

# Partnerships

for Capacity Building and  
Quality Improvements  
in Education



**Papers from  
the ADEA  
Biennial Meeting**

(Dakar, Senegal, October 1997)



Association for the Development of Education in Africa

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**Association for the Development of Education in Africa**

This document is a compilation of papers presented during the 1997 ADEA Biennial Meeting. The views and opinions expressed in this volume are those of the authors and should not be attributed to ADEA, to its members or affiliated organizations or to any individual acting on behalf of ADEA.

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# List of Acronyms

AAS	African Academy of Sciences
ABC1	Africa Capacity Building Initiative
ABEL	Achieving Basic Education and Literacy (USAID)
ACAFE	Alliance for Community Action on Female Education
ACBI	Africa Capacity Building Initiative
ADB	African Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ADF	African Development Fund
AED	Adult Education for Development
AEI	Iberoamerican Association of Educational Television
AGI	Africa Gender Institute
APNET	Africa Publishers' Network
APPER	African Priority Program for Economic Recovery
CBTF	Capacity Building Trust Fund
CILSS	Comité Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (Inter-State Committee for Drought Abatement in the Sahel)
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CONFEMEN	Conférence des Ministres de L'Education des Pays Ayant Le Français en Partage [Conference of Ministers of Education in Francophone Countries]
DAE	Donors to African Education
EDI	Economic Development Institute
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
ENDA	Environnement et Développement (Dakar, Sénégal)
ERNESA	Educational Research Network in Eastern and Southern Africa
ERNWACA	Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa
EU	European Union
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FCUBE	Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (Ghana)
FEMSA	Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio (or Rate)
GRAF	Groupe de recherche, action et formation (Dakar, Sénégal; an affiliate of ENDA)
IAOS	Inventory and Analytical Overview of Education Sector Studies
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IREDU	Institut de recherche sur l'économie de l'éducation <i>[Institute for Research in the Economics of Education]</i>
IIR	Institute for International Research
JET	Joint Education Trust
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NESIS	National Education Statistical Information Systems
NFE	Nonformal Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
PASEC	Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs des pays de la CONFEMEN
PADLOS	Projet d'appui au développement local dans le Sahel <i>[Support Project for Sahelian Local Development]</i>
PCBAI	Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa Initiative
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PLA	Participatory Learning Action
PMU	Project Management Unit (Ghana)
PPSE	Programme de Petites Subventions d'École en Guinée <i>[Guinea Small School Grants Program]</i>
PSs	Permanent/Principal Secretaries
SACMEQ	Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMT	Science, mathematics and technical
SRP	Strategic Resource Planning
TMS	Teacher Management and Support
TSM	Teaching Service Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPAERD	United Nations Program of Action for Economic Recovery and Development
UPS	Uninterruptable Power Supply System

### **ADEA Working Groups**

WGBLM	Working Group on Books and Learning Materials
WGDEOL	Working Group on Distance Education and Open Learning
WGECD	Working Group on Early Childhood Development
WGERPA	Working Group on Education Research and Policy Analysis
WGES	Working Group on Education Statistics

WGESA	Working Group on Education Sector Analysis
WGFE	Working Group on Finance and Education
WGFP	Working Group on Female Participation
WGHE	Working Group on Higher Education
WGNFE	Working Group on Nonformal Education
WGTP	Working Group on the Teaching Profession



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## Making Partnership Work

**by Richard Sack, Executive Secretary, ADEA**

The papers in this volume were presented and discussed at the October 1997 ADEA Biennial Meeting held in Dakar, Senegal. The theme of that meeting was “Partnerships *for* Capacity Building and Quality Improvements for Education in sub-Saharan Africa”—with the emphasis placed on “partnerships”. The choice of this theme comes out of ADEA’s ten-year history which is linked to the ever-growing realization of the importance of viable partnerships between ADEA’s three constituencies: African Ministers of Education, their external financing and technical partners (the “agencies”), and the professional communities of researchers and educators concerned with the development of education in Africa.

Why “partnerships”? This has become *the* key word of development cooperation in the 1990s and its broad acceptance is a positive development. For just that reason, it was felt that clear insights into the operational meanings of “partnerships” were needed—including understanding and agreement on what it means in terms of the actions and responsibilities of the partners. Although an ambitious undertaking, the Dakar Biennial focused on the theory and practice of partnerships for education.

The explorations presented here look at both domestic and international partnerships. Education, of course, is practiced mostly locally, with actors and stakeholders ranging from the minister of education to school directors and teachers, and including communities, employers, parents, politicians and taxpayers. The history of education throughout the world provides ample evidence

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1. Prominent examples include the influence of: Arab universities on the development of higher education in Europe; German higher education on the development of higher education in the United States; and how Japan borrowed from Europe in developing its mass education system in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See: G. Mialaret et J. Vial and M. White.



that education is also international in scope.<sup>1</sup> This is especially so when external financial and technical partners become part of the equation, as is the case for most of Africa. With this in mind, the scene is set by the point made in Senegal's President Abdou Diouf opening speech to the meeting, where he states that:

*“In order to progress from the aid relationship to partnership, the first step lies in redefining the status and roles of those involved in a way that truly recognizes and accepts the equal dignity and responsibility of both partners, above and beyond differences in their cultures and levels of development. The type of partnership we should promote cannot be founded on a vertical relationship based on authority, constraint, the imposition of a balance of power, substituted sovereignty and the transposition of models, or, on the other side of the same coin, paternalism and condescension. Instead, it should be founded on conditions such as authentic dialogue in a horizontal relationship in which the actors recognize each other as equals and participate in an exchange considered mutually useful and enriching by both parties because of their very differences. With this in mind, it is important to develop our capacity for listening, not only to institutions, but also to individuals, cultures and the internal processes that determine the movements of real world. This is necessary in order to achieve a better understanding of each one's specificities along with a common understanding of development goals and strategies.”*

## **Recent history and emerging trends<sup>2</sup>**

The Pearson Commission was established by the World Bank in 1969 to examine international development assistance in a context of disappointment with the performance of the developing countries and doubt about the objectives and usefulness of external development assistance. That Commission's report<sup>3</sup> made the following points:

- To be effective, aid had to be separated from political and commercial objectives and be targeted for specific development purposes.
- The purpose of aid is to help the poorer countries achieve sustainable development, and thus narrow the gap between the developed and developing countries.
- Development is not a linear progression. It is a process that involves profound

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2. Much of this section is based on a background paper by Ahmed Mohiddin, *Partnership in the Development of Education in Africa*, written with financial support from the International Development Research Centre.

3. Lester B. Pearson, 1970.

social, economic and political changes which could trigger problems and threats to national cohesion. Such problems can be solved only by policies relevant to specific historical circumstance of the countries.

- The education systems in Africa, inherited from the colonial times, were ill-adapted to the economic, social and cultural requirements they were supposed to fulfill. The Report stressed the crucial importance of relevant education for African development.
- It is necessary to create the building blocks towards mutual trust and respect and the establishment of a better partnerships between the developed and the developing countries. This requires dialogues about the ends and means, and the meaning of development. The Report raised process to the same level of importance as objectives, and recognized the importance of what we now call “ownership”.

We see that the idea of partnership—the striving for an enduring, mutually acceptable and beneficial relationship between the developed and developing countries—is not new.

There are, however, a number of factors that are new to the 1990s. All of us, South and North are living in a very different world than that in which our institutions, institutional cultures and work habits, rules, accountabilities and procedures have developed. Like it or not, we have to adapt to these new factors, and build them into our ways of doing business in partnership.

Globalization—increasingly mobile populations combined with the lack of controllable frontiers for the transfer of capital and knowledge—is profoundly changing the way we live and work with one another. We are becoming increasingly inter-dependent with different—but not necessarily equal—consequences. Although globalization is a universal phenomenon, the nuances of its meaning and impact differ from one country to another, and between groups of the same country. When seen as driven by technology, it may be viewed as the expansion of western material civilization, and with it the economic and technological domination of the western countries over those lacking in the technology. When seen as a carrier of values, cultures and ways of life, globalization may viewed as imposing certain life-styles on the rest of the world. Indeed, one of the most common criticisms (or fears) of globalization—on all continents—is expressed in terms of loss of national traditions and cultural uniqueness.

The end of the Cold War has altered the legitimacy of development aid for the governments and populations of the Northern countries. “Aid fatigue” is the best known expression of this. This situation is already having a tremendous impact on the nature of development aid where considerations of a geopolitical nature (e.g., keeping alliances, maintaining blocs and political spheres of influence, ensuring votes in the UN) are yielding to considerations more germane to development issues (commercial and market considerations, good governance, social development, girls’ education).

This new situation is reflected in recent reports of the Development Assis-

tance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>4</sup> Here are some of the points made in these reports on the evolving environment for development assistance:

- Since the end of the Cold War has liberated both developed and developing countries from the ideological manipulations of one another, both are now free to concentrate on the real issues of development in “...a new era of shared human progress in the 21st century, ... based upon an increasingly clear vision of partnership—of mutual interests and mutual responsibilities.” (*DAC Annual Report*, 1996).
- Effective partnerships need to place a “premium on knowledge of local circumstances and the freedom to act flexibly in a manner that is responsive to local conditions” (*DAC Annual Report*, 1996).
- It is necessary to distinguish between development results and aid effectiveness. The former “flow from the combined efforts of all concerned—local authorities and civil society, as well as external partners—from governments, multilateral institutions non-governmental organizations, the private sector—to achieve overall development goals at national, regional and global levels” (*DAC Annual Report*, 1998).

