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## The Concept of Non-Formal Education in Independent Kenya: Theory and Practice

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this Paper was to provide a historical perspective of the theory and practice of non-formal education in post-colonial Kenya. It focuses on programmes for out-of-primary school age-group in both rural and urban Kenya. It posits that the meaning of the concept of non-formal education was tied to its history. This was illustrated through an analysis of various non-formal education programmes in post-colonial Kenya. The study also observed that, often, owing to diversity of providers, learners and objectives, the theory and practice of non-formal education varied in time and space. Primary and secondary data was drawn from field research, Kenya National Archives and other public libraries. Oral interviews and documents analysis were the main techniques used in data collection. Narrative and analytical styles of writing were employed. The study was restricted to the main programmes and features of non-formal education for out-of-primary school youth in post-colonial Kenya.*

**Key words:** concept and practice of non-formal education, out-of-primary school youth, rehabilitation programmes.

## Introduction

The importance of non-formal education in Kenya cannot be gainsaid. This is demonstrated by the amount and breath of literature on it by Government, Non-governmental organisations and scholars. Since the 1960s it has provided educational and training opportunities particularly to primary school leavers, orphans, children from poor households and in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya. Although it expanded mainly from the 1990s, the concept of non-formal education remained imprecise. It not only varied from provider to provider but also in theory and practice. It tended to draw its meaning from the prevailing socio-economic and even political contexts. This paper tracks its meaning and practice since 1964.

## The Concept of Non-formal Education

From the 1970s non-formal education attracted research by scholars, Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations particularly from developing countries. The resultant literature revealed three main strands of discourse on the subject. The first strand dwelt on the meaning of the concept. Often the meaning was derived from comparison and contrast between it and formal education. For instance, in response to the challenges that faced formal education in developing countries in the late 1960s, P. Coombs proposed that a more flexible system of education which he called non-formal education be offered to primary school leavers. He defined non-formal education as “any organised educational activity outside the established formal system-whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity- that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives”.<sup>1</sup> This definition was adapted in many countries, including Kenya. In practice, however, the interpretation and contextualization of the non-formal concept differed from country to country.

By 1970s, some scholars derived the meaning of non-formal education by comparing and contrasting it with formal education. Among such scholars were T. Simkins and N. J. Colleta and D. B. Holsinger who posited that non-formal education was characterised by flexible, short term, learner-centred, and functional, non-certified acquisition of knowledge and skills.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, Alan Rogers revisited the concept and argued that it is better understood in a continuum of informal, non-formal and formal education provision.<sup>3</sup> Noteworthy about these studies was that they were mainly theoretical and, therefore, hardly hinged on specific geographical and historical contexts. A linear

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in J. L. G. Garrido, “Open and Non-formal Education: New Paths for Education in a New Europe”, *Comparative Education*, Vol. 28, No.1, Special No. (14): Educating the NEW Europe, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1992, p.84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099345>, accessed on 31/10/2012.

<sup>2</sup> T. Simkins, Non-Formal Education and Development: Some Critical Issues, Manchester Monographs 8, 1977; N. J. Colleta and D.B. Holsinger, “Assessing the Impact of Non-formal Education on National goals” in L. Anderson and D.M. Windham (ed.), *Education and Development Issues in the Analysis and Planning of Post-colonial Societies*, Lexington books, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> A. Rogers, “Re-conceptualizing Non-formal education: Flexible schooling or participatory Education?” Studies in *Comparative Education* 15, Non-Formal Education, Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong Kluwer Academic Publishers, Springer Science & Business Media Inc., 2005.

<http://books.google.co.ke/book?id=pQcOj3luIQC&PG=pa286&lpg=PA286&dq=non-formal+education+in+nairobi>”source=bl&ots=JpjhANuw9s&sig=C accessed on 05/10/2015.

analysis of such studies, however, gave the impression that the concept was not static but was given meaning by the context and timeframe in which it was studied.

The second type of literature was described the operations of, or what was needed to successfully implement, actual non-formal education and training programmes. The works of P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield in 1966 on education of out-of-school youth and adults in Kenya and M. Ahmed's general description and cost-benefit analysis of non-formal education programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America fall in this category.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, E. R. Ortuzan wrote a detailed account of the main features of the Ecuador non-formal education project from 1970 to 1976.<sup>5</sup> The features included facilitator approach, use of games and radio educational materials as training aids, adaptation of local conditions and training of local facilitators in the implementation of the project whose main goal was to improve the lives of the communities without the rigidity and "verticality" of formal education.

