understanding the political economy of reform in the countries in which we work: Who are the key stakeholders (both potential gainers and losers) in a given reform direction? What are their strengths, depth and breadth of influence, and points of vulnerability? What are the characteristics of local institutions, groups, and individuals who might be able to play critical roles of influence and dialogue facilitation as well as analytical and technical support to the reform effort, over the long haul? And, most importantly, how can we design reform assistance that attenuates stakeholder tensions and exploits stakeholder alliances, vulnerabilities, and strengths, to the advantage of positive and sustainable movement toward reform overall?

Education Reform Support creates an operational framework through which education programs and projects can organize the techniques of information, analysis, dialogue, and communication into a strategic package. The objective of that package is to help improve a country's capacity to formulate education policy and implement reform. It does so by applying these techniques in order to

- recognize and counterbalance the political interests that accompany reform,

- build the capacity of diverse actors to participate in the policy process,

- reassert and redefine the role of information in policy making, and

- create networks and coalitions that can sustain the dialogue and learning that are essential to educational development.

The Africa Bureau believes this series will prove valuable in helping education officers in USAID and other organizations design projects that take into account the knowledge and lessons gained to better support education reform. The Bureau also feels that the Education Reform Support approach will help governments, ministries of education, and other interested actors better shape their contributions to the difficult process of negotiating and managing education reform.

Julie Owen-Rea
Office of Sustainable Development
Division of Human Resources and Democracy

Foreword to the Education Reform Support (ERS) Series

This series of documents presents an integrated approach to supporting education reform efforts in developing countries, with particular emphasis on Africa. It is intended largely to specify how a collaborating external agent can help strategic elements within a host country steer events toward coherent, demand-driven, and sustainable educational reform. Additionally, this series of documents may help host country reform proponents understand the aims and means of donors who propose certain activities in this area. We hope that host country officials, particularly in reform-minded, public-interest nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, find this series of documents both an inspiration and a guide for coherently proposing and articulating undertakings to donors, using the donors' own vocabulary of reform and modernization.

Several key premises and motivations underlie ERS. First, the major *binding* constraint to successful educational development in poor countries is neither the need to transfer more funds nor a lack of educational technology and know-how. That is, we contend that in most instances, countries can make sufficient progress by better using whatever internal or external funds and pedagogical technology already exist, but that in order to so, they need far-reaching modifications in the way they approach both policy formation and system-wide management.

Second, policy-analysis inputs (such as information systems, databases, and models; training in public policy and cost-benefit analysis; training in management, budgeting, and planning; and so forth) into policy reform and management improvements, while necessary, are not sufficient. The constraints to policy improvement are ideological, attitudinal, affective, and political-economic as much as—if not more than—they are analytical or cognitive in origin.

Third, as a means of pressing for the attitudinal and political changes needed for reform, donor leverage of various kinds is largely insufficient and inappropriate. The pressure has to come from within (i.e., it must be both indigenous and permanent), which means that until powerful national groups are mobilized and have the means at their disposal to exert positive policy pressure, little will happen in the way of thoughtful reform.

Our approach aims, therefore, to integrate traditional public policy analysis (using known information and analytical techniques) with public policy dialogue, advocacy, awareness, and political salesmanship, and to build indigenous institutional capacity that can strategically use this integration for purposes of effecting purposeful education reform.

The above suggests that in order to support processes of education reform, a donor would need a rather flexible and sophisticated approach—so flexible that it would verge on a nonapproach, and would simply rely on the difficult-to-articulate wisdom of individual implementors. Yet, to define activities in a way that renders them "fundable" by donors and intelligible within the community whose efforts would support these activities, one obviously needs to have some sort of system—some way of laying out procedures, tools, and

steps that can be used in this messy process. As a way of systematizing both lessons learned and certain tools and techniques, we have developed Education Reform Support (ERS).

A long-winded but precise definition of Education Reform Support is: ERS is an operational framework for developing policy-analytical and policy-dialectical abilities, and institutional capacities, leading to demand-driven, sustainable, indigenous education policy reform. The purpose is to ensure that education policies, procedures, and institutions empower the system to define, develop, and implement reforms that foster relevant and meaningful learning for all children.

There are both operational and technical dimensions to ERS. With regard to the former, we have developed steps one might take in an ERS project. First, there are processes, procedures, operational guidelines for designing a project in ERS. Second, there are the same aspects to running such projects. Aside from the operational and institutional "how-to's," we provide a set of guidelines on the tools, techniques, analytical approaches, etc., that can motivate and generate reform movements, as well as assisting in managing the ongoing reform in a modernized or reformed sector.

The ERS series is organized in the following manner. Volume 1 offers an overview of the entire ERS series. It also contains the ERS series bibliography and a guide to some of the jargon that is found throughout the series. In Volume 2, we introduce the problem, and establish the justification and basis to the approach in terms of past donor activities in the sector, and its critiques from both "left" and "right" perspectives. This volume also sets out some of the main lessons learned that establish a basis for the procedures and strategies described in the following volumes. An operational perspective on how to support reform activities is presented in Volume 3. It discusses both the institutional frameworks that reformers can seek to support or help coalesce if they are only incipient, and some likely ideas for sequences of activities. Volume 4 lists and discusses in considerable depth the specific analytical and communication tools and techniques that can be employed. It also places these tools and techniques in the context of past and ongoing donor activities in areas which have in the past used these tools and techniques disparately and unselfconsciously.

Having provided in Volumes 2-4 both the basic intellectual underpinning as to what might be done and how to proceed technically, sequentially, and institutionally, Volume 5 assumes that reformers, particularly donors, might be interested in designing an intervention of considerable size. Therefore, it lays out in detail the specific design steps one might wish to undertake to ensure a healthy start to a major level of support to an ERS process. Finally, Volume 6 presents ideas for how to monitor and evaluate a typical ERS intervention.

In addition to the volumes, the ERS series includes three supplemental documents: *Policy Issues in Education Reform in Africa, Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) for Accountability,* and *Strategies for Stakeholder Participation.* An ERS Course Description is also a part of this series. This course description provides guidelines for teaching almost any ERS-relevant course (e.g., education planning, EMIS, policy modeling) within a larger ERS construct. It also details the provision of a core set of ERS skills.

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Section 1

Introduction

Education reform support (ERS)[1] is a systematic approach for *learning-driven*, *ongoing* change. It is premised upon the belief that answers are at once ephemeral and elusive. Moreover, they differ across geographic regions and vary over time.

For the past 50 years, donor activity for the most part has been answer-driven. That "magic bullets" as such do not exist accounts in part for why sustained sector-wide reform has remained an elusive goal for both the donor community and host countries alike. Reform unfortunately is not a utopia that can be achieved over a finite period of time. It is instead an ongoing slog that should both shape and accommodate constant change.

Against this backdrop of understanding, the structures, mechanisms, and mind-sets that expedite relevant lifelong learning and purposeful ongoing change themselves become the long-sought-after answers for reform. Thus, we might add, we can understand the appeal and longevity of most democratic institutions. They have the inherent potential to deal effectively with messy change.

That democratic institutions have this potential, however, does not necessarily mean that reform will occur of its own accord once the appropriate structures and mechanisms have been put into place.[2] Knowledge has to be acquired. Demand for change has to be engendered. Dialogue has to be initiated. Debate has to be informed. Endogenous answers—that is, homegrown ones—have to be obtained. Political-economic battles have to be waged. Negotiations have to be undertaken. Coalitions have to be built. And consensus has to be generated. Moreover, *all* of this has to happen again and again. Furthermore, these activities can succumb to friction that not only will slow down ongoing, purposeful reform, but also will stop it entirely if

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[1]For a more complete definition of Education Reform Support, see Volume 2, *Foundations of Reform Support*.

[2]We distinguish here between reform and change; see Volume 1, *Overview and Bibliography*, Annex A, for a discussion of various terms used throughout the ERS series.

it is not safeguarded via strategic facilitation. Thus the need for an entity whose job is to make it all happen.

This document is about making Education Reform Support happen. In particular, it describes a range of implementable, fundable activities aimed at establishing the structures, mechanisms, and mind-sets needed to facilitate learning-driven, ongoing development of an education system. To facilitate exposition, this discussion unfolds around an operational framework that is conceived as having three broadly defined task domains:

(1)   developing and maintaining a reform support infrastructure (RSI),

(2)   creating an enabling environment,

(3)   facilitating the expansion of reform within that environment.

In addition to these three domains we discuss the *strategic management* of the reform process, and afford specific attention to the *initiation* of ERS (or the identification of starting points).

That these different areas have been discerned for the purpose of this discussion does not mean that they are always discrete. There is a significant amount of conceptual overlay among them. They have been made distinct to help facilitate a broad analytical and descriptive overview of what should be done to help make ERS happen.

Section 2 of this volume describes each of the task domains cited above, accounts for how they relate to each other, and pieces them together as a coherent operational framework. Section 2 having thus described *what* should be done to make ERS happen, Section 3 discusses *how to go about making it happen*. In this regard, it first describes the various activities that can be undertaken to get the reform process started (Sections 3.1–3.3). It then recounts activities that could be carried out to create an enabling environment (Section 3.4). Finally, Section 3 delineates a set of measures that could help to enact reform within the enabling environment (Section 3.5). Finally, Section 4 summarizes the main points of Volume 3.

This volume is meant to be a practical guide either for persons wanting to design a project around ERS, or for those interested in undertaking various initiatives within the context of an intervention that has been designed around ERS. As practical as this document is meant to be, it is not to be regarded as a compendium of relevant materials that can be

found elsewhere.[3] Political mapping, for example, is central to making ERS happen. However, if one is looking for a detailed account of how to *do* political mapping, references to other works are provided. Nor is this document to be regarded as a cookbook. Where "recipes" are given at all, they are supplied only for purposes of illustration and elucidation. They are not meant to be copied. This does not mean, however, that they cannot ever be copied. If, after analysis of a particular situation, someone finds that the way in which ERS has been unfolding, say, in Swaziland is the way it should unfold elsewhere, then indeed, that person should feel free to copy some of the recipes. The point is that this volume should be regarded as a source of understanding, guidance, and inductive illustration, not answers.