This current trend is demonstrated by recent outputs from the European Union (EU) and from the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC), both of which have developed guidelines aimed at promoting more effective partnerships.<sup>5</sup> Although indicative and non-binding, they exemplify the directions in which agencies are moving. Examples (ideally) include: full transparency and information sharing; external financing that is driven by government priorities and policies; agency coordination that is led by the national governments; harmonization of procedures between agencies based on the procedures and guidelines of the recipient countries; local capacity building through use of national consultants; and working through existing national institutions.

Yet to be put fully into practice, these points provide a road map of directions we should expect (and require) from development cooperation. Actually getting there, of course, will involve overcoming entrenched resistance and, most likely, encountering unforeseen perverse effects. Depending on who demands and/or initiates it, full transparency, for one, may be viewed as a threat to sovereignty. This may hold for agencies and countries, alike. Similar issues may arise in the area of the harmonization of procedures where requirements for accountability and reporting may vary between countries and agencies (indeed, between agencies, themselves).

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4. See the successive reports (1996, 1997, 1998) from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Development Cooperation: Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee* (known as the *DAC Annual Report*). Also, OECD/DAC, *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation*, May 1996.

5. For the EU’s draft code of conduct, see ADEA’s *Newsletter*, April-June 1998; for DAC’s checklist, see “The tests of crisis and the development of partnerships strategy”, in DAC’s *1998 Report*, p. 29.

Such is the overall context in which we observe increased efforts at coordination among the development agencies. A major motivation for these moves is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their development aid. ADEA—which began as a donors’ club for improved coordination—is an example of this. At the same time, we see an increase in coordination within Africa and dialogue on educational policy matters. OAU’s Decade for Education in Africa attests to this. In other words, along with the recent emphasis put on “North-North” coordination between agencies, we see an analogous phenomenon in the South. This could provide a basis for increased and more effective partnerships between the two.

Civil society is emerging all over Africa. People are organizing themselves in various types of non-governmental organizations and establishing networks of relationships amongst themselves and with the international development community. Government is no longer the only player and, increasingly, is sharing the stage with NGOs and other actors from the civil society. As President Diouf points out, civil society is demanding greater accountability and transparency from their governments in the formulation and implementation of national policies. They demand participation in the policy formulation process and a role in the implementation of development assistance. The role of the state is being redefined and refined, and governments find themselves incapable of delivering the quantity and the quality of the services demanded by citizens.

Information and communications technologies (ICT) are increasingly present. In addition to the rapid communications facilities inherent in these technologies, rapid access to information (for those who possess and master the ICTs) will confer important developmental advantages.

All of these factors have implications for organizational structures which are becoming increasingly flatter—i.e., less hierarchical. This is not only a matter of fad. Two factors play a central role: (i) the increasingly democratic access to information via the internet. This tends to undermine one of the major claims to legitimacy of hierarchies whose authority has been based largely on its exclusive access to information and the ensuing knowledge; and (ii) the speed and ease with which people can communicate with one another without passing through intermediate levels. In many organizations equipped with e-mail, formal requirements that communications between hierarchical extremes pass through intermediates are losing ground. Increasingly, presidents communicate directly with staff and vice versa. For these reasons, traditionally structured organizations are losing ground to networks.

At the same time, the development world has entered into an age of agnosticism. Yesterday’s “certainties” about “how to develop” have not worked according to expectations.<sup>6</sup> Everything, including the effectiveness of aid, is put into question.<sup>7</sup> This has created something of a theoretical and conceptual void that

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6. For an overview, see L. Rodwin and D. A. Schön (eds.).

7. World Bank, 1998.

has yet to be filled. It is now generally recognized that no one school of thought and no one institution is in a position to claim intellectual superiority when it comes to developmental “know-how”. This is a time of modesty when it comes to theories of development and of pragmatic ambitions for results on-the-ground.

## **What is partnership, who are partners?**

There are plenty of examples and models in our environment. It would be easy to provide a long list of partnerships in a variety of contexts: politics (running mates), business (banker and entrepreneur; co-owners), the family (husband and wife) and social spheres (mother and midwife), sports (coach and player), education (teacher and learner; teachers and Ministry of Education) ...<sup>8</sup> No matter how broad the variety, they all have something in common: when all is said and done, the most powerful motive for the partnership is self-interest. People enter partnerships because there is something to be gained from it. Success in partnership is heightened when all concerned are explicitly aware of their own and their partner’s interests. Success is also promoted when the partners share a common goal of mutual attainment of each partner’s interests, as well as mutual respect for each other’s interests.

A partnership is a relationship characterized by roles, responsibilities, rights, obligations, and accountabilities. These may be based on law, shared ethical standards, rules, and/or conventions derived from long experiences of working together for common objectives. It can take quite some time for a partnership to reach the stage of satisfaction for both partners—reached after a period of trials and errors, successes and failures, achievements and disappointments. It is in the course of such processes that people come to know one another more intimately and that respect is earned and trust established between partners.

Who are the partners? Can they be institutions, or must they be individuals? Ministries and agencies are institutions. But they are all composed of, and run by, individuals. At the end of the day, the nature and quality of the relationships between institutions, ministries and agencies will depend on how individuals get along and work together. It will also depend on how those individuals manage *within* their respective institutional constraints (deadlines, procedures, policies, reward structures, priorities, etc) and how they communicate their constraints to their partners working in other institutions. However, although institutions stay put and evolve slowly, the individuals within them change, sometimes frequently. This makes the exercise of partnership—which, operationally, is fueled and practiced by individuals—between institutions more difficult when there is frequent turnover of individuals and poor institutional memory.

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8. Of course, we are concerned with cooperative partnerships, not the antagonistic ones that are found on opposite side of the chessboard or the tennis court where, it could be argued, the opponents are partners since neither could play without the other.

Automatically, when we think of partnerships we think of business relations. Business people enter into various types of partnership because they are beneficial to them or because they are the only means available to promote their interests or maximize profits. For example, a foreign company may enter into a partnership with an African company that is well-established in its country. In entering such a partnership, the foreign company will have access to the African market, sources of raw materials, and in the process learn something useful for the long-term business interest of the company. The African company may benefit from the advanced technology and organizational expertise of the foreign company, as well as enhancement of profits. Both companies might also gain other types of knowledge and information which could not otherwise have been obtained. Ideally, in such cases, the cross-fertilization that occurs will enhance each partner's gains. Hence, although each of the partners is differently endowed in terms of their comparative advantages—one may have the technology and organizational expertise, and the other may have the knowledge and share of the local market, human resources and the contacts that are essential to the operation of any business—each finds common interests.

The pursuit of profits does not motivate partnerships for development cooperation which, rather, are long-term and largely political and humanitarian. This, therefore, makes such partnerships subject to policy changes, continuous debates and more diffuse forms of accountability than straightforward balance sheet calculations. Development partners may have varying interests, but they have common objectives.

The “business” of education has two major actors: the State and Civil Society. The latter is composed of communities, parents' associations, teachers' unions, private schools and universities, private enterprise, etc. A well-functioning education system is continually forging partnerships between representatives of these two actors. In addition to providing resources, the external financing and technical partners help provide access to information and technologies needed to live and compete in this interdependent world.

## **How successful partnerships develop— the mechanics of partnerships**

Successful partnership relationships require clear understandings of how they operate. Clarity is required on the reasonable expectations, roles, interests, obligations and responsibilities of all the partners, on all sides of the equation. To attain this, effective communication between the interested parties is a central enabling factor. As the factors and dimensions that contribute to productive and sustainable partnerships are examined, it will be useful to think of illustrations. The papers in this volume serve this purpose.

What are effective bases for organizing partnerships: contracts or trust? More often than not, partnerships in the North are sealed by contractual agreements

that are legally binding and specify in detail the rights, duties, contributions and responsibilities of each partner. Each partner's expectations of the other are explicit. African societies are not as tightly regulated by such formalities embedded in well-structured and codified legal systems with formal, institutional traditions and clear sanctions. Very often, trust is the basis for working together which, as stated by President Diouf, must be "one of the determining factors in all partnerships." As the basis for organizing partnerships, contracts and trust, both, have their advantages and disadvantages.<sup>9</sup>

Contractual arrangements are most effective for functional partnerships that are designed for a specific and limited purpose—such as a business deal or a project. Contracts promote clarity, eliminate ambiguities and state the sanctions in case of breach of contract. The effectiveness of such arrangements depends on that of the juridical and enforcement systems in place and the willingness of both sides to abide by the terms of the contract. Trust and mutual respect, on the other hand, are essential for the enduring partnerships we find in family relations, political alliances and long-term development cooperation. In such cases, trust reduces transaction costs and provides solid foundations for the individual activities (such as projects) that may require contracts for effective implementation.

Clearly, we need both contracts (which are specific to the activity, deal or project at-hand) and trust (which is more diffuse in nature). We and our lawyers know all about contracts—they are straightforward and follow standard formats. However, development is much more than contracts for individual projects. Development also requires partnerships based on the trust and mutual respect. These are the underpinnings of working together on a protracted basis.