Finally, some few authors linearly analysed the activities of specific non-formal education programmes which were established either in response to challenges facing the formal education sector or in the informal sector of the economy. For instance, In Europe, the study by Jose Luis Garcia Garrido in 1992 presented non-formal education as a novel approach in education provision.<sup>6</sup> In Latin America, Thomas J. La Belle discussed the shifts in emphasis and importance of non-formal education vis-à-vis formal education in Latin America<sup>7</sup> while D. N. Plank described a variety of non-formal (out-of-primary school) education programmes whose establishment he traced to the challenges that faced formal education in Brazil since 1930s.<sup>8</sup>

In Kenya, scholarly work on the concept and practice of non-formal education in post-colonial Kenya is scanty. For instance, S. N. Bogonko<sup>9</sup> hardly discussed non-formal education while D. N Sifuna<sup>10</sup> described non-formal education as a second chance, and inferior education opportunity for pupils who dropped out of formal schools. He further explained that the sub-sector did not thrive in Kenya in the immediate post-colonial era but had the potential of improving livelihoods. The authors' categorisation of indigenous education into formal and informal did not align with the

<sup>4</sup> P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield, "Continuing Education for Youth and Adults" in J. R. Sheffield, Education, Employment and Rural Development, Report of the Kericho (Kenya) Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October 1966, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1967, pp. 366-389; M. Ahmed, *The Economics of Non-formal Education: Resources, Costs and Benefits*, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> E. R. Ortuzan, "The Ecuador Non-Formal Education Project" in R. O. Niehoff and Kenneth L. Neff(eds.), Report of Conference and Workshop on Non-Formal Education and the Rural Poor, Institute for International Studies, College of Education , Michigan State University, 1977, pp111-120.

<sup>6</sup> J. L. G. Garrido, "Open and Non-formal Education: New Paths for Education in a New Europe", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 28, No.1, Special No. (14), 1992, pp.83-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099345>, accessed on 31/10/2012.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas J. La Belle, "The Changing Nature of Non-Formal Education in Latin America" in *Comparative Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Taylor and Francis Ltd, February, 2000, pp. 21-36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099849> accessed on 31/10/2012.

<sup>8</sup> D.N. Plank, *The Means of Our Salvation: Public Education in Brazil, 1930-1995*, Boulder, West View Press, A Division of the Harpers Collins Publishers, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> S. N. Bogonko, *A History of Modern Education in Kenya (1895-1991)*, Nairobi, Evans Brothers Ltd., 1992.

<sup>10</sup> D. N. Sifuna, "The National Education and Training Structure and Attainment of National Goals in Kenya", A Paper presented at the Kenya National Education Conference, themed: "Meeting the Challenges of Education in Kenya in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Nairobi, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2003.

concept of formal education as perceived by providers in colonial and post-colonial Kenya while their usage of the term “informal” tended to be synonymous to non-formal. Further, though separated in time, the attempts by K. King and H. D’souza to distinguish informal and non-formal education revealed that even in late 1980s there was both dearth of information and interchangeable use of the concept by scholars.<sup>11</sup>

By describing various programmes which were organized outside the framework of formal education to cater for primary school leavers, P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield demonstrated that the main differences between these programmes and formal education were varying duration of the courses (ranging between one to four years), use of multi-ministry specialists and non-fixed training locations.<sup>12</sup>

Without employing a historical perspective, E. J. D. Thompson reviewed some literature on non-formal education, summarized findings of studies on non-formal education sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture and Social Services in 1994; UNESCO and ACTION AID Kenya in 1996; CIDA from May 1998 to January 1999; and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, CIDA and Germany Technical Cooperation-Kenya in 2000.<sup>13</sup> The studies mainly focused on the objectives, curriculum and providers of basic education in formal and non-formal education contexts. He argued that non-formal education provided both alternative paths to education and alternative education (with emphasis on skills’ training rather than academic work) to out-of-primary school youth in Kenya. He illustrated the prevalence of these features in non-formal education centres by analysing some non-formal education schools and centres in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. Notably, all these studies dwelt on the status of non-formal education in urban and rural Kenya in the individual years of study and, therefore, did not track the concept to determine its usage in different contexts.

In 2004, T.W. Gathenya adapted a human rights perspective and not only defined non-formal education programmes as “third channel programmes” which provided “flexible, complementary” basic education, but also expanded the concept to include care and protection of “marginalised” groups in Kenya.<sup>14</sup> Citing a non-formal school in one of the informal settlements in Nairobi, Gathenya demonstrated that, in practice, it was difficult to distinguish non-formal and formal education where the hitherto identified distinctive features such as none-use of school

<sup>11</sup> K. King, *The African Artisan; Education and the Informal Sector in Kenya*, New York, Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977; H. D’Souza, *Kenyan Education in its African Context*, Volume 2, New York, Vantage Press, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield, “Continuing Education for Youth and Adults” in J. R. Sheffield, Education, Employment and Rural Development, Report of the Kericho (Kenya) Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October 1966. Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1967, pp. 366-389.