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[3]Conversely, where information cannot be found elsewhere, it is provided in this document.

Section 2

The ERS Operational Framework

2.1   General Discussion

Operational frameworks are meant to comprehensively inform the actors undertaking specific activities embraced by the framework about what they are doing within the larger scheme of things. For example, it is one thing for development practitioners to understand that they are undertaking, say, a political-economic assessment. It is quite another to locate that particular exercise within a broader stratagem aimed at creating an enabling environment such that learning-driven, ongoing reform can take hold within a certain country. Operational frameworks also enhance people's understanding of how a number of seemingly disparate tasks can work together toward the realization of a common end. Viewed superficially, institutional development, simulation model-building, and political mapping have little in common. However, viewing them as a set of activities located within an operational framework geared to implementing Education Reform Support makes it easy to see how they relate to each other.

Volume 2 in this series provided a basis for the development of the approach we are calling Education Reform Support. The operational framework presented in this volume derives from many of the lessons we have learned from past attempts at supporting education in general, supporting education reform, and supporting reform in other sectors. A brief summary of some of those lessons provides a context to which the operational framework of ERS is intended to respond.

Years of trying to apply the infrastructure project paradigm (see Volume 2, Section 1.2) to promote educational change have shown that the constraints to educational development are usually neither lack of funds, nor lack of educational technology. Experience has demonstrated that the failure to adopt, adapt, and finance the spread of existing or new technologies is in part a result of (1) deficient policy and management environments; (2) the political and economic power of interest groups defending the status quo; (3) the lack of genuine demand for change and the absence of mechanisms for accountability; (4) the need for viable models of how teachers, schools, districts, and the system can function differently; (5) the failure to engage stakeholders broadly in the early stages of policy identification and formulation; (6) an overemphasis on supply-oriented solutions (supply of

inputs, supply of information, supply of "magic bullets"); and (7) the absence of a dedicated, driving force for change.

In addition to the lessons summarized above, recent efforts to effect widespread education reform in several countries in Africa and Latin America, and numerous aspects of what might be called an emerging "reformist" agenda,[4] cast reform and reformed systems in the following light.

2.2 Fundamental Features of Reform and Reformed Systems

First of all, reform should be approached *systemically*. The numerous aspects of an education system relate to each other variously. Changes in some areas of the education system have impacts that ripple through certain other aspects of the system. Other changes require commensurate changes elsewhere to take place. The fact is that an education system is just that: a system. Accordingly, reform should not be approached piecemeal (Brown 1993; DeStefano, Hartwell, and Tietjen 1995; Sarason 1990).

Reform needs also to be *demand-driven* (Crouch, Vegas, and Johnson 1993; Fullan 1991). The people most affected by reform not only should want change, but also must want *to* change. This being the case, to the extent that widespread demand for reform does not exist, reform efforts should be directed toward strategically generating demand for reform. Given that reform should be demand-driven, then the "answers" that constitute reform should be endogenous, or homegrown. *Endogenous answers* not only "address" local educational needs and aspirations, but also engender a sense of ownership that enhances the overall implementability of reform. Clearly, if reform is about the derivation of endogenous answers, then widespread *participation* among stakeholders becomes a fundamental feature as well. Teachers, parents, and students should all take part in the design, development, and implementation of solutions aimed at improving their educational context. We call the act of generating these solutions *filling space*.

As we stated in the introduction, because people's educational needs and aspirations vary in both time and space, there can be no "magic bullets." Answers must be continually pursued. Implicit here are several other principles as well. One is the view that reform is *ongoing*. Reform is not something that is "accomplished," say, after a 10-year, multimillion-dollar intervention. Moreover, if each successive change is to improve on the previous situation, both *information* and *learning*

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[4]Elements of the reformist agenda include accountability; client orientation; targeted financing; competitive access to public funding for education provision; moving of decision making down (or up) to where local information acquisition costs, economies of scale, and certain requirements of homogeneity and equity all balance each other; information-based management and finance; voice and exit control mechanisms; etc.

should be regarded as key elements of the overall reform paradigm. To this end, the entire education system should be viewed as a *learning organization*. Needed, then, are the structures and procedures that can both accommodate and facilitate meaningful change and reform-specific learning. Accordingly (as we pointed out earlier), *democratic institutions* wherein wide cross-sections of stakeholders can actively participate in *informed deliberations* over alternate views, visions, and means, should be seen as the engines of learning-driven reform.

Clearly, reform will not take place on its own accord: Demand has to be generated, learning has to be facilitated, endogenous answers have to be obtained, institutions have to be built, technical capacity has to be transferred, information has to be gathered, and political-economic strategies have to be pursued. This being the case, a ***reform support infrastructure***—a loosely organized body of actors and entities collaborating to make reform happen on an ongoing basis—is needed.

Of central importance to this vision of reform is the need to both account for and use the *political economy* of education. If education is failing to address the learning needs of every child, then the primary interests of the dominant forces within the political economy must not be coinciding with those of the children. Furthermore, to the extent that education reform threatens the status quo of education, these dominant forces will actively work against it. To effect widespread reform in an environment that is largely hostile to it will require altering the political economy of education such that the voiceless have more, if not a dominant, voice. To this end, *incentive structures* figure centrally in this understanding of reform (Elmore 1996). We refer to activities aimed at addressing these constraints as ***clearing space***.

As we previously noted, Education Reform Support proposes an operational framework that intentionally simplifies the discussion of assisting educational reform into the three broad categories of building a reform support infrastructure, clearing space, and filling space. Figure 1 below summarizes the relationship of these three aspects of the ERS operational framework to what experience has told us is needed for educational reform.

2.3 The Reform Support Infrastructure

> "If we know one thing about innovation and reform, it is that it cannot be done successfully to others. It is not as if we have a choice whether to change or not. Demands for change will always be with us in complex societies; the only fruitful way ahead is to carve out a niche of renewal and build on it."
>
> Fullan (1991, p. 1).

Figure 1. The technical composition of the ERS operational framework

What education reform requires	+	What ERS does	=	Operational framework

changes in the rules and structures governing the sector

management of the different interests affiliated with those rules and structures

→ uses analysis and policy communication to generate an environment conducive to reform → **Clearing space**

real changes in the organization and practice of teaching and learning

someone(s) dedicated to pursuing change

→ promotes and enables piloting of innovations → **Filling space**

→ builds local institutional capacity in key support areas → **Building a reform support infrastructure**

The need for a reform support infrastructure (RSI) is inferred from the proposition that purposeful reform will not take place of its own accord; it must be facilitated. As observed earlier, someone must generate effective demand for meaningful change. They must engender understanding of the educational situation; encourage ownership of the reform process; and obtain the answers the process generates. They must promote reflective learning. They must encourage the process of investing intellectual capital back into the sector. They must facilitate the restructuring of institutions, and they must build capacity. The list goes on, but the point is that *without an entity in place whose job it is to help make all of this happen, purposeful reform will at best be happenstance.*[5]

We are not saying that change will not occur in the absence of an RSI. Surely, it will. Teachers' salaries may go up (or down). University students may receive additional stipends. The tertiary sector may get disproportionately more money. Expensive book deals may be made

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[5]In some instances, such as in the interplay of individual opportunities that characterize well-functioning private markets, happenstance and noninterference are best. For goods whose financing must be collective to some degree, as is strongly the case in education, some meaningful and organized public action, at all social levels, is obviously necessary. Such action is called for particularly when there is a widespread perception that the system is broken.

with overseas publishing firms. Bureaucrats may become further entrenched. Politicians may make silly promises (e.g., free primary education). And donors may move additional money and set new conditionalities. Indeed, change not only is ubiquitous, it seems to take place without the slightest bit of effort. The fact is, however, that there is much effort behind it. Interest groups abound, and they all spend a considerable amount of resources pressuring decision makers to initiate changes that ultimately will benefit their narrow interests.

That these changes are not all working toward a common end can give the *impression* that nothing is changing. However, when one looks at the amount of learning that actually goes on in the classroom, one can only conclude that nothing much really does change. Children are still subject to more rote learning than may be desirable. Repetition and dropout rates remain high. Pass rates remain low. And children remain ill-equipped to participate effectively in a rapidly changing global economy even in countries and sectors where having well-equipped workers is desirable or inevitable. The trick is to orchestrate change such that *thoughtful education reform* can take place (Brown 1993, Sizer 1996). Admitting that a reform support infrastructure is needed to facilitate such change simply acknowledges that purposeful change cuts against the grain.

Structurally, a reform support infrastructure is nothing more than an informal network of actors working together to help make thoughtful reform happen *throughout the system*. A number of public sector and private sector actors could potentially come together to form an RSI. Likely candidates within the central ministry might include the planning unit, the department of information management, the teachers service commission, the testing and assessment department, and the curriculum development department. Within the larger education sector, there are the following: the inspectorate, the regional education offices, the universities, the teacher training colleges, various in-service teacher training centers, rural education centers, school committees, and parent-teacher organizations. Actors from the private sector might include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), policy think-tanks, businesses, and individuals.

Experience shows that RSIs are *dynamic entities* with different sets of actors coming together depending on the nature of the reform work being undertaken. For example, the technical demands of policy advocacy are vastly different from those required to build management capacity at the school level. Accordingly, the visibly active reform support infrastructure for the policy advocacy example might comprise NGO policy think-tanks and quite possibly the planning unit of the ministry of education, while for the management activity it might

comprise NGOs and consultants whose specialty is school management training.