The question, therefore, becomes: How can this trust be developed? A number of dimensions and factors merit exploration. First of all, as was pointed out by President Diouf, it is necessary to ensure

*“mutual recognition of each partner’s institutional and self-interests, expectations, problems, sovereignty, and cultures. It is maintained through common experience, permanent communication, and proximity, which facilitate mutual understanding. With this in mind, we should applaud and encourage both the development agencies’ moves to decentralization in order to be as close to the field as possible, and their tendency to integrate more and more Africans into their networks.”*

It is clear that institutions, ministries and agencies all have their self-interests, expectations, problems, cultures, as well their varying reward structures and accountabilities. But so do the individuals who work in these institutions and represent them.

Looking at partnerships between African Ministries of Education and their

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9. Trust, as a basic building block of development through the formation of “social capital” has lately been the focus of scholarly enquiry into the processes of development. See R. D. Putman, 1993; F. Fukuyama, 1995; and A. Peyrefitte, 1995.

external financing and technical partners (e.g., funding agencies), one can see a large difference in the roles played by ministers and their senior officials on the one hand, and those of agency staff, on the other hand. The roles played by the former tend to be more diffuse and include both political and technical roles. A major difference between ministries and agencies is that ministers and senior officials tend to be more politically accountable—to legislators, taxpayers and voters, for example, who, as democracy grows, are becoming increasingly active and vocal in public affairs. They are closer to the political structures and their careers are more dependent on political vicissitudes. Agency staff tend to play more specific roles and be more bureaucratically accountable—i.e., they are further from the political pressures and changes to the extent that they do not report directly to political authorities.

This demonstrates the impact of the roles we all play. They clearly influence our respective capacities to operate in partnerships. Roles can be defined in terms of the interests, constraints, expectations and accountabilities under which we operate. Role differences are inevitable and the same individual can play several roles. However, what matters is to ensure that each partner is fully aware of how these factors impinge and weigh on the other partner. And, when individuals play several roles (e.g., parent, spouse, son/daughter and professional—all part of the same person), it becomes important to be able to make appropriate distinctions and differentiate between them. Otherwise, it will be difficult, at best, for people to work together. Role differences can create gaps between aspiring partners. Although fundamental, such gaps need not be fatal to the nature of the partnership. They do, however determine the processes by which partnerships are constructed and maintained.

A clear understanding of role differences may lead to improved acceptance of the differences between the actors in a partnership and how each one may have his/her specific and legitimate needs. Such partnerships may be characterized by unity and diversity. Recognition of such needs is essential to devising strategies and behaviors aimed at developing and maintaining such partnerships. Also, cultural differences should not be ignored, especially when the actors are not native (or near-native) speakers of the working language.

Another gap that characterizes this partnership could be called a “status gap”. This occurs when young, relatively inexperienced staff from the agencies, with superficial knowledge of countries in which they are working, negotiate with that country’s highest officials. The problem is exacerbated when these agency staff invoke the non-negotiable superiority of their knowledge of the country’s educational systems and problems and the strength of their solutions. Similar situations may occur between ministry staff and community people active in promoting education. African societies tend to assign status to age, learning and experience. In any intercultural exchange, it is useful to be sensitive to varying, even conflicting, notions of status. For all to profit from the benefits of fruitful dialogue between people whose status is derived from different characteristics (formal training and bureaucratic status for some; age, experience and



political/social recognition for others), each side must be able to take into account the unique capabilities of the other and the extent to which the interests of each side are well served by working on common grounds of understanding.

How can such understandings be promoted? One factor that militates against them is the physical distance between partners—be they ministries and agencies or ministries and communities. These distances tend to allow for the persistence of opposing institutional cultures and the respective tropisms that dominate them. Working with the external financing and technical partners (the “agencies”), for example, one can observe the difference between their headquarter’s logic and field logic, with the latter generally more in tune with the conditions, needs and expectations of the field. This argues in favor of more intensive linkages between the partners.<sup>10</sup>

In this respect, two tendencies in the domain of the agency-country partnerships are worthy of note: (i) the increased decentralization of a number of agencies that are reinforcing their country and regional offices; and (ii) the increasing number of Africans working in the agencies and getting to know them from the inside. Such trends can only promote the understandings needed for more genuine partnerships between agencies and ministries of education. Furthermore, thanks to modern information and communications technologies, the information and institutional supports required for professional work are increasingly available and accessible.

Knowledge and information are, in many respects, the life blood of development work. This has taken on even greater importance as would-be partners work together on policy issues that are grounded in deep and detailed, knowledge-based understandings of education systems and their economic, social, institutional and political environments. As Samoff’s paper in this volume indicates, this knowledge has often been conceived, generated, maintained and controlled by the agencies. Reasons for this are many and complex. The resource situations of the partners may vary, as well as their capacities in terms of both individual expertise and institutional capacities.

It is generally agreed that policies, programs and projects need to be based on well-informed rationales. However, no matter how well-founded and informed such undertakings may be, if those who will implement and live with them have not thoroughly understood and accepted their rationale, implementation and sustainability will be deeply compromised. Those charged with implementation need to be intimately involved in all aspects of the knowledge development on which partnerships are based. It might take a bit longer, but the outcome will be much more lasting and sustainable.

This raises the question of “acceptable” information and knowledge. Epistemological issues—what is appropriate knowledge and how we know it—have always been with us and they take on even greater importance in

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10. See R. Sack, 1995.

cross-cultural contexts. There are two issues here:

- The scope for analytical policy making is inevitably limited and must allow room for politics to the degree that the analytical methods and results we have (i) are fallible and everybody believes so, (ii) cannot wholly resolve conflicts of value and interests, (iii) are too slow and costly to produce, and (iv) cannot tell us conclusively what to do and how to do it.<sup>11</sup> Modesty is very much in order as partners search for policies that are “correct” and will work.<sup>12</sup> It is important to focus on what works in practice, not in theory.
- Since practice is local, much of the knowledge and understanding needed to plan and guide it are contextually specific. We know that effective teaching and institutional behavior are linked to cultural factors. Much valid and useful knowledge is contextually-bound, intuitive and intrinsic to the settings of daily practice. Although this may appear as subjective to some, such knowledge has deep roots in experience and is invaluable for policy making.

Insofar as education policy formulation and its related activities are knowledge-based, these issues have clear implications for the nature of partnerships devoted to tackling such issues. All too often, donor-funded projects and policies have been based on donor-conceived and generated knowledge. Samoff shows that, at times, this knowledge and its mastery have remained within the agencies with little-to-no country ownership. This may be a function of the processes by which relevant knowledge is defined and identified. Naudet points out that a perverse effect of ignoring local knowledge is that too many development projects tend to focus on “solutions” to poorly identified problems. This situation is exacerbated when the “solutions” are of the “one-size-fits-all” variety.

This demonstrates the need to develop strategies and methods to ensure that: (i) the implementing partners are intimately involved in the knowledge-generation processes from beginning to end so that they have the capacity to fully use the knowledge and reproduce it in the future; and (ii) the contextual knowledge possessed by local actors is taken into account. Without addressing these points there will be neither sustainability nor national ownership of agency-financed development programs. The paper by Demebe shows that similar forces are at work when looking at partnerships between education ministries and teachers. In other words, when it comes to systematic, analytical understandings of education systems and their problems, it is necessary to pool intellectual and knowledge resources, with each partner recognizing the com-

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11. D. R. Evans (ed.), 1994; D. R. Evans, R. Sack & C. P. Shaw, 1996. Lindblom, C. E. & Woodhouse, E. J., 1993.
  12. It is useful to keep in mind a comment by Herbert Simon who has argued that “*The capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems is very small compared with the size of the problems whose solution is required for objectively rational behavior in the real world—or even for a reasonable approximation to such objective rationality.*” Herbert A. Simon, 1957.

parative advantages of the other. This way, each partner can build the other's capacities for developing deeper and more comprehensive knowledge.

In recent years the importance of national ownership of development policies, projects and programs has been much discussed. Without a doubt, this is essential. However, the correlates of this ownership merit examination. Accountability is one such correlate. This leads to the need for norms for accountability that, most often, take the form of indicators. This, in turn, suggests that partners in development must also be partners in the indicators which are developed and monitored together.

It becomes clear, therefore, that effective partnerships will require highly complementary, if not equal, levels of capacity between the partners. Both have responsibilities for this. This implies strategies that span the organizational, political and educational spheres. The State has a role,<sup>13</sup> especially in education. The effectiveness of structures—such as the Ministry of Education—depends on their stability and capacity to attract and keep high-level professionals. If they are to assume the leadership role and “be in the drivers seat” when it comes to formulating and negotiating their own development strategies and their financing, they need people and structures capable of (i) garnering the requisite political support, and (ii) elaborating realistic and implementable policies, programs, plans and projects. As demonstrated in Marope's paper, this requires much more than training. It requires institutional development strategies that represent reasonable compromises between the weight of tradition, the myriad social pressures placed on government structures, and objective technical norms. It will also require the understanding and complicity of the partners, national and international.

Partnerships that work must be governed by *reasonable* expectations held by each partner for the other's actions and responsibilities. According to the philosopher John Rawls, a “reasonable” person is one who is “ready to propose principles...as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so.” The Biennial Meeting from which these papers are drawn attempted to explore how this can work in practice.