<sup>13</sup> E. J. D. Thompson, Non-formal Education in Urban Kenya: Findings in Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) KENYA, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> T. W. Gathenya, “Alternative Education Provision for ‘Street Children’ in Kenya”, PhD Thesis, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2003; T. W. Gathenya, “Breaking Boundaries To Achieve Quality Education for All: National Strategies for Mainstreaming Non-formal Education Innovations in Kenya”, in A Paper Presented during the ICSEI Conference in Barcelona, Spain from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

uniforms and formal education curriculum were no longer prevalent in non-formal schools. By so doing she implied a variance between theory and practice of non-formal education.

A. I. Abdi evaluated the Free Primary Education policy in improving access to education among nomadic communities in Wajir.<sup>15</sup> He noted that contrary to conventional school practices, mobile schools, learning under trees, multi-grade learning and curriculum adaptation to communities' nomadic lifestyle were some of the innovative non-formal education approaches used to increase pupil participation in formal education.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Although there is dearth of information on the history of non-formal education in post-colonial Kenya some of the available studies nuanced an "evolving" concept of non-formal education.<sup>16</sup> This aspect of non-formal education for out-of-school youth in post-colonial Kenya has hardly been tracked. Similarly, there is a gap in the analysis of theory and practice. This Paper attempts to fill these gaps in the literature of non-formal education in Kenya.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the concept, theory and practice of non-formal education in post-colonial Kenya.

## **The Practice of Non-formal Education in Independent Kenya**

Non-formal education in post-colonial Kenya was multi-faced. It was manifest in formal on-the-job training, the National Youth Service, the Village Polytechnics, Street Children Rehabilitation centres, mobile schools among nomadic pastoral communities, open air garages and workshops, non-formal schools and Orphaned and Vulnerable Children's centres. Each of these categories of education provision had distinctive features. All of them reflected socio-economic and, to a lesser extent, political needs of a particular historical period in post-colonial Kenya; needs that could not be fully met by formal education alone. The concept and practice of non-formal education were, therefore, context-dependent. The evolution of the programmes was both vertical and horizontal.

## **The National Youth Service**

The National Youth Service was a Government-sponsored training programme which was established to cater for out of school youth. During and after the state of Emergency in colonial Kenya, the Ministry of Community Development established Youth Centres for 14 to 19-year old youth who had never been to school or whose schooling was curtailed by inability to pay fees or proceed to Intermediate schools.<sup>17</sup> In addition to providing education, the youth centres helped

<sup>15</sup> A. I. Abdi, Education for All (EFA): Reaching Nomadic Communities in Wajir, Kenya-Challenges and Opportunities", M Res in Education, University of Birmingham, UK, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> J. L. G. Garrido, "Open and Non-formal Education: New Paths for Education in a New Europe", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 28, No.1, Special No. (14): 1992. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3099345>, accessed on 31/10/2012.

<sup>17</sup> R. G. Greaves, "The Youth Problem in Nyeri", Ministry of Community Development in KNA, AB/2/31, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Youth Training Schemes, p. 1.

control the movement and activities the youth lest they join or relapse to Mau Mau activities. The youth were trained in leadership, community service and values, such as respect, industry and “right use of leisure”, and craft work and literacy. In 1964, the National Youth Service (hereafter NYS) was purposely established to provide similar skills-training to out-of school youth aged between 25 and 30 years.<sup>18</sup>

In practice, however, age and educational qualifications were continually reviewed to accommodate prevailing social, economic and political circumstances. For instance, among the first recruits in Nairobi were homeless street children and younger youth who had dropped out of school or had never been to school but needed to be hemmed in and occupied in some constructive activities.<sup>19</sup> Further, from 1965, the minimum age of recruits was reduced to 16 years while the primary school leavers, though few after the qualification was adjusted to form four school leavers, continued to be admitted in the Service up to the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, a diverse curriculum including basic and vocational education inducted mainly through practical work in the NYS field stations which were spread in various parts of Kenya, distinguished NYS training from other formal technical/vocational training institutions. The gradual transition of NYS to a predominantly formal institution did not change the target population and the goals of the Service: namely, out-of-school youth and skills training for self-reliance and patriotic citizenry, respectively.

## The Village Polytechnics

By 1966, another front opened for non-formal education in Kenya. Many primary school leavers were neither in school nor in employment owing to smaller number of secondary vis-à-vis primary schools, inability of households to meet the cost of secondary school education, and young age and lack of requisite skills for formal employment among the school leavers. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations’ (hereafter NGOs) concern for the primary school leavers translated into the establishment of Village Polytechnics not only in rural Kenya, but also in Nairobi.