The dynamic character of RSIs can also be attributed to the fact that constituent members will come and go for reasons other than the nature of the work that has to be undertaken. Some, for example, may simply run out of financial resources. Some may finish the work they were contracted to do—or were interested in—and not be needed further. Others may lack the managerial skills to provide services efficiently, and therefore go out of business. Still others may no longer wish to be a part of a loosely organized whole. The point is, simply, that reform support infrastructures are not well-defined organizations. Instead, they are loosely structured coalitions of actors working together toward a common end. The RSI that came together in South Africa is illustrative in this regard (see Box 1).

Interestingly, with the emphasis in South Africa now on implementation and delivery, and with resources that were once targeted for NGOs now being channeled to the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the once vibrant reform support infrastructure discussed in Box 1 has faded away, highlighting its dynamic nature. The par-

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Box 1. The Reform Support Infrastructure in South Africa

During a four-year period leading up to the elections in 1994, a reform support infrastructure was fashioned around the need to initiate, inform, and facilitate a nation-wide dialogue over the nature and character of post-apartheid education in South Africa. The discussions started among a collection of stakeholders from within the government and representatives of the Democratic Opposition, which was composed largely of the African National Congress (ANC). Discussions among that group soon faltered, in large part because the Democratic Opposition appeared to have little in the way of quantitatively articulated policy options based on best international practice. Around the problem of getting the discussions back on track emerged an RSI dedicated to providing quantitatively based support to the Democratic Opposition such that they could put innovative and numerically substantiated policy options on the table.

At the center of the reform support infrastructure was the Education Foundation: a trust initially conceived of as an information clearinghouse but which over time became a well-equipped policy support NGO. Through the intensive work of the Education Foundation, an RSI was formed. At one point, the RSI was composed of the education office of the ANC, several NGOs (EduPol of the Urban Foundation, Center for Futures Research, Independent Development Trust); Education Policy Units from several univer-

sities (University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape, Witswatersrand University, and University of Natal at Durban); the Research Institute for Educational Planning at the University of the Orange Free State; and a large number of talented consultants and individuals attached to various universities.

Each member of the RSI was an autonomous body that contributed to the task at hand in a number of different ways and most certainly did not always agree or represent the same ideology. It was more like a marketplace than like a factory. Order and progress were emergent properties of a somewhat chaotic process, rather than the result of someone's orchestration. Most members provided information and data. Some ran workshops, others conducted research.

A number of policy dialogue tools were developed by the Education Foundation to help further the dialogue process. These tools were used in numerous workshop settings to inform discussion around a variety of topics ranging from finance to governance. Out of these discussions came a number of documents and position papers, the substance of which eventually found its way into various white papers and policy documents that have been put forth by the new government.

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ticular job around which this RSI was formed had, to a large extent, been accomplished. Moreover, the environment within which it operated changed dramatically with the coming of the new government. Indeed, this example raises the issue of how to maintain an RSI in changing times. It should be remembered, however, that by definition a reform support infrastructure is dynamic. It should not stay together for its own sake.

2.3.1 Examples of RSIs Outside the Education Sector

Reform support infrastructures can be likened to multiorganizational service networks (Esman 1991). Multiorganizational service networks (see Box 2) are collaboratives of autonomous actors from both the government and nongovernment sectors that can be associated with any one of government's three major tasks: regulation, promotion, or services.

From a political-economic perspective, private sector and civil society participation within an RSI is crucial, to accompany the public sector actors. Government is, in the end, not always constituted of neutral and dynamic arbiters with the best interests of the children in mind. Moreover, particularly in developing countries, the state will not tolerate loud and persistent voices of technical dissension from within its own ranks for very long. Since dissension and critique are at the heart of any reform initiative, it is hard to see how healthy reform could be the exclusive province of government in most countries. For this reason, an RSI should not be entirely within the public sector. Private sector involvement in an RSI is warranted on grounds of effectiveness as well. The public sector simply does not have the overall capacity needed to carry out reform on its own. In this regard, the following observation made by Esman (1991) is apropos:

Box 2. Multiorganizational Service Networks

From Esman (1991):

A familiar multiorganizational example regarding the management of regulation is the practice of many governments on motor-vehicle inspection: Government specifies safety standards and licenses privately owned garages to perform the actual inspections; government officials periodically inspect the inspectors to enforce standards; private insurance companies pressure government to set tough standards, and they pressure licensed garages to enforce the standards strictly.

Another example is in promoting housing construction for low- and medium-income families. The state may assist local authorities by clearing land; by providing basic highway, water, and sewage facilities; and by making subsidies available to private financial institutions to assist with self-help construction by members of local cooperatives. A multiorganizational network of this kind may involve one or more units of central government as the promoter of subsidies, local authorities as the contributors of sites and infrastructure, private banks as the source of mortgage financing, construction companies as suppliers of building materials, and self-help housing cooperatives (p. 118).

In the generation following independence, many governments in LDCs [less-developed countries] invaded fields of activity previously performed—though often with limited range and limited effectiveness—by nongovernmental organizations and incorporated these activities into monopolistic state bureaucracies. Instead of working with and through existing nongovernmental organizations, attempting to strengthen them, encouraging them to expand into related services, and linking them into multiorganizational structures, governments instead weakened, displaced, and even destroyed them. The result was that once capabilities and initiatives had been impaired or stifled, government found that it could not command the managerial skills or financial resources needed to mount adequate services entirely on its own and that bureaucratic monopolies lacked the incentives and the flexibility required for efficiency and responsiveness. As a result of this costly learning process, governments have been changing course, accepting and even initiating participation by nongovernment actors. While retaining many functions in their own bureaucracies, they have provided service networks as the main instrument for coordinating activities that governments now share with organizations outside their own ranks (Esman 1991, p. 120).

2.3.2 The Notion of a Core Group

RSIs may not easily coalesce on their own accord.[6] Nor will they function as a unit without a force that makes this happen. Experience suggests that what is needed is a small core group of actors who assume the responsibility to knit together an RSI and to broker its activities such that reform not only happens, but unfolds in a coherent and thoughtful manner (Healey 1994a; Section 3.2 tells more about how to compose the core group). In South Africa this driving force comprised a group of four to five persons who came from a number of different private sector organizations. In Swaziland, this core group of actors is referred to as the Education and Training Reform Group, and it is composed of about eight persons from both public and private sector organizations.

These *core groups* are the driving forces behind the development and operation of a reform support infrastructure. As part of the process of forging an RSI and driving the Education Reform Support process, the core group carries out a number of tasks. In South Africa, much of the work of the core group was technical. It collected data, analyzed it, and developed presentation packages. Much of its time was spent strategizing as well. The group constantly scanned the environment to ascertain what the hot issues were and what analyses had to be done in order to

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[6]Esman (1991) observes, however, that multiorganizational service networks can on occasion spontaneously come together.

move the debate forward. The core group also organized strategic meetings and public fora, and determined how best to introduce critical information into the debate. The core group tracked and responded to the political-economic and educational movements of others.

In Swaziland, the Education and Training Reform Group will (in 1997) initially work to formulate a set of medium-term strategies and programs aimed at effecting reform within the context of an overall education development strategy. Once the medium-term strategies are formulated, the Education and Training Reform Group will take on the task of piecing together an RSI and pushing for change at the school level. Operating at the local level, for example, are newly formulated Teacher Resources Centers. There, reform efforts are already under way to support a nascent in-service teacher training program that has the head teachers taking on a new role as in-service teacher trainers, and the Teacher Resources Center-based inspectorate assuming the new responsibility of providing both technical and supervisory support to the head teachers. For these efforts not only to be supported, but also to be allowed to expand, will require that the Education and Training Reform Group initially "sell" the reform to the whole of the head teacher cadre as well as the inspectorate. Ultimately, these Teacher Resources Centers should, through the efforts of the Education and Training Reform Group, become a part of a larger RSI, so that the work of the Teacher Resources Centers can be linked to a broader initiative toward sustained sector-wide reform.

2.4 Enacting School-level Change: Filling Space

Educational innovations abound. As our understanding of how children learn improves, say, with the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983, 1991, 1993), our knowledge of how to facilitate children's learning advances in turn. These insights foster the subsequent development of innovative ideas on how to design curricula, how to enhance certain modes of instruction, how better to assess the learning process, and how, for example, to capitalize on both existing and emerging technologies. Similarly, as our knowledge of how to improve organizational performance grows, along with the understanding of what client orientation, accountability, competition, and teamwork all mean, ideas about how better to run school systems and manage schools percolate upward. Often, movements or initiatives organize themselves around particular reform ideas. In the United States, for example, there are the Coalition of Essential Schools, the Accelerated Schools Project, Foxfire, Comers Schools, Paideia, Roots and Wings, and the Little Red School House, to name but a few.[7] There are movements of sorts that have precipitated around organizational

issues as well. Among others, these include school choice, vouchers, charter schools, and home schooling.