## **Explorations in working partnerships**

ADEA's 1997 Dakar Biennial Meeting focused on development partnerships for capacity building and improvements in the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on the structure of the Biennial Meeting, the papers in this volume are arranged as follows:

- (a) A focus on the theory and practice of partnerships, looking at effective partnerships (i) between agencies and countries, and (ii) within countries;

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13. For example see, World Bank, 1997.

- (b) Examples of partnerships for capacity building, with papers on (i) capacity building for education planning and management, and (ii) the unique approach of the ADEA Working Groups to capacity building; and
- (c) Reports on partnerships for quality improvement.

## **Effective partnerships between countries and agencies**

The first two papers in this volume examine the issue of effective partnerships between countries and the funding and technical agencies from different perspectives. Taking a critical look at how agency-funded projects and programs come with donor-driven “solutions” to the issues they address, Naudet’s paper points to a general sense of frustration that is shared by all partners. His in-depth review of the aid relationship (in all sectors, not just in education) in the countries of the Sahel leads to four lessons. The first lesson points to the necessity of constructing aid instruments that are flexible and well adapted to the problems facing the beneficiaries. For this, flexibility in defining the instruments of aid programs needs to be further developed. Secondly, the channels through which aid is requested need to be reinforced if they are to be country-driven. The absence of counterpart funding, the author points out, is “at the heart of the malfunctioning of the aid system.” The third lesson is that less visibility of projects would enhance their impact. Donors’ accountability norms, however, require visible and measurable results in a context where we all know that development results are long-term. Finally, it is necessary to move away from crisis management and focus more on institutional development with leadership and innovative solutions coming from the concerned countries (and not the agencies).

The paper by Harry Sawyerr was written when he was Minister of Education in Ghana. This paper tells the story of how coordination between funding agencies led to increased communication between them and the education ministry which, eventually, took the lead in coordinating both the management of agency-funded projects and their role in the policy formulation process. In practical terms, this meant (i) a systematic and frequent dialogue between the ministry and its technical and financing partners, and (ii) merging all agency project implementation units into one Projects Management Unit with clearly defined functions. The process put into place led to external financing of a Ghanaian policy aimed at attaining free basic education by 2005. Since Government made its priorities clear, all external funding support was channeled to support Government’s program on a well-coordinated basis. Four lessons are drawn from this experience: (i) the importance of strong Government leadership at every stage of the process; (ii) funding agencies appreciate such leadership, including when it serves to coordinate and structure their own activities; (iii) pooling implementation efforts into one unit creates real efficiencies; and (iv) such processes are gradual and grow out of evolving working relationships that allow the actors to learn from one another and develop mutual respect, trust and under-

standing.

## **Effective partnerships within countries**

Nick Taylor's paper on South Africa's Joint Education Trust (JET) is about a partnership between actors from the private corporations and the civil society, with the aim of providing educational opportunities to the poorest communities. Working outside of the apartheid regime, with national NGOs and, then, within the dynamics of post-apartheid government, the story of JET illustrates how actors from very different segments of society found common ground on the basis of enlightened self-interest. It also illustrates the role of government in providing an enabling environment for such partnerships to develop.

Peter Easton's paper focuses on existing forms of collaborations in nonformal education programs in West Africa. Based on studies undertaken by the ADEA Working Group on Nonformal Education, this paper demonstrates a series of innovative and promising forms of "partnering" that have evolved in the area of nonformal education in recent years. This includes new forms of collaboration with communities, development agencies and between nonformal and formal modes of education. The studies show that when local initiatives are allowed to develop, effective partnerships develop that provide a variety of educational services and opportunities. What is necessary is an environment that allows, enables and values such initiatives where local actors become the major players in the development of education in their communities.

The paper by Rodolfo Stavenhagen provides a perspective from outside of Africa that combines the findings of UNESCO's international Commission of Education for the Twenty-First Century (the "Delors Commission") with examples from Latin America. After a brief overview of the "Delors Report", this paper focuses on the evolution of partnerships in Latin America and how they have come to play a central role in overall development.

## **Partnerships for capacity building**

The paper by Christopher Colclough presents an initiative promoted by FAWE and ADEA's Female Participation Working Group that aims at developing an analytical framework to examine the causes of low participation of girls in primary schools and identify cost-effective policy choices to remedy this. The sophisticated modeling approach presented in this paper requires intensive capacity building efforts in ministries using this approach. An advantage of such an approach is that it helps "to locate the gender debate within the mainstream of the day-to-day business of education policy making and planning."

The paper by Tung, Diawara and Makwati is based on the work of the ADEA Working Group on Education Statistics and outlines a "strategy based on the principles of country leadership, ownership and partnership." According to this approach, all partners play an active role, working from their respective com-

parative advantages. To promote sustainability, this Working Group has developed multi-dimensional strategic alliances based on each partner's specific strengths and needs. The paper derives a rich set of lessons in the "principles of partnership" that have demonstrated their value in the workings of the Statistics Working Group.

The information and communication technologies that, it is often said, will be the hallmarks of the twenty-first century pose daunting challenges for African education. The paper by McGinnis and Carlson provides a summary of the benefits and challenges of using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in African classrooms. Factors of success, they point out, are grounded in the development of information-rich (i.e., through the use of monitoring and evaluation) partnerships with a broad variety of concerned parties (teachers, school administrators, pilot schools, the telecommunications industries, local communities, etc.).

Kulpoo and Coustère present very similar approaches to the central issue of developing national capacities aimed at assessment and monitoring the quality of education—meaning student learning outcomes. These approaches (SACMEQ and PASEC for anglophone and francophone countries, respectively) "are creating favorable policy environments within the education ministries of participating countries by encouraging a three-step approach to transforming information into action." The emphasis is on the analysis of reliable data that provides the basis for policy suggestions that are discussed with policy-makers and translated into realistic agendas. This approach is particularly useful in that it promotes confidence among the various partners on measurements of education quality and, therefore, policy measures aimed at improving it. One means of developing this confidence is by making the data readily available (by CD-ROM and over the Internet), thereby bringing more actors into the decision-making processes.

Dr. Marope's paper is a broad, in-depth view of capacity development, with emphasis on how the ADEA Working Groups approach this central issue. Working from a holistic and original analytical framework for capacity development that disaggregates capacity into component elements, her paper identifies how the special characteristics of ADEA's Working Groups make unique contributions to capacity development. The paper shows that being in the mainstream of education ministries has been important for the capacity development efforts of some Working Groups. The paper concludes with a set of lessons on the conditions and practices that facilitate capacity development.

The centrality of sector work for policy formulation and the definition of agency-funded projects is well known to all. Less well known, is the extent to which sector work studies have a common framework, a common approach, a common methodology and come to common conclusions and recommendations. This topic is developed in Joel Samoff's paper, based on work for the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis which, using the lenses of sector analysis, concentrates on the knowledge underpinnings of the aid rela-

tionship. Recognizing that education sector work is a powerful tool for supporting and improving education policy and programs, Samoff argues that the center of gravity of education sector work needs to be shifted toward Africa and that the “process itself requires major restructuring and reorientation, from conception through completion.” In order for this to contribute to a process and a practice of partnership, sector work requires “genuine dialogue among partners who not only talk but also listen and hear.”

## **Partnerships for quality improvement—experiences from the field**

FEMSA (Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa) is a major activity of the Female Participation Working Group. The paper by Volan and Namuddu shows how FEMSA is tackling the major issue of the very poor performance of girls in science, mathematics and technical (SMT) education. This has involved studies in Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda on the status of girls’ access and performance in SMT education. These studies became opportunities for researchers, policy makers and school and community people to expand their skills and horizons in diagnosing barriers to girls’ participation in SMT education and in seeking appropriate solutions to be implemented in future. Using a variety of methods and approaches in establishing school-community partnerships, FEMSA’s research work was a point of entry into useful partnerships and enabled stakeholders and participants to develop a clearer understanding of both (i) the constraints to girls’ SMT education, and (ii) the usefulness of their own skills in being able to diagnose problems and search for their solutions. The paper draws a number of lessons on how action-oriented research methodologies can inform policy as well as develop the partnerships and local awareness necessary to solve the problems.

Professor Dembele’s paper shows that there are a host of benefits from making teachers full partners in the design and implementation of their own professional development. One such benefit is improved motivation that is not based solely on material rewards. Results from programs in Guinea and Burkina Faso show how teacher engagement (i.e., participation, ownership, and accountability) in the process can be a precondition for authentic professional development. Of particular interest here are the details provided by the author on how these programs operated.

## **Conclusions**

The papers presented in this volume demonstrate that there is no one way to construct and operate the vehicles of productive partnership. They can be diverse and varied in form. In order to work, however, they all need to operate from

similar principles, which include: mutual trust and respect; transparency; the full involvement of all those who ride them; shared understandings of the operating procedures and the knowledge base that determines their operations; and common understandings of the destinations and the road maps used to get there.

However, several contributions to this volume refer to partnerships that are more than vehicles for getting us to a desired destination. Although we have viewed “partnerships” as a means to an end (i.e., partnerships for quality improvements and capacity building), a number of the contributions to this volume point to partnerships that are part and parcel of the goal itself. For example, the papers by Easton, Dembele, and by Volan and Namuddu suggest that the partnerships used to attain goals of effective community participation, teacher in-service training, and sustainable SMT education for girls, respectively, are actually part of the result itself—especially if the result is to be sustained over time. These examples demonstrate the power and importance of the process, and the extent to which means and ends can be tightly linked.