Conceptually, the Village Polytechnics were expected to source and assemble trainees from their local areas, train them in diverse and locally relevant skill areas so as to engage them in employment and problem-solving in those local areas and within the frame of their socio-cultural values.<sup>21</sup> The non-formality of the village polytechnics was in the nature of the training programmes, trainers and duration of training. The primary school leavers undertook a two years course which was taught for four days per week.<sup>22</sup> The course provided three types of training; agricultural training which was done in farms, artisan training on skills that were on demand by farmers, and classroom instruction which included book-keeping, literacy (reading and letter-writing), banking and how to organise cooperative societies.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, agricultural training was associated with “money can be made”

<sup>18</sup> P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield, “Continuing Education for Youth and Adults” in J. R. Sheffield, Education, Employment and Rural Development Report of the Kericho (Kenya) Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> October 1966, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1967, p. 372.

<sup>19</sup> R. Martin, *Anthem of the Bugles: The Story of Starehe Boys Centre*, Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books, 1978, pp. 47-48.

<sup>20</sup> J. R. Sheffield, *Op. cit.*, p. 372; ROK, *Economic Survey*, Nairobi, Government Printer, 1995, p. 188.

<sup>21</sup> T. Simkins, *Non-formal Education and Development: Some Critical Issues*, Manchester Monographs 8, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> P. Fordham and J. R. Sheffield, “Continuing Education for Youth and Adults” 1967, p. 379

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.379.

while classroom instruction was categorically associated with “making money” upon passing examinations at the end of the training.<sup>24</sup>

Preference for certificated formal education over non-certificated non-formal education for school leavers was informed by prevailing perception that non-formal education was inferior to formal education: it was a second chance mode of education for low status members of the society.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, by 1980s some Village Polytechnics had not only formalised their programmes but also established boarding facilities.<sup>26</sup> That the Village Polytechnics were viewed as schools by both some providers and trainees was indeed an illustration of society’s ranking of formal education vis-à-vis non-formal education and training that was offered in the Village Polytechnics. It is noteworthy that while some village polytechnics were established or assisted by the Kenya Government, the Ministry of Education did not provide a policy on non-formal education until 1998. Up to 1990s, therefore, the transition of society’s mind-set from formal education and training, as the only channel that guaranteed high socio-economic returns, to non-formal education and training was quite bumpy.

Nevertheless, the establishment of the Village Polytechnics energised collaborative efforts between the Kenya Government, NGOs and local communities in the expansion of education provision in Kenya. For instance, while the National Council of the Christian Churches in Kenya pioneered the establishment of Village polytechnics, Churches, communities and individuals stepped in and provided required financial and material support.<sup>27</sup> This continued participation of NGOs, local communities and individuals in non-formal education laid the foundation for their future and greater participation when circumstances required them to. By so doing, their participation also rendered non-formal education and training to various interpretations and practices depending on the goals and priorities of each provider and the socio-economic as well as cultural context of the learners/trainees. The establishment of Village Polytechnics also reflected a shift of focus from only the linear formal academic education to vocational education for primary school leavers.

The infrastructure of the non-formal education and training centres/institutions also depended on the financial and management capacity of their individual administrative organs. Consequently, even in diversity, there were noted improvements in infrastructure in some non-formal education centres/schools. For instance, starting with a simple timber-walled and iron- roofed street children rescue centre in 1970s in Mathare (in Kasarani Division of Nairobi), Undugu Society of Kenya constructed stone-walled and iron sheet-roofed spacious workshops, namely the Undugu Mathare Vocational Training Centre in early 1980s. The Undugu Mathare Non-formal School which was in the same compound was also stone-walled and roofed with iron-sheets.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Jitegemee Non-formal Education Centre and Undugu Ngomongo Non-formal School indeed started as makeshift and

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 379.

<sup>25</sup> D. N. Sifuna, “The National Education and Training Structure and the Attainment of National Goals in Kenya” A Paper Presented at the Kenya National Education Conference, 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> J. R. Sheffield and V. P. Diejomaoh, “Non-formal Education in African Development”, Report of A Survey conducted by the Africa-American Institute, New York, African-American Institute, 1972, pp.83-84; T. Simkins, *Non-formal Education and Development*, 1977, pp. 41-43.