Yet amid all of this reform activity, be it in the United States or in the developing world, reformed schools are still very much the exception, not the rule. Education reform exists in small, isolated pockets— pockets filled with good educational practice. The idea of such pockets leads to the notion of *filling space*. Filling space is, simply, the work of introducing, doing, and furthering good educational practice. To date, it is what much of education reform has been about.
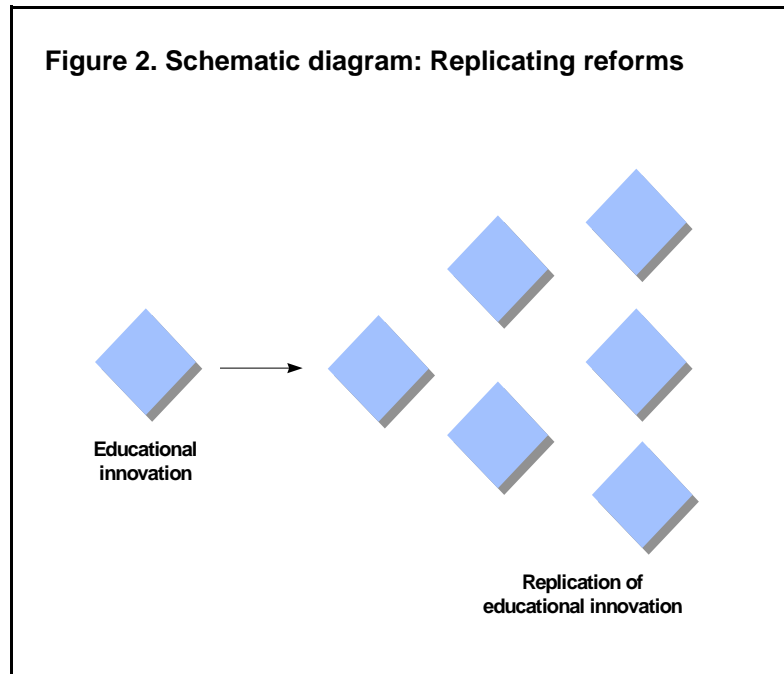
2.5   Clearing Space

That reform exists in pockets and, even amid a torrent of reform activity, cannot seem to move much beyond these pockets is a phenomenon that has been called the scale-up problem (Education Week 1995). In the United States, for example, where an intensive school reform movement has been under way for just over 15 years,[8] good educational practice can be found in only 1 to 3 percent of America's schools. The central problem of education reform, then, is how to bring education reform to scale. Together with the age-old problem of sustainability, this problem of scale-up begs two sets of questions: (1) What exactly is it that we want to go to scale? What exactly is it that ideally we want to be sustained? (2) Why is it that innovation does not go to scale? Why can it not be sustained?

2.5.1   What Should Go to Scale?

Most efforts to replicate success stories meet with modest success at best. We suggest that this is so because the wrong thing—the reform itself—is being replicated (see Figure 2). Success stories are success stories because (1) the reform addressed a well-understood local need, (2) there was a local demand for the reform, (3) the reform itself was endogenous, (4) it was championed by one or more "messiahs," (5) it was well-financed, and (6) there was widespread ownership of the reform. 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. This does not mean that the replication of innovations doesn't work. Indeed, replication is an important and effective tool in the panoply of means by which education reform can be brought to scale. What it does mean, however, is that replication has serious limitations as a conceptual tenet of a scale-up strategy.

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[7] In Los Angeles Unified School District there are over 20,000 such reform initiatives.

[8] The beginning of the current United States school reform movement is usually marked by the release of the document *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Figure 2. Schematic diagram: Replicating reforms

Educational
innovation

Replication of
educational innovation

We contend that instead of the reform itself being replicated, it is the *conditions which give rise to the reform in the first place* that should be replicated (see Figure 3).

Replicating the *conditions* not only improves the prospects of education/school reform going to scale, but also creates an environment that will spawn multiple innovations and the potential for significant lateral transfers of knowledge. What is needed, then, are the tools, techniques, structures, mechanisms, and institutions that can (1) help generate widespread demand for reforms, (2) facilitate an informed localized deliberation over the substance and character of reform, (3) create a policy environment that is hospitable to whole-school change, and (4) safeguard the phenomenon of ongoing, learning-driven change.[9]

2.5.2 Why Does Reform Not Go to Scale?

That the wrong thing frequently gets replicated explains, in part, why even widely accepted reforms often fail to go to scale. And if ever there were a time when the work of education reform was easy, those days and those tasks are well behind us. In truth, the work of fundamental change is never easy and seldom quick. The forces arrayed against it, intentionally or not, are both powerful and entrenched. What are those forces?

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[9]These tools and techniques are discussed in Volume 4, *Tools and Techniques*.

Figure 3.   Schematic diagram: Replicating conditions that lead to reform

Conditions that spawn education innovations

Replication of the conditions that spawn educational innovations

Scaling up of education reform
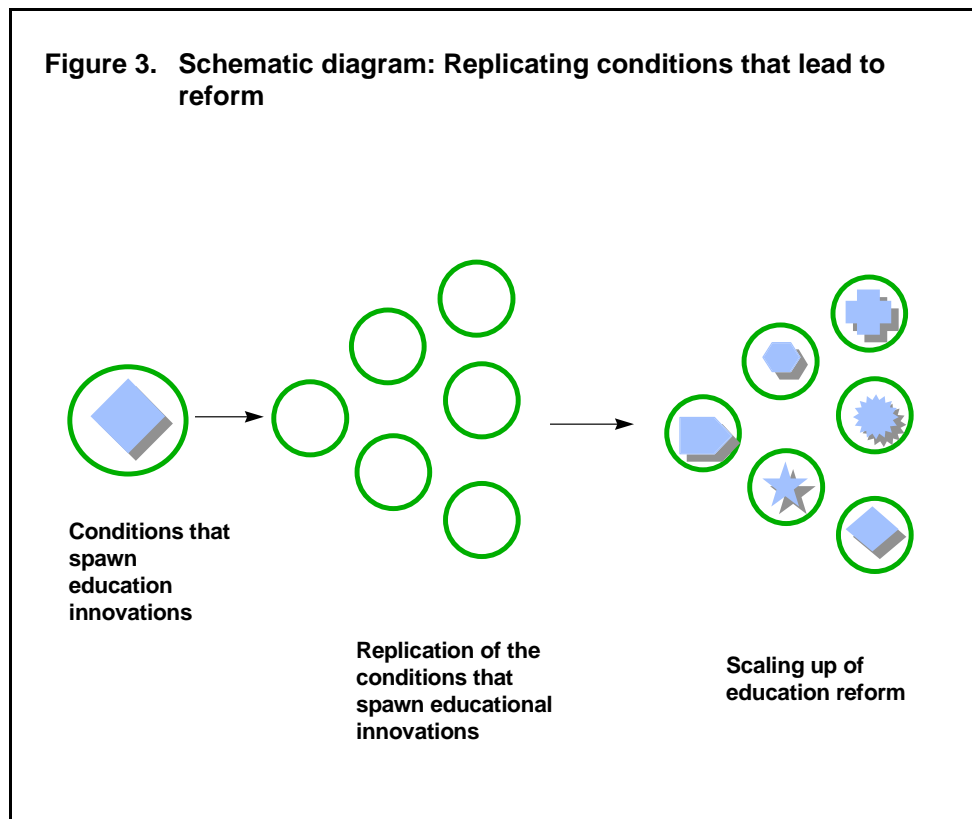
They are many (see Figure 4). Widespread *ignorance* regarding both the character of education and the nature of education reform is a powerful force that stands in the way of school reform going to scale. That most stakeholders don't understand the systemic nature of an education system, or know the financial constraints within which an education system must responsibly operate, or appreciate the long-term implications of adopting certain policy initiatives, suggests that unless the general public's learning about education and education reform is strategically facilitated, scale-up will remain an elusive goal for reform efforts. Likewise, people's *mental models*[10] also stand in the way of scale-up. Parents' vision of education is often shaped by the manner in which it was practiced when they were in school. Practitioners often cannot visualize how teaching and schools can be organized differently. Policy making is too often rigidly characterized by piecemeal solutions, solutions for the "crisis of the day," distributive politics, top-down regulations with too little local and public engagement, and inadequate attention to results. Schools tend not to see the importance of policy, and policy makers often fail to understand how their decisions play themselves out at the school level.

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[10]This term was borrowed from Senge (1990).

Figure 4. Forces opposing education reforms

Interest Groups

Rules and Regulations

Bureaucratic Structures

Lack of Capacity

Ideologies

Momentum of the Status Quo

Population Growth

Education Reform Measures

- teacher-learner interactions
- Instructional technologies
- assessment and measurement
- school administration
- inspection

Union Contracts

Mental Models

Ignorance

Economy

Certain *laws and statutes* also obstruct efforts to scale up, as do sundry *bureaucratic rules and regulations,* and *union contracts*. The fact that in most locations, schools are not free to decide whom to employ (or release) as teachers, severely limits the degree to which teachers can be held accountable for what they do. The inertia of the bureaucracy itself and what can be characterized as a "reform fatigue syndrome" make it difficult to motivate the system to change. Also standing in the way of scaling-up initiatives are various *governance arrangements*. For example, because so little meaningful decision-making authority resides in the classroom, teachers' ability to "individualize" the curriculum (a potent aspect of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences) is severely limited.

In addition, there is the *absence of clear, high academic standards* aligned with assessment systems that are owned at the local level and linked to accountability mechanisms that allow schools to know what they want to achieve, where they are with respect to those objectives, and whether their efforts are making a difference. Just as the absence of standards diminishes the incentive for students to learn and teachers to improve their instruction, *the lack of strong professional and social normative structures and a set of incentives operating within those structures* makes it extremely difficult to bring about needed changes in attitudes and behaviors throughout the system (Senge 1990). In fact, the normative structures and incentives that exist by default in today's education systems can be characterized as "perverse," for often they actually punish innovation and departure from the status quo while rewarding lethargy and "toeing the line."

Finally, the *political economy of education* stands as a major obstacle to scale-up. The status quo in education is a well-guarded dynamic. Any threat to an interest group's perceived or real beneficial station within the status quo will evoke a response aimed at either safeguarding or advancing that interest group's station. Against this backdrop, it is easy to see why educational innovations can exist in pockets: At that level they are not a threat to the status quo. In fact, pockets of reform such as the ones embodied by the community schools that can be found in Malawi and Mali are welcomed by the educational establishment, for under the mantle of stakeholder participation (via the provision of building materials, in-kind service, etc.), the rural poor can do what the state often refuses to do: provide for rural education. In a sense, these pockets help entrench the status quo.