The role of Government in promoting and enabling partnerships can take varied forms. On the one hand, Sawyerr’s paper shows that strong leadership is needed to promote the effective Government-led donor coordination that will, in turn, lead to more cooperative, partnership relations between Ministries of Education and their external financing partners. On the other hand, the partnerships presented by Easton and by Taylor flourish thanks to enabling environments where Government has remained a relatively inactive player, thereby allowing segments of civil society to play a lead role in forging partnerships for the development of education.

The variety of types and styles of partnerships presented here is typical of education. If there are any common denominators to these partnerships, they would be related to a high degree of openness of the process, full availability of information, trust and mutual respect, and the active participation of all the partners. Isn’t it interesting to note that these factors are also to be found in good classrooms where education (i.e., the learning process) is based on the partnership between the teacher and the student/learner?

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# **Part 1**

## **The Theory and Practice of Partnerships**



# **Speech delivered by President Abdou Diouf**

## **Opening Ceremony of the ADEA Biennial Meeting (Dakar, Senegal, October 14, 1997)**

***By Hon. Abdou Diouf,  
President of the Republic of Senegal***

“...On a formal occasion such as this, it is hardly possible to express the full intensity of Senegal’s joy and pride in the choice of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, as the venue for first Biennial of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa’s (ADEA) to be held on African soil. I lend my voice to the people and government of Senegal, who wish to express plainly and forthrightly their great pleasure in hosting such a large and distinguished group of key figures in politics, education, and international cooperation. Indeed, here on the western-most tip of the African continent, meetings and exchanges, openness and hospitality have become favoured traditions, almost a culture in themselves.

I wish to express the warmth of our Senegalese “teranga”, which reflects more than the scorching heat of the moment. It is a message of welcome and friendship straight from the heart to all our distinguished guests. Allow me to add a special welcome for my friend and brother, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Head of State of Uganda.

Under various guises, the alliances between our countries and the North in matters such as the fight for adult literacy, children’s education and high-level training dates back to independence.

As we concentrate on the road still before us, we sometimes fail to do justice to the remarkable efforts that have already been accomplished. As stated in a World Bank paper:

*“Between 1960 and 1983, enrollments at all levels in African schools quintupled, reaching a total of 63 million. Their numbers increased at an annual rate of about 9% during the 1970’s: twice as fast as in Asia and three times as fast as in Latin America. The net rate of enrolment in primary education rose from 36% in 1960 to 75% in 1983. The number of students enrolled in Africa’s secondary schools reached 437,000 in 1983, as compared to only 21,000 in 1960. The rapid development in teaching since independence has opened the doors of education to sectors of the population that were, until then, practically or totally excluded.*”

*This massive expansion of education has greatly enhanced Africa's human resources. The average level of education of male and female workers in a median country rose from less than half a year in 1960 to more than three years at the beginning of 1980, and the literacy rate among adults rose from 9% to 42%."*

The facts are eloquent and there is no further need to stress that Africa has made considerable progress with regards to education.

It is true, however, that following the peak growth period, stagnation and, even, decline in enrollment rates, have been the tendency. This trend has not been substantially reversed, despite the resolutions of several African conferences on the issue and the international community's commitments in the declaration and framework for action of the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990.

Analysis of the causes of the situation often highlights factors external to education, such as the population growth rate which is deemed excessive and the economic slowdown with its corollary of financial crisis. These factors have made it more difficult to satisfy a considerably higher social demand for education and have negatively affected quality-related inputs. However, we should also question the type and methods of cooperation that prevailed in the days of national and sectorial structural adjustment programmes; the limits of the expansion of educational models reputed to be ill-adapted to the realities, resources and needs of African societies; and problematic relevance of education with regards to the need to enhance endogenous development potential in order to solve the fundamental problems of the African environment.

The common denominator in all of these issues raises important questions about the effectiveness of policy dialogues in education in Africa and the effectiveness of the partnerships that aim at expansion and revitalization of our education systems.

Although African governments devote a substantial portion of their national budgets to education—up to one third in some countries such as Senegal—illiteracy remains high. Almost half of all adults are illiterate and three children out of ten do not attend primary school. Given these conditions, it is increasingly obvious that the efforts of the state alone are not enough to achieve the goals of basic education for all within a reasonable lapse of time, not to mention the investments needed at other levels and in other aspects of the educational system. That is also why the partnerships we need should not be thought of in terms of the traditional aid relationship, but rather as a duty for all concerned to unite to meet the challenge facing our universal conscience in terms of equity, human rights and the interdependence of all the inhabitants of our global village. For the price to pay for not educating the few will be, or rather, is already, a huge burden on all members of the community.

In order to progress from aid relationship to partnership, the first step lies in redefining the status and roles of those involved in a way that truly recognizes and accepts the equal dignity and responsibility of both partners, above and

beyond differences in their cultures and levels of development. The type of partnership we should promote cannot be founded on a vertical relationship based on authority, constraint, the imposition of a balance of power, substituted sovereignty and the transposition of models, or, on the other side of the same coin, paternalism and condescension. Instead, it should be founded on conditions such as authentic dialogue in a horizontal relationship in which the actors recognize each other as equals and participate in an exchange considered mutually useful and enriching by both parties because of their very differences. With this in mind, it is important to develop our capacity for listening, not only to institutions, but also to individuals, cultures and the internal processes that determine the movements of real world. This is necessary in order to achieve a better understanding of each one's specificities along with a common understanding of development goals and strategies.

On this point, I would like to share with you a few thoughts on defining priorities in the area of education.

Today, our number one objective is the goal set in 1990 at the Jomtien world conference: basic education for all. Defined in terms of equity, this implies vigorous action against disparities and, more particularly, in favour of improved participation of girls and rural people. At stake is the spread of knowledge throughout society, the development of a critical mass of education in the country, and the training of independent men and women capable of successful self-promotion and active participation in the development of democracy and their communities. After the issues of quality outlined clearly and in depth by my friend and colleague, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, we should also examine the means and the conditions for achieving these objectives in the African context.

Indeed, is it even realistic to think that all these necessary and ambitious education projects can succeed in Africa when the educational models on which they are based ignore the resources and heritage upon which were built the still flourishing traditions and practices that African societies use to develop and transmit knowledge, skills, attitudes and values?

And can we hope to make basic education universal, i.e. give every male and female member of our communities the tools, skills and values they need to learn throughout their lives, to solve the basic problems of daily life in their environment pertaining to production, culture, health, hygiene, the environment, family and community living, and democratic citizenship in a situation where there is an almost complete break with the languages that are the real avenues of communication in those same communities?

More generally, we must question the very relevance of the basic education we provide in relation to African cultures, social practices, capacities and needs. So far, policy dialogue and partnership have not directed enough attention and efforts in these crucial directions. And yet, adapting education models to the requirements and resources of the local context is one of the critical conditions for the success of our goals for the development of education, and of develop-

ment in general. Far from being contrary to quality teaching and advanced science, as certain experiments with “Africanized schools” rightly or wrongly indicated, relevance should be closely linked to these two in order to strengthen motivation and pedagogy. Such an approach would increase the chances and relevance of success through visible opportunities to invest knowledge within the sphere of social practices and in close relationship with the needs and realities of the milieu.

I would also like to make another point on which it is also important to intensify policy dialogue: we need to understand the priority status of basic education.

In our view, this choice cannot be questioned. This priority is the primary condition for the edification of democratic structures and the achievement of lasting development through the constant and active participation of all citizens. However, granting priority to one level of the educational system does not mean we should neglect or abandon the other levels. It is a natural law that all systems function through the interdependence of their parts. More specifically, Africa has a pressing need to train senior and mid-level officials who can strengthen our capacity to accept, adapt and appropriate scientific and technological discoveries from the outside, and develop our own inventive and creative potential so that we may participate in global progress on our own terms. For this reason, priority treatment of basic education must be conceived and carried out as part of a global and integrated approach to the development of the education system. We need this to respond to the general education needs of each country and prevent malfunctioning, disconnection, and other factors of deficiency and crisis.

It can be deduced from the foregoing that our goal of developing education is not a simple one. It is a complex and sometimes contradictory process of social change that requires profound changes in direction, institutions and actors. Expected effects and impacts are rarely visible over the short term and are difficult to reconcile with project cycles. It is in our interest to go beyond this limited level of design, planning and operations by integrating projects into broader, strategic education development programmes involving long-term action, planning of transitional phases as milestones to measure progress towards an ultimate goal. This way we can know what resources will be needed to reach our goals and intermediary objectives, and thereby improve systems’ management by strengthening capacities for foresight, monitoring and arbitration. Now, that is a challenge to be promoted by our new partnerships. And, to meet that challenge we will need all the understandings and knowledge that no one of us, alone, possesses.

I wanted to share these ideas with you as my contribution on the prerequisites for partnership and policy dialogue for defining goals and priorities for the development of education. Let us now turn our attention to a brief reflection on the practice of partnerships, the issues at stake and the challenges before them.