<sup>27</sup> J. R. Sheffield and Djemaoah, *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> M. W. Wanyoike, observation during field research on Non-formal education centres in Nairobi in May, 2013.

mud-walled, iron-roofed structures, respectively.<sup>29</sup> The centres' surrounding environment was often not conducive to learning and play. Improvement in physical infrastructure in non-formal education centres was often also reflected in improved quality of teachers, curriculum and curriculum delivery. Such improvement was often traced to financial and material support from individuals, Community-based and Faith-based organisations and international NGOs such as UNICEF in Jitegemee Education Centre, Norwegian Church Aid in St. John's Community Centre, and Dulverton Trust (UK) in Starehe Boys Centre, among others.<sup>30</sup>

## Street Children Rehabilitation Centres

The establishment of rehabilitation centres in urban Kenya is traced to the colonial period. Up to 1920s, colonial housing policy did not cater for Africans in urban Kenya and when it did, it discouraged residence by African families. The growth of urban centres in colonial Kenya was, therefore, accompanied by the establishment of informal settlements by Africans who migrated to the centres in search of employment. During the colonial period, the population in these urban informal settlements in Nairobi, for instance, was higher than in other parts of the urban centres. Yet social amenities in these settlements were either scarce or non-existent.

Rural-urban migration sustained the tempo of population growth, particularly, in the informal settlements while unemployment increased the levels of poverty. This in turn eroded some parents' ability to take and keep their children in school and to provide for their other basic needs. Some of the out-of-school children from these informal settlements and parts of rural Kenya migrated and lived in the streets. They earned the label "street children" and as years went by "street youth" and eventually "street families". Some writers on the subject have attributed the phenomenon to poverty and its subsequent impact on access to education and stability of families in both rural and urban Kenya.<sup>31</sup> By 2001, there were about 250,000 street children in Kenya.<sup>32</sup>

Several approaches which included the provision of non-formal education were employed in response to the street children phenomenon. Rehabilitation of the street children and other out-of-school youth in Kenya was done in approved schools, youth clubs and youth centres which were established particularly during and after the Mau Mau war, between 1952 and 1956.<sup>33</sup> It involved both correction of juvenile behaviour in the approved schools and re-integration of youth to society. To date approved schools continue to be important learning and correction facilities for juvenile offenders in Kenya. Formal and non-formal education is prevalent in these schools.

<sup>29</sup>E. J. D. Thompson, Non-formal Education in Urban Kenya: Findings of a Study in Kisumu, Mombasa and Nairobi, Nairobi, German Technical Cooperation-Kenya, 2001, pp. 29, 34.

<sup>30</sup>J. Mujidi, "Non-formal Education- Alternative Approaches to Basic Education: Efforts towards Mainstreaming, Report of a Survey on Selected Non-formal Education Schools in Nairobi, 23nd to 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2001. GOK, 68/2004, pp. 6, 9, 12, 15; Oral Interview, J. Maina and E. Kitoto , Nairobi, 18/3/2013; R. Martin, *Anthem of the Bugles: The Story of Starehe Boys Centre*, Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books, 1978, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup>T. W. Gathenya, "Alternative Education Provision for Street Children in Kenya", PhD Thesis, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2003.

<sup>32</sup>G. Masese, "Crime, Violence and Trends in Nairobi, Kenya, Case Study Prepared for enhancing Urban Safety and Security", Global Report on Human Settlements, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup>R. Martin, *Anthem of the Bugles: The Story of Starehe Boys Centre and School*, Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books, 1978, pp. 6-10.

Further, repatriation of displaced, homeless and orphaned children from Nairobi which had the largest number of street children in urban Kenya was slow and often an unsuccessful deterrent to those who were still immigrating. Government and Non-Governmental Organisations established rehabilitation centres for juvenile offenders and street children, respectively, in various parts of the country. These included Likoni Boys centre, Kabete , Kakamega and Kirigiti centres, and Undugu Society of Kenya and St. John's Community, respectively.<sup>34</sup> Government-established rehabilitation centres provided formal and non-formal education while NGO-established centres initially served two main purposes, provide food and shelter, and control the outflow of the children from the informal settlements and rural areas into the urban centres. Gradually out-of-school arrangements were made and the centres started offering basic education and skills training to the street children.

In practice, non-formal education for street children was initially done in open field at a designated meeting point. That is how the Undugu Society of Kenya started its rehabilitation work among street children in Nairobi in early 1970s.<sup>35</sup> Socialisation and re-orienting the street children to constructive activities were among the immediate objectives. Helping them to earn a living and improve their wellbeing was the ultimate goal. From 1980s, similar street children rehabilitation activities were undertaken in Pand Pieri in Kisumu, Werna Centre in Mombasa, Nardikonyen Catholic Street Children Centre and Islamic Al-Noor Nursery School (in Lodwar) in Turkana District, and Bendera Out-of-school Centre in Samburu District.<sup>36</sup> Further, in Samburu District, learning was also organised in shifts: one group in the morning and another in the afternoon system, so as to allow herding and domestic chores, and learning to run concurrently. Individuals, local communities and Faith-Based Organisations played key roles in rehabilitation activities. Yet no matter how diverse the motivation for the establishment of rehabilitation centres, rehabilitation and reintegration of street children into society were key goals to be achieved outside mainstream education system. Gradually, the rehabilitation centres also admitted children from poor households, developed a “curriculum” and in some cases, eventually started using the formal school curriculum.