It is also easy to see why small-scale innovations have a very difficult time breaking out of their pockets: They *become* a threat to certain elements within the political economy. Furthermore, the mechanisms that in other systems tend to promote the automatic spread of innovation (e.g., informed competition, clear output metrics, accountability to clients, good information policy regarding production processes, community overview), in the education sector, are *themselves* a threat to the status quo.

That these forces stand in the way of reform both going to scale and being sustained suggests that counterforces need to be applied to overturn, bypass, or reverse them. The process of strategically identifying and applying these counterforces is what we mean by clearing space.

By way of example, we can look at something as simple as trying to introduce continuous assessment to an education system. Standing in the way of continuous assessment going to scale are the following: In-service teacher training and pre-service teacher training programs are not structured to teach continuous assessment techniques to the teachers themselves; head teachers are not able to oversee what their teachers are doing regarding continuous assessment; inspectors are unwilling to supervise teachers practicing continuous assessment; the national exams council is against continuous assessment because the members think it largely obviates the need for many of their exams; the national curriculum center doesn't want to see it happen because its staff just finished writing a noncontinuous-assessment-based math curriculum; and parents find it foreign and as such are simply against it. If no one identifies these obstacles and puts together a set of strategies designed to clear the space necessary for continuous assessment to take root and go to scale, it probably won't go to scale.

2.6 Strategic Manage- ment

For reform to move forward in a fairly coherent and orderly fashion, space-clearing and space-filling activities need to be strategically orchestrated. On the one hand, successful reforms can be used as pointers to help clear space for more reforms. On the other hand, further space needs to be cleared so that certain reforms can progress to scale. That this is the case points to the centrality of strategic management to ERS. Moreover, there are the following factors to consider. The environment within which ERS will unfold is complex, uncertain, and constantly changing. In addition, there are likely to be a significant number of forces which, if not openly hostile to reform, might still mitigate against it. As soon as ERS begins to unfold, it will affect the larger environment in ways which at the time of implementation may be entirely unpredictable. Add to this the fact that as ERS proceeds, people's needs and aspirations will change, goals will alter, and the capacities of those driving reform will fluctuate as new people come on board, and experienced persons either learn more or leave. These examples also speak to the fact that reform needs to be strategically managed.

The elements of strategic management in these kinds of situations are fairly well-known (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 1992, Crosby 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Goldsmith 1995), and we summarize them below in the context of ERS.

Common vision is a fundamental element of strategic management (Bryson 1995, Senge 1990). Given the vicissitudes of reform, it is critical that those working to facilitate and further it share a common purpose and work toward a collective goal. Without a common vision, the reform process runs the risk of dissipating into a fragmented morass of inchoate activities. The objective, then, is to forge a common vision out of a multitude of organizational objectives and personal aspirations. Reaching a common vision is not easy, but techniques are beginning to emerge. Common to most of these techniques is the inculcation of a genuine sense of ownership among those involved in the process.[11]

Asking stakeholders to help define reform also will foster *commitment*, another fundamental component of strategic management (Fullan 1991). There will be many political-economic battles to fight (from the central ministry to the head teacher's office), and the reform war will not likely ever come to an end; there will *always* be opponents to thoughtful reform.[12] Without true commitment to the ultimate

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[11]Cultivating ownership means that the various people engaged in the reform process actively participate in the design and development of the various relevant programs that constitute the process (Nathan 1993).

purpose of reform—empowering children to fulfill their hopes and dreams within a vibrant economy and civil society—the friction that is always working against reform eventually will bring it to a grinding halt.

Technical capacity is important as well (Drucker 1993, Senge 1990). On a personal level, people must have the skills needed to make reform happen. Many of these skills are related to the use of elements of public policy discourse, such as qualitative analyses, projections, cost-benefit analyses, simulations, facilitated dialogue, communication and social marketing, etc.[13] Moreover, actors must continuously build on those skills and strive to become more adaptable so that they can adjust to the needs and demands of a fast-changing environment. Reform is not the responsibility of any one person. It requires many people of great skill complementing each other's strengths such that the resulting team is greater than the sum of the parts. ***Forging organizational teams*** of technically skilled learners is, therefore, another key aspect of strategic management (Peters 1987, Senge 1990).

Getting organizational *teams* to learn is yet another. It requires both practice in reflection (Schön 1983) and the subsequent generation of intellectual capital. Investing that capital back into the organization facilitates organizational learning. The resulting ***organizational learning*** is another important aspect of strategic management (Argyris 1993, Senge 1990).

Organizational learning must be relevant. It is one thing for everyone in an organization to read *Moby Dick*, for example. It is quite another for everyone to learn in such a manner that the organization flourishes over time. To this end, much of the learning that goes on must relate to the larger environment within which the organization is functioning. In this regard, ***environmental scanning*** is a key aspect of strategic management.

In addition, an organization must continuously monitor its own capacities against the demands of a complex and changing environment, and adjust accordingly. This fact argues for the centrality of ***organizational assessment*** to strategic management.

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[12]Some scale-up strategies are premised on the belief that once a certain critical mass of change has been reached (30 percent), then the rest will fall into place, much like a nuclear reaction. This belief stems from diffusion of innovative research (Rodgers 1969) that was forged largely outside of the education sector. Whereas the widespread adoption of hybrid corn may happen once 30 percent of a country's farmers put it to use, we daresay that the political economy around the use of hybrid corn is far less forceful or complex than that which exists around education. Thus, we can assert that true education reform is never over.

[13]These tools and techniques are discussed in Volume 4, *Tools and Techniques*.

Common vision, commitment, technical capacity, organizational learning, environmental scanning, and organizational assessment are fundamental aspects of strategic management. But what is it that is being strategically managed? Ultimately, it is the reform process itself. This being the case, it is the core group that must initially adopt a strategic management style. The organization the core group should ultimately come to manage is the RSI. Moreover, every actor within the RSI should understand that reform takes place in a very complex, changing environment, and that it must be managed in such a way as to ensure that the reforms account for and accommodate this understanding.

2.7   Initiation

2.7.1   Getting People to Buy into ERS

Initiation embraces a range of activities that are undertaken to get various dimensions of Education Reform Support under way. The most basic dimension is *getting people throughout the sector to buy into reform in general*. In some countries, the political-economic environment is such that reform is not highly regarded. Either education is ignored altogether, or the state simply throws money at it with no consideration of what impact that money is having. Reform may indeed be taking place in small pockets throughout the system, but powerful elements in the government ignore it, are hostile to it, berate it as second rate while unable to do better, or at the very least, do not know what lessons to learn from it (Fass 1995a, 1995b).

As basic as introducing ERS might sound, it has its complexities. First, the concept of ERS is quite a bit to digest; observe the multiple volumes it is taking for us to elaborate fully. Accordingly, our experience suggests that it should not all be introduced at one time. Moreover, certain aspects of ERS may not appeal to some people initially or perhaps ever. Hence, it may be prudent to determine what aspects of ERS should be introduced to whom, and when they should be introduced. For example, central decision makers may not enthusiastically embrace some of the allusions to democracy that are found in ERS. If this is the case, it is best to introduce these aspects of ERS at a later date—one that is more strategically appropriate. Policy support tools can indeed empower decision makers to make more informed choices and so enhance their stature with, say, the ministry of finance. Accordingly, *this argument* might be a fairly good place to start when it comes to introducing certain aspects of ERS. ERS ultimately must be introduced to a whole range of stakeholders, all with their own interests in and perspectives on reform, which underscores the fact that the introduction of ERS needs to transpire over time, and that it must be strategically and thoughtfully pursued. Experience dictates, for

example, that if some actors are brought on board before others, the political fallout could prove detrimental.

2.7.2 Generating Demand

It is one thing to introduce the notion of reform and ERS to certain people; it is quite another to generate widespread *demand* for ERS. Accordingly, generating demand should be seen as another activity within the realm of initiation. In this regard, people not only must reach the point where they want change per se, but also ultimately must want a particular kind of change—an evolution that requires a lot more than salesmanship. There is a role for policy marketing,[14] but if genuine demand for change is to be engendered, it must stem largely from a *learning experience*. People must ultimately come to own both the notion of change and the package aimed at directing it (Fullan 1991). Inasmuch as generating demand is an initiation activity, so too is facilitating learning.

2.7.3 Introducing Innovative Ideas

The introduction of innovative ideas (apart from ERS itself) is regarded as an initiation activity as well. ERS has the entire education sector dealing with new knowledge—both introduced from the outside and generated from within. So, for example, when the Accelerated School Project[15] shows that *the best education for the best students is the best education for all*, this new information should find its way to the appropriate persons within the RSI-facilitated reforming system. Furthermore, people's active learning regarding what this information means for the system in question should be facilitated either through formal workshops or through interaction between local-level change agents and groups of teachers. And when some innovative approach to education is generated in a school somewhere within the target country, that new knowledge should be disseminated in like fashion, and efforts should be made to facilitate people's understanding of what it means for their particular learning situation.

2.8 Putting It All Together

The most important issue here, and hence our point of departure, is that, messy as Education Reform Support (or support of education reform) appears to be, it must nevertheless be addressable in a systematic fashion if donors are to play a helpful role.

Our systematization uses concepts from:

- political science and political economy as to how the policy process actually happens;

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[14]See Volume 4, *Tools and Techniques*, for a discussion of the role of policy marketing and other policy communication techniques.

[15]The Accelerated School Project is a successful school reform initiative that was designed to bring at-risk students into the mainstream of U.S. education. This initiative is being guided by Henry Levin of Stanford University.