Our world has changed. The fall of the Berlin wall and the events surround-

ing it, the explosion of communication technologies and the agreement on the organization of global trade have given a new impetus to the interpenetration and interdependence of economies, to the unification of markets and global scale production, and to the transnationalization of capital, technologies and information networks. The resulting universalization of performance criteria and rules of economic management has sparked a globalization process ruled by the general application of economic principles, the market, and unrestricted competition. The differences in the political choices of nation-states, cultures and societies are confronted with homogenization that leaves little room for initiative and expression.

This brave new world is even harsher for its weaker inhabitants, since the generous solidarity the rich used to show in the past is disappearing in favour of a scepticism characterized by the appearance of a new phenomenon designated by an expression loaded with pessimism: “aid fatigue”.

And yet, we also live in an era when the prodigious expansion of science and technology give us access to enormous resources and potential that could satisfy the essential needs of all humanity. Unfortunately, the established international order, with its continuing injustice to the poorest among us, greed, destructive conflicts and waste of all kinds prevent this dream from becoming a reality.

The challenges currently facing Africa and its partners in education development can be found in this contradictory context; they include the need:

- to democratize access to, and success in, school;
- to improve the quality and scientific content of education;
- to centre our educational systems on Africa’s cultural personality and the requirements of sustainable endogenous development.

How can Africa meet these challenges in these times of dwindling resources and increasing need?

The answer is that Africa must meet them and indeed it will meet them if we all show the sort of determined commitment that is said to move mountains, the sort of creative imagination that can turn problems into opportunities and a generous solidarity that does not exclude the lucidity we need to have a balanced understanding of reality and of the value of our choices. For this, today’s Africa has no lack of assets.

At the national level, policies of decentralization and devolution of powers towards the base, alternative strategies initiated by rural and urban groups, assertive civil societies that demand their rights and responsibilities, and the democratization of the state and society are factors favouring a participatory approach to the formulation and implementation of national policy.

The National Conferences on Education organized in several African countries bear witness to the will to seek a national consensus on education policy, to be used as a foundation for partnerships mobilizing every sector of society, especially teachers’ unions and parent-teacher associations, in order to achieve



the expected objectives. This has led to vital partnerships between the state and civil society, which is the source of new dynamics of social mobilization, new commitments and increased potential for resources and innovations in favour of the expansion and renovation of education.

Non-Governmental Organizations, in close contact with grass roots communities, are very active in literacy training and the non-formal education sector. The private sector is developing at all levels of the system, and especially in secondary and higher education. Local communities and grass roots organizations are getting ready to put their improved skills into practice and take charge of education. Progressively, societies are claiming ownership of education and actively participating in its development. However, we need to strengthen the partnerships being formed at the national level by giving the actors the necessary instruments of regular meetings, exchanges, and dialogues in order to overcome sources of mistrust and promote trusting relationships while ensuring an optimal distribution of roles and responsibilities on the basis of authority and skills and developing and supporting all partners' organizational and implementational skills.

Throughout the continent, a number of initiatives have also been undertaken to organize cooperation and exchange networks. At the initiative of the Ségou Perspectives Observatory (SPO), OAU declared 1996 the Year of Education in Africa and 1997-2006 the Decade of Education in order to engage African countries, governments and societies in new continental dynamics of strong mobilization in favour of schooling, literacy and training.

The *Bureau africain des sciences de l'éducation* (BASE, or African bureau for Education Science), the *Centre régional pour l'éducation des adultes et l'alphabétisation en Afrique* (CREAA, or Regional centre for adult education and literacy training in Africa), the Ségou Perspectives Observatory (OPS) and the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar (BREDA) are the precious instruments of this initiative, and they illustrate, *inter alia*, the need and the will for partnerships among African countries. I am also very pleased to acknowledge the important contributions of the ADEA to intra-African exchanges between decision-makers, between experts, and between decision-makers and experts through its Biennials and various meetings on specific themes as well as through the research, reflections and other activities of its working groups.

In order to increase the effectiveness of regional cooperation, we should endeavour to clearly define its objectives and priorities, rationalize its framework for institutional action to reduce duplication, and increase the coherence and continuity of its initiatives and the synergy of its actions so that their goals converge and resources are used more efficiently. The obstacles to communication between African countries represent a serious hindrance to the development of regional partnerships. It is urgent that we remedy this and the use of new communications technologies could be a decisive solution.

At the international level, it is encouraging to note that we have begun to recognize the errors of the past and learn from them in order to promote authentic

partnerships.

Firstly, the belief that there are universal truths and recipes for development that apply without taking specific historical situations into consideration is beginning to undergo in-depth revision in light of the failures this approach has engendered. Instead, partnership should begin with a phase of questioning, listening, research and real dialogue on policies. Actions should be anchored in the forces and factors that determine internal processes. This leads us to look for solutions to the problems stemming from the profound social, economic and political changes inherent in the development process, rather than creating artificial needs and projects, as referred to in the evocative title of one of the papers to be presented at this Biennial: “Looking for problems to fit the solutions”. This new approach will ensure improved relevance and effectiveness of the support that comes from the partnerships.

Secondly, the contradictory requirements of development partners stemming from divergent political or commercial interests or, more generally, from competitive positioning often wreaked havoc at local levels. The effectiveness of support was diminished by the lack of synergy among actions undertaken in the same sector. The lesson we have learned from this deplorable situation was the need to improve the agencies’ coordination with regard to development goals placed above and beyond special interests. This makes for more efficient use of the resources available for education.

It is fortunate that this approach has been combined with an ownership approach, so that the responsibility for the coordination of the partners in development is assigned to the beneficiary countries. In this connection, we can only applaud the UN Special Initiative for Africa, which I have supported from its inception. This has systematized the coordination of support and national leadership to ensure the relevance of programme goals and strategies, and effective action successfully integrated into national policies. The development of education, which along with health, is the Initiative’s main component. Education should, therefore, gain a new impetus provided that the Initiative receives, as we hope it will, the support of all partners in Africa’s development.

Another lesson we have learned has its source in the very theme of this Biennial. Why do we still need to discuss capacity building after over thirty years of technical assistance, then cooperation, and now partnership?

The delivery of expensive and poorly adapted expatriate technical assistance did not, as intended, provide training for high-performance African experts ready to take up the torch. Instead, it formed an obstacle to the use of local expertise that would have enhanced local capacities. Learning is a necessity, but it should also entail responsibility and total commitment to development and action and constitute a space of freedom that promotes initiative and creativity. Capacity building should be conceived according to that approach, while developing research and knowledge- and skill-generating potential among Africans in direct contact with the specific needs and resources of the local context.

Above and beyond the successive conceptual shifts from “aid” to “technical

assistance” to “cooperation” to “partnership”, these lessons which have been learned or are still being learned point to new concepts and practices that will have a decisive content with regards to our stated objective of development.

In my resolve to contribute to the success of these new partnerships, I would like to outline certain principles, factors and mechanisms that contribute to the quality, sustainability and effectiveness of partnerships.

One of the determining factors in all partnerships is trust. It does not reside merely in a clear, balanced contract in which roles, responsibilities and burdens are fairly shared. It also and more importantly involves mutual recognition of each partner’s institutional and self-interests, expectations, problems, sovereignty, and cultures. It is maintained through common experience, permanent communication, and proximity, which facilitate mutual understanding. With this in mind, we should applaud and encourage both the development agencies’ moves to decentralization in order to be as close to the field as possible, and their tendency to integrate more and more Africans into their networks.

Mutual understanding is also reinforced by transparency, which implies knowledge and information for all partners. Every aspect and every phase of the design and development of studies and knowledge on education systems should be shared. Having a broader vision of that need means understanding that good technical design alone cannot guarantee a project’s success. If a project does not take internal factors into account and if those in charge of its implementation do not make it their own, it is sure to encounter major obstacles.

Finally, strengthening partnerships means strengthening each partner in its role at the policy and political levels as well as the scientific and technical levels. African leadership can only be legitimately exercised if it is accompanied by institutional development strategies that combine efforts to achieve nationwide social and political consensus with a high level of technical expertise in defining priorities and formulating educational policy, and planning and implementing education projects and programmes. This means support and training conceived, not as a shift of responsibilities, but as guidance that truly strengthens national capacities in the areas of negotiating and defining policy, monitoring and managing education systems, planning and evaluating plans and programmes, as well as performance-enhancing research, design and training skills.

We fervently hope that the sought-after partnerships will be firmly rooted in these new relationships of equality, mutual understanding, active solidarity and the quest for maximum efficiency and that they will make a decisive contribution to the development of education in Africa. Only through education will the continent and its sons and daughters be able to meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century which, undoubtedly, will be even more than the present one a century of science, knowledge and communication.

And that is also why I will conclude with a ringing appeal to the international community and development agencies: may your commitment be propor-

tionate to Africa's enormous needs in education and training. Similarly, I would like to echo the requests formulated in the report of the UNESCO International Commission on Education in the 21st century headed by Mr. Jacques Delors:

- increase education's share of development aid to twenty-five per cent of total;
- develop "debt for education swaps" in order to soften the negative impacts of structural adjustment policies in this sector;
- distribute new information technologies as widely as possible in all countries in order to increase education and training opportunities, including distance education.

From the rostrum of the first ADEA Biennial on African soil, I make this solemn appeal to you in the hope that it will not go unheard. I also thank each one of you for your kind attention and wish you every success in your meeting."