From street children rehabilitation centres two other strands of non-formal education were born; the non-formal education and training centres and non-formal schools. Non-formal education and training centres provided basic education and livelihood skills training to street children and children from poor households in urban Kenya. The order in which the children were “admitted” to the centres depended on when and why the centre was established. Thus street children preceded children from poor households and vice versa. For example, in early 1970s, Undugu society of Kenya first provided recreation and entertainment skills and basic education to street children, gradually extended the same to children from poor households. By 1980s Undugu Society eventually upgraded from basic education to formal education school curriculum which was offered in its non-formal schools in Mathare, Korogocho, Pumwani and Kibera.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> P. M. Kinyua, “Exploring Giftedness among learners with Juvenile Delinquency in selected Rehabilitation Schools in Kenya”, PhD Thesis, School of Education, Kenyatta University, 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Oral Interview, J. Kamau, Nairobi, 30/5/2013.

<sup>36</sup> ROK, MOE, “Final Report of Synthesis of Case Study Findings: Strengthening Primary Education Project (SPRED)”, Operational Research, Phase 2, Ministry of Education, Kenya, 1995, pp. 40-43.

<https://org.nacosti.go.ke/modules/library/publications/research>. Accessed on 13/3/2019.

<sup>37</sup> Oral Interview, J. Kamau, Nairobi, 30/5/2013; J. Etole, Nairobi, 27/5/2013.

On the contrary, St. John's Christian Community centre started as a club for young girls in Pumwani in 1957, then offered skills training to single mothers and food and clothing to the elderly, started a street rehabilitation programme in 1992, ran a 6-year basic education and training course for children from poor households in Pumwani and eventually expanded the basic education course to include formal school curriculum and eight years of learning leading participation in Certificate of Primary School Education examinations from 2009.<sup>38</sup> By 2009, therefore, the girls club had been transformed into a non-formal school, while the Community centre housed several other formal education and training programmes. Done outside ministry of education and formal education system, other forms of education and training in this centre was referred to as non-formal.

Nevertheless, the word non-formal was not uniformly applied to all education and training outside the framework of the ministry of education. Some providers referred to the unregistered centres as "informal". Prevalent in informal settlements in urban Kenya, the centres derived their identity from their location: informal settlement.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the concept was associated with the informality of settlements: no titles for land ownership, no building plans for "houses", no or few public primary schools in the vicinity; and temporary buildings. Sometimes the learning/training centres were also temporary: - here today abandoned or flattened tomorrow. Some vanished because the owner went bankrupt and closed shop, others succumbed to slum fires, or bulldozers paving way for other structures while others were relocated to more prime locations. The informality of the centres was also initially associated with the informal<sup>40</sup> as opposed to the formal Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development primary school education curriculum, pedagogy, and Kenya National Examination Council mode of assessment. In practice, however, most non-formal/"informal" education schools gradually adopted the formal school curriculum and teaching techniques.<sup>41</sup> After 2005, some of the learners were also allowed by the Kenya National Examinations Council to privately sit for the Kenya National Primary Certificate examinations in designated Ministry of Education-approved examination centres for private candidates.<sup>42</sup>

Besides the institutionalised non-formal education, non-formal education and training of out-of-school youth was also prevalent in skills and on-the-job training in the informal and formal sectors in Kenya. Open-air and indoor motor vehicle garages, carpentry and blacksmithing "workshops", tailoring and dress-making joints were among the most popular non-formal training avenues in Nairobi, in particular, and urban Kenya in general. In most of these "workshops", acquisition of functional knowledge and skills, within the trainees' capacity to internalise and practice, was more important than certification. However, some of the trainees also registered and sat for grade tests which were administered by the National Industrial and Training Authority in the Ministry of Public

<sup>38</sup> Oral Interview, P. Njuguna Nairobi, 31/7/2013.

<sup>39</sup> Hakijamii Trust, "Analysis of Kenya's Budget Allocation Patterns fo Basic Education in Urban Slums from 2006/7 to 2008/9 Financial year, June 2010, p. 20. <http://hakijammii.net/banalysis.pdf> accessed on 03/11/2010.: Elimu kwa Wanavijiji Coalition, "Rapid Assessment of Non-formal Basic Education in Informal Settlements in Nairobi", Elimu kwa Wanavijiji Coalition, 2004. [www.commonwealtheducationfund.org/download](http://www.commonwealtheducationfund.org/download). Accessed on 03/11/2010.

<sup>40</sup> Unplanned and incidental learning attained in the course of social interaction among the out-of-school youth.