- decision support theory as to how to aid decision processes with good, accessible information;

- extension and other technical propagation functions; and

- social and policy marketing as a means of communication and mutual stakeholder education.

Within the operational framework just described, ERS embraces activities in the areas of policy communication and dialogue, data and analysis generation and use, strategic planning and management, and networking and coalition building.

In the specific case of education reform in Africa, all of this framework of understanding is informed by a knowledge of what the reform issues are, and what analytical tools and institutional processes would be appropriate for helping define the reform parameters.

As indicated in the discussion in Volume 2 of this series, past attempts at supporting policy reform in a variety of sectors stressed a "technical fix" or "information supply" approach. We are stressing a demand-led approach that places emphasis on policy communication, dialogue, and marketing.

Porter (1995) describes the indirect manner in which analysis usually contributes to the policy process: over time by shaping the general interpretations and understandings of issues and eventually altering the working assumptions of policy makers (two obvious examples would be policy toward tobacco use in the United States, and promotion of girls' education in developing countries). What policy makers decide to do with information or analysis is in most cases dictated by the interplay of political interests. The use of information is constrained more by the characteristics of the policy makers and the process through which they habitually make decisions than by the nature or lack of information. For information and analysis to directly effect policy changes, investigators must produce objective research, and advocates must use it to make claims, persuade, build alliances, and mobilize stakeholder groups. In short, information and analysis must be strategically used to alter the political economy of education. This process is what we refer to as policy communication or dialogue. The more arenas for public argumentation, discussion, debate, and exchange, the better.
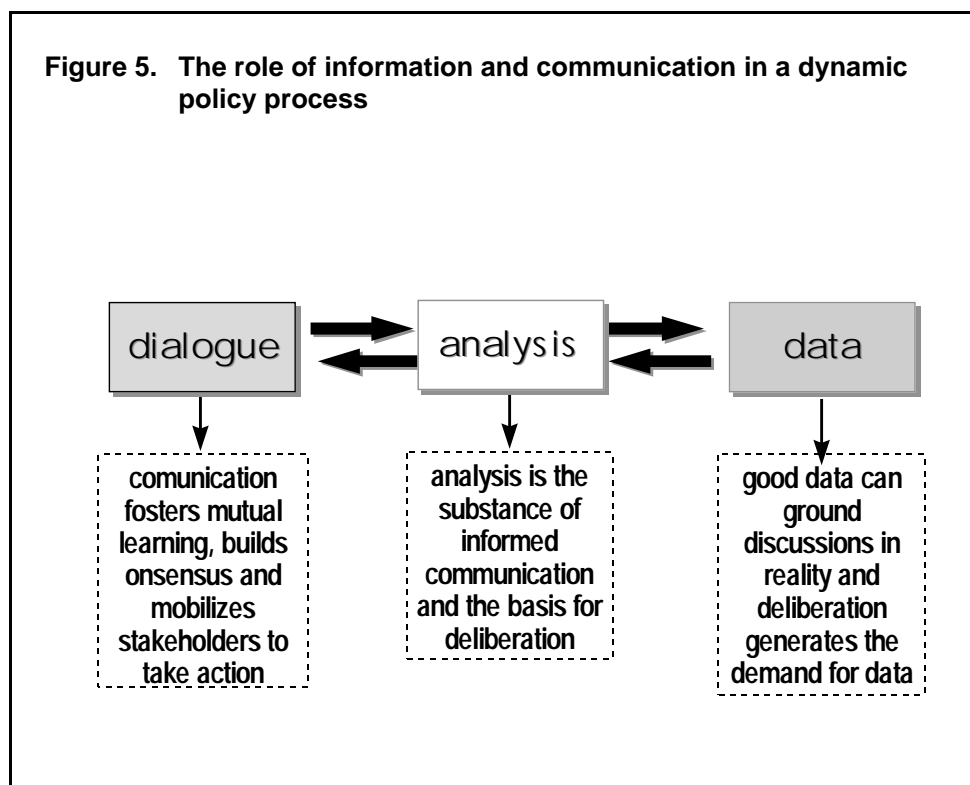
Information and analysis in most cases influence policy making by altering the terms of policy discussions (Weiss 1995). Knowledge generated for policy purposes then cannot be discussed in the abstract; it is useful only if it is linked to policy discussions within which information is needed and demanded. We contend that it is possible to

start using information in policy decision making by communicating and opening dialogues to stimulate demand for better and new information and analysis.

Data, analysis, and policy communication as the basic technical elements of Education Reform Support figure centrally in both the development and the operation of a reform support infrastructure (see Figure 5). That is, activities germane to data, analysis, and communication constitute much—though not all—of what a reform support infrastructure does.

If we wanted to systematically apply information, analysis, and policy communication to the activities of clearing and filling space and building reform support infrastructure, our assault would have two prongs. In one, we would help governments see the utility of broader participation in "policy design" and raise their capacity to seek input (information and analysis) in formulating their policy or reform agendas, from a variety of sources and in structured fora (policy communication). In the other prong, we would help nongovernmental information brokers (think-tanks, independent institutes, media, NGOs) get, analyze, and use data, as well as helping to create or exploit regular public fora and arenas for policy marketing, dialogue, advocacy, and information sharing.

To clear space, reform advocates use information and persuasive com-

Figure 5. The role of information and communication in a dynamic policy process

dialogue → analysis → data

| comunication fosters mutual learning, builds onsensus and mobilizes stakeholders to take action | analysis is the substance of informed communication and the basis for deliberation | good data can ground discussions in reality and deliberation generates the demand for data |

munication to address the obstacles to reform. If laws or regulations need to be rewritten, if union resistance to reform needs to be overcome, if perceptions need to be changed, then the case for those changes needs to be made and made persuasively. Policy marketing, advocacy, and dialogue can address this need and generate demand for the needed changes. Sound information and analysis are the currency of that marketing, advocacy, or dialogue. Similarly, if public ignorance or malaise is to be overcome, then mass communication techniques can be employed—e.g., social marketing or social advertising.

If scaling up involves creating or replicating the conditions that enable innovation to take place, then someone needs to document, analyze, and publicize the nature of the relationship between enabling conditions and innovation. These persons also can use analytical and advocacy tools to draw system-wide implications from space-filling activities. And they can facilitate dialogue about how to create those conditions on a large scale (and the implications of doing so).

Section 3

Key Activities Within the Operational Framework

Sections 1 and 2 provide a framework for ERS, and discuss what is needed to make it happen. Section 3 is meant to provide pragmatic examples. In particular, it names activities that planners embrace in building a reform support infrastructure, or in clearing space or filling space. In this regard, Section 3 differs from the preceding sections in that they largely describe *what* should be done to make ERS happen, while Section 3 offers insights into *how* it might be done. Details on some of the examples offered here can be found in the next two volumes in this series, *Tools and Techniques*, and *Strategy Development and Project Design*.

3.1 Understanding the Dynamics of What Happens In and Around the Education Sector

Anyone faced with the challenge of initiating an Education Reform Support undertaking within a particular country must consider the basics. For example, it is critical that one ultimately come to understand current events within education, education policy, education policy making, and education reform. Equally important is the need to heighten people's awareness of the current state of education and to facilitate their understanding of what the consequences might be if the situation remains unchecked. Out of these stages should come a demand for reform in general and a request for ERS in particular. And amidst all of this activity, reformers should initiate the development of a reform support infrastructure.

Fundamental to getting things started is a fairly comprehensive understanding of what's going on. In this respect, assessments are crucial. Reformers should carry them out for the purpose of garnering insight into the educational situation, the manner in which various decisions are made, the nature and character of the political economy surrounding education and education reform, the nature of reform itself (to the extent that there is any), the institutional situation surrounding education, and the country's fundamental value structure. Volume 5 in this series, *Strategy Development and Project Design*, describes several techniques that can be used to assess (1) the education situation and the different issues that are of current or future concern, and (2) the roles of different actors within that situation and in relation to those issues.

Reform is about policy decisions, administrative decisions, and managerial decisions. To make ERS happen, reform advocates will need fairly comprehensive knowledge about who makes these decisions, where these decisions are made, how they are made, and why they are made. For example, is policy purposefully formulated in an informed, coherent, and democratic manner, and ultimately translated into a meaningful, coordinated, and complementary set of activities that move the education system forward in some previously understood fashion (Fuhrman 1993, Porter 1995)? Or is policy blindly slapped together on an ad hoc basis by an elite group of decision makers in response to a series of unrelated political-economic crises, then issued by fiat from the central office and, if implemented at all, misinterpreted and entirely ill-implemented (Healey, 1994a)? Do decision makers spend the bulk of their time fighting fires and responding to silly requests from politically driven higher-ups, or do they work as a team trying to forge coherent policy packages and to manage a system that has a clear vision of where it is going, why it is going there, and how it plans to get there?

Within the ERS framework, reformers particularly must understand the role information, analysis, and policy communication play in the decision-making process (Crouch, Vegas, and Johnson 1993; Porter 1995; Weiss 1995). How are issues brought to the table (Crosby 1992a, 1992b, 1992c)? What paradigm, if any, is driving the policy process? What is the "distance" between the point at which particular decisions are made and the point at which they must be implemented (Sabatier and Whiteman 1985)?

To the extent reform takes place at all, it takes place on a political-economic playing field that for the most part is hostile to reform, complex, grossly uneven, and erratic (Crouch, Vegas, and Johnson 1993; Reich 1993). Anyone who truly wants ERS to happen must have a very good grasp of what the political-economic playing field looks like, how it behaves, and how it might change over time (Crosby 1992c, Gufstafson and Ingle 1992). Accordingly, those persons must come to know (1) who the actors are, (2) what their interests are, (3) how strong an influence they have over policy, (4) what their relationships are to each other, and (5) how their relationships might change over time and across various issues.