# **Adapting Agency Solutions to Country Problems— The Lessons of Twenty Years of Aid to the Sahel Region**

*by David Naudet*

Created shortly after the great drought of 1973-74, the “Club du Sahel” has taken advantage of its twentieth anniversary to conduct an in-depth review of its activities. What are some of the lessons of past experience and what kind of cooperation with the Sahel countries should we envisage for the generation to come?

## **A mixed balance sheet**

Twenty years of aid have left their mark on the Sahel region. The effects are clearly visible through advances in infrastructure, telecommunications, and institutional growth, as well as the development of agriculture, better access to clean drinking water, and the progressive eradication of endemic diseases. The effects of aid are visible in other spheres as well: to manpower training and education, policy definition and the rise of civil society. In a more global manner, aid has probably been a significant factor in opening the Sahel countries to the international community and the circulation of information. Finally, several observers believe the crisis prevention aspect of aid may help explain the relative economic and social stability of the region.

When measured in terms of living standards, however, progress appears limited. Human Development rankings produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) show three Sahel countries among the five appearing at the bottom of the table. More than 60% of the rural population subsist below the international standard of poverty, as defined by a minimal consumer basket. Private investment in the region is extremely weak. The risk of further crises, especially in the environment, weighs heavily on the future. On the other hand there have been real advances regarding food security, socio-political organiza-

tion, civil awareness and the development of export-oriented activities such as cotton production. But for all its achievements, foreign aid has failed to raise the general standard of living.

## **A general sense of dissatisfaction**

A second conclusion of the Club du Sahel review is that aid to the region has left a feeling of dissatisfaction. That is shared by aid agencies, recipients and aid workers alike. This arises from a sense of disappointment with the nonsustainability of results, but also from a criticism of aid practices in the field. There are two main criticisms.

- **Aid is donor-driven**

From initial concept to final evaluation, the aid cycle is controlled by the donors; the recipients are simply participants in the process. As a result, aid in the Sahel rarely responds to the real requirements of local institutions and populations, which further discourages the participation of local actors.

- **The aid system lacks cohesion**

The aid system tends to hamper the capacity of Sahel institutions by overwhelming them with multiple and derivative structures. It tends to attract the best qualified personnel towards the aid system which considerably weakens the institutional systems already established in the recipient countries.

The aid system generates a saturation effect; too many programmes, too many conditions, too many projects and initiatives, too many different procedures. The net effect is to overload the intended beneficiary institutions by, for example, expecting them to handle an unreasonable number of planning and programming instruments.

The aid system dulls the sense of responsibility among local managers and leads to passivity. When specific financial incentives are built into to counteract these tendencies, the resulting climate is neither healthy nor conducive to genuine participation.

These are serious criticisms of how aid is managed. They go a long way towards explaining the general dissatisfaction expressed, despite the large number of successful operations supported by foreign aid. The prospects of future aid initiatives will depend, in part, on the capacity of donors and recipient authorities to overcome these inadequacies. Past experience leads us to consider four principal lessons.

### **Lesson 1: Construct instruments that are more flexible and better adapted to the problems facing beneficiaries**

Analysts are unanimous in noting that aid leads to the adoption of similar, predetermined actions in very different local situations, even when they appear poorly adapted to the specific problems. This reliance on standardized prescriptions is also common in structural adjustment aid and in aid projects in

rural areas.

Much of the problem stems from the aid instruments used. Often, the definition phase has already imposed a standardized approach to programs that prevent their being modified during implementation. The aid scheme is defined on the basis of an a priori diagnosis which favors available solutions over the aspirations of local people. Problems are defined, consciously or not, according to the instruments, budgets and solutions that experts know they can mobilise. Thus technical problems are designated when the solutions are technical, and environmental problems appear where solutions touch on this theme, and so on. Aid practitioners frequently seem to behave like salesmen of mass produced goods.

The management and appropriation of aid conceived in this way merely exacerbates existing problems in the recipient countries. The demands of administering aid add to the demands of promoting development. The requirement by donors that decentralised Sahelian authorities prepare medium-term community development plans (plans that are not prepared even by communities in the developed countries) represents just one example. Aid operations often appear more adapted to manipulating the instruments of aid, rather than to providing a lasting solution to the problems of the Sahel.

This criticism has been partially heeded. Over the past few years there has been an increase in more flexible approaches, linked more closely to the phases of implementation (the “process” or “flexible funding” approach). These initiatives place greater importance on assisting the aid partner rather than on the strict observance of targets established at the outset. In addition, this new approach requires a change of habit by the aid agencies, leading to less programming, to dispensing smaller sums more frequently, and to more durable intervention.

## **Lesson 2: Reinforce the channels through which aid is requested**

The aid market appears to be supply driven. Requests from Sahel countries frequently play only a minor role in the nature of activities finally undertaken. Indeed, one might ask, who is the supplier and who the client. With the progressive disappearance of requirements for real financial counterparts, the aid market has in many cases been inverted. Donors often appear in the position of soliciting agreements, rather than as suppliers of aid. The “sale” of a project is accompanied by various advantages for the beneficiary institutions, which may range from the supply of equipment, to subsidies and even to salaries.

The absence of counterpart funding is at the heart of the malfunctioning aid system. It hides limits to the absorptive capacities of the beneficiaries and, consequently, contributes to numerous cases of aid saturation. More generally, it contributes to losing sight of the legitimate demands of the Sahel. Counterpart funding is in fact the only signal which allows capacities to be identified, vali-



dated and prioritized. In the Sahel today, aid appears as a zero or negatively priced service. In such circumstances how can we be surprised at its excessive or casual use?

Sahel governments only partly fulfil their natural role as intermediaries between the aspirations of their populations and the support offered by donors. The level of confidence between these governments and the donors is often weak. Aid administration is scattered and handled by ad hoc co-ordinating structures, executing agencies, NGOs, associations, and so on. Because these structures derive their legitimacy from the aid agencies, they have a natural tendency to reinforce the supply, rather than relay the demand for aid.

Increasingly, Sahel institutions, governments and civil society are prepared to assume a greater responsibility in the management of external aid. This slow but profound evolution must be nurtured. Above all, mechanisms must be established, such as counterpart funding (increasingly respected regarding aid to populations), which allow this sense of responsibility to grow and provide the means for donors to identify and better assess the demands coming from the Sahel.

### **Lesson 3: Less visibility for greater impact**

Donor requirements for precise, visible and measurable results often outweigh more long-term preoccupations such as how to give support to the slow internal processes of development. In a climate of limited confidence, and in order to guarantee visible results and justify investments to their constituencies back home, funding agencies establish reporting requirements and routines within beneficiary institutions that permit close supervision of their undertakings. These monitoring tools derive from the legitimate donor requirement for results, but they also contribute to undermining the beneficiaries' sense of ownership. They may also result in the duplication of established administrative procedures and add to the loss of coherence within Sahelian institutions.

Risk management is at the heart of this problem. Numerous aid instruments, notably the reporting routines mentioned above, are set up by donors in order to eliminate risk and to arrive at the intended result. These instruments are fundamentally in tension with the uncertainties that necessarily characterise development initiatives. The outcome is passivity or worse, conflict. Minimal risk strategies may guarantee a certain level of results, but they also limit the opportunities for assimilation and long-term success.

Risk incentives could be transformed through a better system of aid evaluation. The present system comprises multiple detailed studies addressing individual initiatives (roughly 2000 evaluations have been undertaken in the region over the past 20 years). This system leads to tunnel vision about the results of aid, to individual failure-avoidance strategies and, finally, to poor learning.

Funding agencies are conscious of the need to redefine the results of aid, and to place greater emphasis on impact rather than visibility. This will require tak-

ing a much broader look at the effects of activities across whole sectors over time, and, of course, taking into account the totality of external interventions. New types of evaluation are required and these are under consideration. Whether thematic, sectoral or multi-donor, they must be shared by all partners in the debate.

## **Lesson 4: From crisis management to partner in development**

The Sahel experience shows that the approaches and instruments of aid are too often linked to crisis situations where donor agencies become executing agents using relatively standardised methods. To be sure, the international community has several times been faced with major emergencies, such as food crises or the financial crises of the 1980s, that threatened to overwhelm Sahel societies. In such cases, where the goal was to manage extreme situations (and prevent their recurrence), the aid system intervened promptly in a massive, and sometimes authoritarian way.

Aid designed to improve Sahel capacities and develop opportunities must, however, respect a different rhythm. It is a never-ending process. Instead of leading, aid must accompany. Instead of transmitting messages or goods, it should propose choices. There is too often a tendency to consider each Sahel village, economic activity or administrative service as an institution in crisis that absolutely must be reformed according to external designs, applied, as necessary, through systems of financial incentive.

Funding agencies now agree that capacity building and institutional development are major factors in development. But do they possess the proven instruments needed to assist in these areas? The review of experiences in the region shows that classic aid interventions have produced limited results. It is not enough to stress institutional development. This must be accompanied by efforts to devise innovative methods and instruments capable of tackling this question in the future.

## **Conclusion: A necessary restraint?**

The malfunctioning of the aid system in practice must be put in perspective. It should not hide the results obtained but should nevertheless be taken very seriously. Aid cannot be sustained unless it wins the approval of Sahel and western actors alike.

If aid efforts have failed in the past, this was often due to excessive interventionism. In the Sahel region, aid has occupied a place that is too important and too central. The desire to assist, to reform, and to fund has sometimes prevailed over the need to respect the fragile structures of transformation within Sahel societies.