<sup>41</sup> J. Mujidi, et.al, "Non-formal Education Alternative Approaches to Basic Education: Efforts towards Mainstreaming", Report of A Survey conducted on Selected Non-formal Education Schools in Nairobi from 22<sup>nd</sup> to23rd May 2001, Government of Kenya, 68/2004.

<sup>42</sup> Oral Interview, J. Maina, Nairobi, 18/3/2013.

Works.<sup>43</sup> This further illustrates existing linkages between non-formal and formal education. In the case of on-the job training, after work hours and certification were common features, indicating both the non-existence of fine boundaries between formal and non-formal education and the complementary role of non-formal education in knowledge and skills' acquisition.

Perception also played a role in the conceptualisation of non-formal education, particularly in urban Kenya. In the 1980s and 1990s, high levels of unemployment and poverty in informal settlements in urban and arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya contributed to low access, retention, completion and academic achievement of pupils in formal schools and also low transition from primary to secondary schools.<sup>44</sup> Unemployment was attributed to the general unemployment challenges in the country as well as low educational and skill levels of these populations. Unemployment limited parents'/guardians' ability to meet their children's educational costs in formal public and private schools while low academic attainment barred pupils' admission to the relatively fewer public secondary schools. Most non-formal educational centres either fully funded or subsidised education therein. Thus the Non-formal schools provided an alternative path to learners' participation in formal education. The non-formal training centres also provided alternative education and training in form of livelihood/vocational skills, including sports and music.

The perception of non-formal education as alternative education or alternative path to education explains the negative attitude towards it because it was both unconventional and associated with poverty and low academic grades.<sup>45</sup> However, by 2008, some non-formal education providers in Nairobi distanced themselves from the labels "alternative education" and "alternative approaches" to education and argued that they were complementing formal education. They had also formed the Kenya Complementary Education Providers Association (hereafter KECOEPA).<sup>46</sup> This fresh presentation of non-formal education was echoed by a head teacher and a training officer of the Undugu Society schools.<sup>47</sup>

The gradual shift of perception on non-formal education was also evident in Government economic policy and education reform documents. From late 1980s, it became evident that the informal not the formal sector of the economy was contributing more to job-creation and the gross national product than the formal sector.<sup>48</sup> That knowledge was accompanied by a development paradigm and attitude shift towards the informal sector in both Government and other education stakeholders. Policy support of the informal sector as enacted in 1992<sup>49</sup> translated to a gradual positive perception and attitude towards informal sector, and self-employment and eventually non-formal education and training. From 1995, research findings on non-formal education by NGOs, independently or in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Department of Adult Education and Kenya Institute of

<sup>43</sup> Oral Interview, J. Mugambi, Nairobi, 12/02/2013.

<sup>44</sup> N. Ndungu, St. John's Community Centre, Organisational Assessment Review of Implementation Progress of the 1994-1998 Project Plan, St. John's Community Centre, 1998, pp. 2-4, 5.

<sup>45</sup> E. J. D. Thompson, Non-formal Education in Urban Kenya: Findings of a Study in Kisumu, Mombasa ND Nairobi, Nairobi, German Technical Cooperation-Kenya, 2001, pp. 35, 37.

<sup>46</sup> Informal Discussion, E. Njiru , Nairobi, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Oral Interview, Mwalimu Okech, Nairobi, 17/02/2013; J. Etole, Nairobi, 27/5/2013.

<sup>48</sup> ROK, National Development Plan, 1997-2001, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

Curriculum Development, were disseminated.<sup>50</sup> In 1998, the Ministry of Education drafted the Non-formal Education Policy while the Commission of Inquiry into the education system in Kenya recommended the establishment of linkages between non-formal and formal education.<sup>51</sup> By 2000, the Ministry was conducting research on non-formal education with a focus on mainstreaming it to formal education or adapting it to improve access to formal education in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya.<sup>52</sup>

Further, while human capital formation had informed most non-formal education activities, from 2000, a human rights paradigm gained currency in the provision of non-formal education. Non-formal education for school-age youth was prevalent among pastoral communities in North Eastern Kenya where a nomadic lifestyle made conventional schooling impracticable.<sup>53</sup> The drive for non-formal education among the pastoral communities was the Education For All (hereafter EFA) goals, particularly Goal 2 which required each EFA signatory country to provide free and compulsory primary education. A flexible mode of education provision had, therefore, to be devised to be in sync with their pastoral and nomadic lifestyle as well as honour the commitment to Goal 2.<sup>54</sup> Among these communities, non-formal education was manifest in lechukuti/shepherds schools in Samburu District where herders aged between 6 and 16 years were NFE programmes in the afternoon in nearby primary schools where pupils accessed formal education in the morning.<sup>55</sup> This arrangement allowed herding and domestic chores, and learning to be done concurrently. Similar shift system shepherds schools were established by a community-based organisation, namely, Organisation for the Survival of Il-Laikipia Indigenous Maasai Group Initiatives (OSILIGI) in Laikipia. Literacy, numeracy and an indigenous knowledge-based curriculum on animal husbandry were offered.<sup>56</sup> Mobile schools/school on the camel and tree shade schools were also prevalent in arid and semi-arid areas in Kenya. The non-formal education practices in these areas were derived from and adapted to indigenous knowledge and cultural systems.