Of significant importance as well are the perceptions people within the education sector have about reform itself. In this regard, reformers should first determine if anything in the way of reform is being done at all. Assuming there is, what is it and what does it say about reform itself? Are donors driving reform? Is reform seen as something that will be accomplished in five years' time, or is it perceived as an

ongoing phenomenon? To what extent is the existing reform similar to the vision laid out in ERS?

Getting a sense of what reform is already going on is very important, for it is against this backdrop that reformers will have to maneuver ERS. It is very difficult to get people to buy into a *new* reform process if they are already engaged in various reform activities, for doing so would require them to accept that what they are currently doing is insufficient. Uganda, for example, recently has been in the midst of its Primary Education Reform. Although a lot of good things are happening (such as the development of regional teacher support centers), the overall effort is donor-driven and the implementors have little awareness of the implications various reform measures might have, say, on the overall cost of education ten years hence. In this particular situation, it became clear to reformers helping Uganda to introduce ERS that the way to sell ERS was to get stakeholders to realize that ERS would help to *sustain* the ongoing reform effort by informing them about the implications and options for dealing with donor withdrawal.

Finally, there are the country's value systems. How do various people throughout the sector in particular and the country as a whole view education? Is it valued? If so, on what grounds? Is it seen as a value in its own right or as a means to an end (i.e., economic gain)? Equally relevant is the degree to which the country in question values democracy and pluralism. Getting a sense of whether democracy is considered a threat to the ruling elite is critical information regarding how reformers go about introducing ERS and making it happen. Important as well is the manner in which key persons within the sector view lifelong learning. Personal experience has indicated that most teachers in southern Africa consider themselves "learned" upon becoming teachers. Worse yet, the more highly certified (not learned) they are, the more intransigent they are regarding the acquisition of new knowledge.

3.2 Developing a Core Group

We have noted that the driving force behind the development and operation of an RSI is a small nucleus referred to as the core group. Given the centrality of the core group to the whole of ERS, it is worthwhile to consider some of the ideal characteristics of the host-country counterparts who ultimately should come together to form the core group (see Box 3).

Obviously, some members of the core group must be well-connected— i.e., have solid contacts with the key decision makers and other powerful people within the political economy of reform (Crosby 1995, Healey 1994b, Landauer 1995). A related trait is the group's power of convocation (Healey 1994a, Landauer 1995). For example, can they call a meeting on short notice and get, say, a principal secretary to

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Box 3. Core Group Characteristics

An ideal Core Group should:

- be well connected
- have power of convocation
- be politically acceptable

- be technically proficient
- be strategically adroit
- be committed to reform

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attend? Equally important is the group's (or its publicly visible members') political acceptability in the eyes of many within the political economy of education (Healey 1994a). Ideally, politics should not get in the way of the technical work of the core group. In this regard, the group should be technically adroit and all advocacy work should be based on technical arguments, not on political ones (Crosby 1995; see Box 4). The core group members should equally be strategically adroit. They must, for example, know how to maneuver change processes within the political economy of education reform. Finally, the battles to be fought will require an enormous amount of effort, and new battles will inevitably be right around the corner. Fighting these ongoing battles will require a tremendous amount of energy, drive, and commitment—commitment to both the reform itself and the children it is intended to serve (Healey 1994b).

The above discussion focuses our attention on the kinds of skills and capacity building an outside intervention can help to convey in supporting the establishment of the core group specifically, and the reform support infrastructure more generally.

Given the fact that the core group is a central component of a reform support infrastructure, whoever establishes the core group inevitably initiates the development of an RSI. On a related note, an RSI is not like a factory that cannot operate until it is fully developed. Rather, an RSI develops, in large part, as a result of various operations and undertakings. Accordingly, *operations figure centrally to the development of a reform support infrastructure*. Thus, whenever reformers draw upon certain actors within the education sector to help carry out the assessment activities described above, measures are being taken toward the development of an RSI.

3.3 Core Technical Requirements of the Reform Support Infrastructure

Critical to getting an ERS activity under way is heightening people's awareness of the problems facing the education system and generating a demand for reform in general. Experience dictates that these two tasks usually can be done in workshop settings with the aid of various reform support tools (Healey 1994b). Such tools can range from simple models that can be demonstrated on flip charts, to complex computer-generated projection models, to flashy storyboard presentations sum-

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Box 4. The Education Foundation

In looking for potential actors, reformers should pay attention to how familiar the actors already are with the fundamental skills required of a core group. Consider the example of South Africa's Education Foundation. The Education Foundation is one of various NGOs that have been at, or near, the center of an ongoing dialogue over the nature and structure of post-apartheid education in South Africa for the past six years. Originally established to serve as an information clearinghouse, the Education Foundation gradually acquired a reasonably solid policy/reform support capacity of the kind described in this volume. That this occurred at all can be attributed to some extent to the fact that as an information clearinghouse, the Education Foundation was *already* carrying out some related reform/policy support functions. Accordingly, it didn't require much of an organizational shift to carry out more technically specific functions in the areas of analysis and dialogue.

marizing rigorous analyses. They help people learn about different aspects of education and education reform. Given the importance of reform support tools to the process of getting an ERS activity started, the capacity to develop them and use them figures centrally in the development of an RSI.

As we illustrated earlier (Figure 5), reform support systems embody a very specific host of relationships among three fundamental areas of activity: data, analysis, and dialogue (Landauer 1995). Data must be collected, verified, and managed. In turn, those data must be analyzed. Once analyzed, the resulting information must be packaged and strategically injected into a debate such that it can have an impact on policy. Out of this dialogue process, a demand for additional analyses may be realized. And these analyses may require the collection of more data.

To build policy support capacity, then, means that some element(s) of the reform support infrastructure should have the ability to collect and manage data. One approach is to build this capacity around the development of an education management information system (EMIS) within a ministry's policy and planning unit. Collecting and managing data alone, however, will not completely serve the education reform support needs.[16] The RSI also must have the technical wherewithal to analyze data. Oftentimes this capacity can be built around the development of a reform support tool. (Box 5 discusses the potential role of simulation models.) In addition, the reform support infrastructure should be able to initiate and facilitate an informed dialogue around the analysis and data that are made available. Reform leaders must learn how to use analysis or simulation modeling for raising issues, advocating particular positions or strategies, facilitating consensus building, and mediating.

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[16]In Volume 2 of this series, we have spoken of the need to create demand-driven, as opposed to supply-driven, EMIS.

Box 5. Projection Simulation Model Development

The development of a simulation/projection model has proven to be a very effective means of (1) initiating a dialogue over education reform among stakeholders, (2) nurturing a sense of ownership for the model and the dialogue process in general, and (3) developing capacity within the RSI (Healey 1994b). For these three events to happen, however, the model development process should be open and inclusive. In the case of Swaziland, reformers solicited the views and insights of stakeholders throughout the sector as to what major reform issues needed to be explored by a reform support tool. The model was greatly enriched by the facilitated discussion within Swaziland about the quality and efficiency of education (making use of Ward Heneveld's work [Heneveld 1994] for the Africa Technical Education Department of the World Bank). The basic mechanics of the tool also were discussed with different stakeholders, not only to obtain their feedback on the matter, but also to facilitate their understanding of how models and education systems work. This information was then incorporated into an overall design that ultimately was developed into a prototype. Various beta versions of the tool then were demonstrated at workshops so that people could comment on the tool. In the end, what resulted was a tool that (1) reflects what key stakeholders throughout the system wanted; (2) is "owned" by all who participated in its design; and (3) is entirely transparent. As a result, stakeholders trust what comes out of it.

The importance of this trust cannot be underestimated. In most cases, the news the tool generates will not be good. It will suggest some difficult decisions that will have to be made. If stakeholders had not been involved in the process of model development, they would be inclined to shrug off the warnings of its output as being fictitious.

The model development process also can be used to help gather data for the model. In South Africa, for example, some data for the Assessing Policies for Educational Excellence (APEX) policy dialogue tool were relatively scarce because the then-white government was reluctant to release them. By holding workshops and meeting with people over the idea of a model, reformers were able to make the data requirements for it widely known. Where specific data could be found, the process ultimately uncovered them. Where data could not be found, the value that eventually found its way into the model was one that was agreed upon by many persons and as such, even though it may not have been empirically based, it was a trusted value that allowed the modeling process to proceed (Healey 1994b).

3.4 The Use of Reform Support Tools in Public Fora

With policy support tools in hand (whether a model, a database, a set of budgets, or a presentation), it becomes possible to conduct a series of workshops aimed at sensitizing people to the current state of education. If a technocratic demand for reform is to be generated, people have to realize that the current state of education has to change. Accordingly, the tools should be used to show how the system is performing with regard to the standard quality and efficiency indicators. So that people can appreciate the implications of maintaining these characteristics over the next 5, 10, or 15 years, they are projected into the future. From such "no change" projections, a number of trends can be discerned that otherwise would not have appeared. For example, the no-change projection might reveal that in 10 years' time, the cost of education will be equal to 70% of the national budget.

Once ERS has facilitated people's understanding of how the system works and what the current state of education is, and in so doing, generated demand for reform, another important set of activities within Education Reform Support concerns helping people to examine various reform scenarios. Here again, a simulation model can elucidate the notion of trade-offs and so facilitate stakeholders' prioritization of reform measures. It can also lend insight into the impact certain policy options might have on various aspects of the system.

As important as these tools may be to these workshops, their usefulness is limited, nevertheless. Ultimately, the solutions must come from the stakeholders, not from a tool. Indeed, a reform support tool can tell people that a 50-to-1 pupil-teacher ratio is affordable. It does not tell people how to make the best of a 50-to-1 pupil-teacher ratio (Healey 1994b). Because there are a number of instructional technologies that can facilitate children's learning within a classroom of 50 children, these policy options workshops should be informed *beyond* the capacity of a particular reform support tool. People participating in these workshops need to know what's going on elsewhere in education reform and development. To this end, education reform specialists should be brought into the workshops to be used as technical resources. This is exactly what was done in four South African policy options workshops (see Box 6).

3.5 Creating an Enabling Environment

Thus far, we have discussed assessment of the education reform environment, the development of a core group and the reform support infrastructure, generation of demand for reform, and facilitation of stakeholders' examination of various reform-related policy options. Yet the dialogue processes that we have discussed thus far as the activities of the core group or RSI should not be seen as ends in themselves. Ultimately, they must help to create an enabling environment within which ongoing reform can take place. They should help to bring about real change (clear space).

National education summits and dialogue-driven education development strategies have contributed very effectively to the creation of an enabling environment (Brinkerhoff 1994). In this regard, we offer a few suggestions. One important element of an ERS strategy could therefore be the organization of a national education summit in which various stakeholder groups come together to share their ideas—ideas

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Box 6. Modeling Reform Options in South Africa

Policy Options Workshops in South Africa:

- Policy Options Workshop I, Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, NC;

- Policy Options Workshop II, Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, NC;

- Education Finance Options Workshop, Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC;

- School Reform Options Workshop, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Specialists in the fields of curriculum design, educational development, education finance, governance, school reform, school management, and other relevant areas were brought into a series of workshops aimed at facilitating a better understanding of what could be done regarding post-apartheid education in South Africa. At times, the reform support simulation tool, APEX, was used to inform the discussions of what the impact might be if, say, a junior secondary level was created. But once the broad parameters were established (such as pupil-teacher ratios of 40-to-1, etc.), the exact nature of what was to be done was discussed with outside experts offering ideas and insights based on their own experiences and their understanding of the literature. Were it not for such input, the knowledge plane on which these discussions took place simply would not have been as high.

generated in various policy options workshops—and to piece together a national agenda for change. Just such a conference took place in Swaziland in 1994 (Box 7).

Another suggestion for furthering the creation of an enabling environment is the organization of an official document that ultimately gets "approved" by the country's governing body (i.e., parliament). Such a document can take the form of a white paper or it can become a part of a much larger effort such as a national development strategy.

For example, in Swaziland, springboarding off the momentum from the National Education Symposium, reformers developed and widely distributed a number of documents for the purpose of getting key stakeholders to think about an education development strategy (Dawson 1994, Healey and Dawson 1995). Soon, the National Development Strategy process got under way. With it came the formation of an Education and Training Sector Committee of the National Development Strategy.

The Education and Training Sector Committee met on numerous occasions to discuss the makings of an Education Development Strategy. Supporting this process were a number of client consultations aimed at getting people's input into the process. After nearly a year, an official strategy was finally drafted. By 1997 that strategy will become incorporated into the National Development Strategy which will, in turn, be approved by parliament as the official strategic framework guiding Swaziland's development over the next 25 years. In addition, the Education Development Strategy will become the centerpiece of a negotiated World Bank loan that will help pay for some of the pro-

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Box 7. Swaziland's National Education Symposium

The National Education Symposium in Swaziland was the culmination of a year's discussions over education reform. Leading up to it, numerous workshops took place in which various stakeholder groups explored issues: e.g., restructuring of primary education from a seven-year cycle to a nine-year cycle, continuous assessment, quality improvement. The National Education Symposium itself lasted three days and was attended by over 400 persons, including the whole of parliament and various stakeholders from throughout the system. During the three days, the status of education was described and measures aimed at reforming the system were discussed in both plenary and breakout sessions.

The symposium itself did not lead to immediate changes in the way things were done in the classroom. Nor did it precipitate any *immediate* changes in the way the system

was run. What it did do was to get many key stakeholders attuned to the notion of reform and point them all in more or less the same direction. In this regard, it helped to forge the beginnings of a common vision. That common vision made it possible for changes to be made at a later date.

For example, one issue that came out in the National Education Symposium was the oversupply of teachers within the system. That the unneeded teachers alone would account for nearly 35% of the total education budget in 10 years' time suggested that something had to be done about the situation. Having thus impressed upon people the need to do something about the oversupply of teachers, the Principal Secretary was, at a later date, able to recommend a reduction in the number of posts for new teachers.

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grams that have been designed to facilitate ongoing reform.

Getting an education development strategy approved by parliament is, indeed, a very big step in the direction of purposeful reform. It is, nevertheless, a *single* step. As discussed earlier, standing in the way of purposeful reform are countless obstacles. Some can be ascribed to people's knowledge systems (e.g., general ignorance regarding education and education reform, bureaucratic norms and behaviors, value and belief systems, and people's natural resistance to and fear of change). Others are associated with archaic institutions (e.g., rules and regulations, organizational structures, bureaucratic requirements, and negotiated contracts). Equally obstructionist may be the entire political economy within which reform must ensue.

Overcoming these obstacles will require reformers to facilitate purposeful learning. This facilitation can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Policy marketing, for example, has proven to be an effective means of facilitating the public's learning regarding specific policies and reform initiatives. Public communications campaigns have proven to be equally effective at facilitating a mass audience's learning over more general issues regarding, say, the fundamental character of the education system or the need for education reform. Involving key stakeholders in the design, development, and implementation of specific reform initiatives facilitates ownership of the change in question and strategically overcomes many of the behavioral obstacles that would exist were change imposed on the stakeholders from the outside. Capacity building can also help overcome some of the barriers that stand in the way of reform. Clearly, if people have neither the knowledge nor the skills to make reform happen, it becomes that much more difficult to make it happen.

3.6 Keeping the Process Going: At the School Level

The above discussion centered largely on the creation of an enabling environment. Within that environment, school-level changes that have a positive impact on the learning process must be not only affected, but also furthered. Key to school-level changes happening is a cadre of change agents who, as part of the reform support infrastructure, are responsible for:

- initiating a rolling dialogue among local-level stakeholders about the nature and character of ERS,

- catalyzing various community-level institution-building exercises,

- managing the provision of appropriate capacity-building services, and

- expediting the lateral expansion of reform throughout the periphery.

Local-level stakeholders—teachers, parents, pupils, members of the

community—will have to buy into Education Reform Support if it is to spread from school to school. In particular, they must eventually come to own the notion that they must take charge of education (i.e., contribute to the definition and implementation of school-level change). The supplementary volume *Strategies for Stakeholder Participation* discusses some of the obstacles to involving the large and diffuse groups of stakeholders in the education sector. It also presents some frameworks and strategies for addressing the continuous involvement of those various grassroots stakeholders in educational reform.

In facilitating school-level change, reform advocates will observe that innovations diffuse gradually and sequentially. In most every community there are *innovators*, *followers*, and *laggards* (Rodgers 1969). Innovators are risk-takers who not only welcome change, but are instrumental in making it happen. Followers are a bit more cautious, accepting change only after seeing what becomes of it. Laggards, on the other hand, are people who either are uninterested or in some way are opposed to change (Rodgers 1969). This being the case, it is strategically important for these change agents to identify the innovators as soon as possible. Fortunately, they are usually not very hard to find; they are the community leaders, the most active and successful teachers, the parents who participate in the parent-teacher association (PTA), etc.

For our purposes, one of the critical considerations in developing a reform support infrastructure is this need for it to operate at levels of the system other than the central policy level. This need is perhaps both a constraint to effective Education Reform Support and an asset. It is a constraint in that it requires that much more institutional capacity to facilitate the generation and use of data and analysis in ongoing policy deliberation, marketing, and communication at several levels in the system. It is difficult to imagine any one organization with that kind of capacity (hence the importance of networking and coalition building). It is also an asset, in that it may actually be easier to facilitate dialogue around contentious issues at other than the national or central level. The example of teacher redeployment in Guinea is particularly instructive on this count (see Kamano 1995).

Section 4

Summary

Making Education Reform Support happen consists of three fundamental aspects. The first—building, reinforcing, or nurturing a reform support infrastructure—is how we have chosen to capture the notion of creating the capacity within a country for facilitating an ongoing process of learning-driven change in the education sector.

The second aspect of making ERS happen is addressing the constraints to reform that all education systems must confront. Whether the constraints are political-economic (the power of groups defending the status quo), ideological or knowledge-based (perhaps more accurately a lack of knowledge), or managerial or administrative, ERS offers various techniques for clearing space in the education environment so that reform can actually take root and grow.

The third aspect we have elaborated concerns what can go into that space once it has been cleared. Context-specific lessons about what does or does not work can only be generated from experimentation, innovation, and risk-taking. However, pilot initiatives or isolated experiments are only useful to an education system if the lessons they engender are deliberately brought to the policy deliberation arena. In this way, clearing space and filling space need to be linked.

Deliberately building reform support capacity and clearing and filling space is what Education Reform Support is all about. The "deliberate" part is the development of ERS strategies and the strategic management of the complex process of pursuing reform. ERS begins by introducing the concept of systematic support of the reform process and by generating demand for change in the education sector.

The implementation of all of the above is grounded in a reform support paradigm that stresses the roles of information, analysis, and communication in enriching both the process and the outcomes of policy change. Volume 4 in this series, *Tools and Techniques*, explores in detail how specific data, analysis, and communications tools can be invoked in support of education reform.

Documents in the ERS Series

The Education Reform Support (ERS) series of documents presents an integrated approach to supporting education reform efforts in developing countries, with particular emphasis on Africa. It is designed for development agencies and for individuals interested in helping strategic elements within a host country steer events toward sustainable reforms in education, as well as for host country reform proponents who wish to understand the aims and means of agencies that propose activities in this area.

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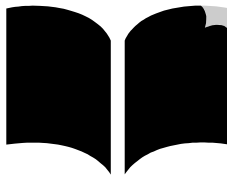
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