## **Orphaned and Vulnerable Children's centres**

Orphaned and Vulnerable Children's centres (hereafter OVCs) presented yet another face of non-formal education in Kenya. Orphanage deprived children of caregivers and social protection networks that staved physical and mental abuse as well as destitution. It, therefore, increased children's vulnerability to poverty and transactional sex, sexual abuse and child labour. Increases in number of orphans in Kenya were especially noted between 1993 and 2003, the peak years of HIV/AIDs pandemic in Kenya, after which their numbers started declining, mainly due to the

<sup>50</sup> Government of Kenya and UNICEF, "Survey of Non-Formal Education in Kenya", Kenya Institute of Education, 1995; Okwach Abagi, "Situational Analysis of the Education Sector in Kenya", CARE Kenya, June, 2000.

<sup>51</sup> ROK, "Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training TIQUET, Report of The Commission of Inquiry into the Education System in Kenya", Nairobi, Government Printer, 1999.

<sup>52</sup> J. Mujidi (ed.), "Non-formal Education: Alternative Approaches to Basic Education", 2001.

<sup>53</sup> A. I. Abdi, Education for All (EFA): Reaching Nomadic Communities in Wajir, Kenya- Challenges and Opportunities", M Res in Education, University of Birmingham, UK, 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Informal Discussion, A. Gitonga, Kikuyu, 03/10/2011.

<sup>55</sup> CARE Kenya (Okwach Abagi), "Situational Analysis of the Education Sector in Kenya", CARE Kenya, June, 2000, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

multiple approaches used to reduce HIV/AIDs-related deaths. By 2012, there were about 2.6 million child orphans Kenya.<sup>57</sup>

From the 1990s, providers of orphaned and vulnerable children's programmes partnered with the health sector to provide physical, material, psycho-social, nutritional and educational support to the OVC. Non-formal education was particularly manifest in educational, nutritional and psycho-social support of the orphans. OVC centres created HIV/AIDs awareness among adults, out-of-school youth and children, sponsored the OVC's nutrition and education in formal and non-formal schools and emphasised on values education for behavioural change as one of the strategies of reducing infection and mortality.<sup>58</sup> Through non-formal education and training, the cash transfer programmes which were launched by the Kenya Government in 2004 in Kwale, Kilifi and Nairobi, spread to about 246,000 households in Kenya by 2015 and targeted not only increased school enrolments by the under 18 year-olds, but also the nutritional and reproductive health status of the recipient households.<sup>59</sup> OVC programmes thus presented yet another phase and evolutionary stage of non-formal education.

## Conclusion

In post-colonial Kenya, the concept “non-formal education” was popularised by scholars who sought to draw distinctions between non-formal and formal education, who debated on its usefulness or otherwise and who studied its practice in different contexts and timeframes. Looked at vertically, the historiography of non-formal education illustrated both its evolutionary nature and discourse. The concept of non-formal education was intimately tied to the objectives, location content and nature of the participants of the programmes. In practice, infrastructural and administrative improvements in the sector were evident. In urban Kenya, rehabilitation centres and clubs for out-of -school youth gradually transitioned into non-formal schools and training centres. Likewise, the underlying frameworks in the provision of non-formal education varied in time, space and goals of the providers. Self-advancement, human capital formation, protection and human rights were the predominant paradigms in the provision of non-formal education and training in Kenya. Influenced by these paradigms, society's perception and attitude towards non-formal education changed with time. Conversely, the dynamism of society in Kenya was reflected in nature of non-formal education and training programmes. Nevertheless, there was some disharmony between theory and practice of non-formal education.

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<sup>57</sup> Veronica, C. Lee, et. al., Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Kenya: Results from a Nationally Representative Population-Based Survey, in *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2014 May 1; 66 (suppl) S89-S97. DOI: 10:1097/QAD.000000000000117, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Liason Development Consultants, St. John's Community Centre, End of Term Evaluation (2004-2008), August 2008; Agape Hope Children's Centre in Waithaka, <https://sowordwide.org/orphanage/agape-hope-children-s-home> accessed on 13/12/2018.

<sup>59</sup> Kenya Vision 2030, Cash Transfer for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children [www.socialprotection.or.ke/national-safety-net-program127-cash-transfer-orphaned](http://www.socialprotection.or.ke/national-safety-net-program127-cash-transfer-orphaned). Accessed on 13/12/2018.

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