This conclusion should not be interpreted as a global condemnation of aid actions. The challenges facing the Sahel remain considerable and private investment has yet to reach this part of the world. Aid must, however, evolve in tandem with Sahel societies.

In the first place, the Sahel's sense of ownership and responsibility for the aid received must increase. Aid should become a topic for reflection and debate in the Sahel. This must be accompanied by a modification of the aid system. Donor

agencies have acquired much experience and savoir faire but need to be more willing to listen and to discuss matters with local authorities (with the Sahelians). They need to use instruments that are more flexible and less demanding, to erect safeguards and constraints (such as counterpart funding) and, probably, to introduce a stricter code of ethics. These reforms could help define a new, more restrained attitude towards aid for the Sahel.

# **Country-Led Aid Coordination in Ghana**

*by Hon. Harry Sawyerr*

## **Historical Background**

The story of funding agency coordination in Ghana is intertwined with that of educational reforms. In the past three decades, Ghana has experienced three major education reforms, the first beginning in 1974, the second in 1987, and the most recent in 1993. During these years, the Ministry of Education gradually reformed its relationship with funding agencies, so that by today, the myriad of international organizations providing assistance to education do so with strong guidance and coordination by the ministry. This is the story of how the ministry took the reins in guiding national reform and foreign aid. It begins with background on early reforms and the advent of significant funding agency assistance.

The story begins in 1974, with the establishment of the Ghana Education Service (the autonomous professional arm of the Ministry of Education), and new curricula, syllabi, and textbooks for primary and junior secondary schools. These new measures were introduced first in primary schools. In junior secondary schools the reform featured a wide array of technical and vocational subjects and the provision of elaborate workshop and laboratory facilities. Following the completion of changes in 1980 at the primary level, changes at the secondary level were introduced on a small scale.

Political instability and economic decline halted reforms at the secondary level. By 1985, the education system was destitute at every level. The portion of GDP spent on education had fallen from over six percent in 1976 to just over one percent. Little learning took place among the vast majority of primary and junior secondary school children. In most schools it was difficult to find a sixth or

even a tenth grade student who could read well. Most schools had no textbooks and no chalk, and, more often than not, few teachers. In senior secondary schools, mismanagement and inadequate budgets forced boarding schools to close many weeks of the school year.

The three universities had a dire shortage of equipment required for advanced study and were often closed because of student protests, staff demands, and opposition to government. Graduates of other higher-level institutes were not acquiring employable skills and were unable to find jobs upon graduation. Even in the area of adult literacy, where once Ghana had been the trailblazer in Africa, the government program had collapsed. Primers which had been developed in a dozen Ghanaian languages were not even being printed.

At every level of the system, teachers left Ghana for other countries where they could earn better salaries, and untrained teachers took their place in the classroom. A lack of foreign exchange deprived students of textbooks and other supplies. School buildings, furniture, and equipment deteriorated, enrollment levels declined, and drop-out levels rose dramatically.

In 1987 Ghana's government approved an Education Reform Program which introduced new ways of doing business in the development and implementation of the education portfolio. The World Bank provided the ministry the financial assistance it needed to diversify the curriculum, making it more applicable to life and work, and to provide facilities, particularly in rural areas. Lending instruments (both adjustment and investment) were flexible, allowing the ministry to implement its own program.

Earlier, in 1986, the government had presented its full education reform strategy to a World Bank and UNICEF organized conference of funding agencies in Vienna. Commitments to support the first phase of the education reform program came from British Development Agency, Norway, OPEC Fund, Switzerland, African Development Bank, and World Bank. In 1990, USAID offered to support the development of the Primary Education Program. Thus it soon became evident that the Ministry of Education needed to coordinate activities supported by funding agencies and their participation in its policy-making process.

## **Improving the management structure of funding agency assisted projects**

By 1993, educational reforms were well underway. Their management had become complicated, however, by the significant interventions of at least sixteen major funding agencies. Each agency-assisted project was managed by a separate administrative unit of the ministry, with its own facilities and staff. The proliferation of these Project Implementation Units (PIUs) caused serious problems for the ministry staff. Some of the units did not function properly because

ministry funds were not available to staff them adequately, and some staff assigned to the units did not have the training or skills to manage the projects. Senior managers were frequently taken away from their daily responsibilities to support or participate in funding agency supervision missions. One estimate is that out of 52 weeks in the year, as many as 44 weeks of senior managers' time were taken up by various missions from funding agencies, which required the attention of nearly the same set of managers. Each funding agency had its own conditions and terms that had to be met and its own procurement and disbursement procedures.

In December 1993, the minister merged all the PIUs into a single unit, the Projects Management Unit (PMU). The new unit was given ten functions:

- To provide effective and efficient professional, technical and management support to the Ministry of Education in implementing externally funded projects.
- To integrate and monitor the formulation and implementation of Rolling Action Plans for all projects.
- To provide sound and effective disbursement of external and government funds.
- To ensure regular flow of counterpart funds required for implementation of project activities.
- To assist in identification, recruitment, and placement of counterpart staff and external and local consultants.
- To assist in carrying out needs assessment for and training programs within and outside the country.
- To prepare and provide technical documentation for the procurement of local and international inputs.
- To provide necessary support and documentation to funding agencies during their review and monitoring missions.
- To facilitate funding agency support and assistance for new projects.
- To implement findings and recommendations of external auditors and agency review/monitoring missions.

Within the PMU, a hierarchy of authority was established to ensure proper management procedures, and specialized divisions were created for disbursement, procurement, and civil works. This unit managed all projects with funding agency assistance. A director general was appointed, who reported directly to the minister. The director of finance was asked to manage all funds and advise on the areas to which new funds should be directed. The director of works was made responsible for civil works, notably the construction of many schools and other buildings. Project managers were assigned to each level of education: primary and secondary, tertiary, literacy training and functional skills and the informal sector.

While project managers attended to the specific needs and interests of the projects to which they were assigned, functions common to all projects were organized by three main schedules:

- A management schedule regulated the preparation and implementation of work plans to ensure adequate support for personnel and contract administration, staff development, supply and management of office consumables, spares, provision of logistical support of office equipment, vehicles, printing, binding, clearing, and warehousing.
- A procurement schedule guided the procurement of all goods and services, including preparing bidding documents, launching tenders, analyzing and submitting reports and reporting the results to the project manager for funding agencies.
- A disbursement/accounts schedule helped disburse project funds, establish sound financial management arrangements, develop an adequate internal financial control system for project funds; establish complete written record system for project funds; control requests for expenditures, and manage the accounting system, project finance, budgets, and cash flow.

## **Improving the process for coordinating the participation of funding agencies**

The participation of funding agencies in policy development and implementation began in a somewhat informal manner in 1993. UNICEF took the lead in organizing other funding agencies in providing to the Ghana Ministry of Education technical and financial assistance during the preparation of a strategy paper on educational reform. The paper, “Towards Learning for All: Ghana Basic Education Reforms for the Year 2000,” became the basis for the reform of priorities and strategies in the provision of educational services.

Teams of specialists and practitioners, including representatives of other funding agencies, were invited to prepare thematic papers on key sector issues. Funding agency representatives met every month at UNICEF, which chaired the meetings. Participants included officials from the Ministries of Education and Finance, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, World Bank, British Council, ODA, European Union, USAID, JICA, and other bilateral agencies, including the Swiss, German, Canadian, Dutch, and French. From time to time, key speakers and special guests were asked to interact with the group on specific topics. These guests included representatives of government departments, non-governmental agencies (NGOs), funding agencies, national and international institutions of academic excellence, and internationally renowned education professionals.

This fruitful collaboration between government and funding agencies in writing a strategy paper and national plan persuaded the Ministry of Education and the expanding funding agency community of the need for the ministry to coordinate funding agency participation in policy dialogue and implementation. Such coordination would enable the ministry to define its own priorities and strategies for national development and utilize funding agency contributions to the sector program as a whole. It would put an end to discrete funding for

agency projects that solely reflected the mandates and priority areas defined by those agencies.

## **The ministry of education and funding agency Forum, July 1994**

A joint Ministry of Education and Funding Agency Forum was held from July 19 to 22, 1994. This seminal event began the process of developing Ghana's basic education reform, called FCUBE (Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education). The meeting was a turning point in the ministry's relationship with funding agencies. The shift in authority from the funding agency community to the Ministry of Education in defining funding priorities became the driving force for education sector reforms in the country. Leadership from the highest ministerial levels was critical to this effort.

The purposes of the forum were to: gain insights into the consensus on problems in the education sector; sensitize funding agencies, implementing agencies, and potential beneficiaries on implications of future policies and program; enhance the coordination of funding agency activities and the program of the Ministry of Education; draw attention to good management practices, implementation bottlenecks, and institutional constraints; and examine the role of the community in the provision and management of education.

The immediate objective of the forum was to identify the main issues for which studies and analyses were required to develop a fully elaborated and costed sector strategy. The strategy would include efforts to strengthen the ministry's capacity to make professional and related technical decisions and interventions would be replaced with a sector-wide approach to program coordination. The process of developing a strategy would also yield new options for financing by funding agencies.

Forum participants identified nine key issues for study and delineated the problems, causes, strategies, and policy options related to each:

- A regular and disciplined teacher
- Learning achievement; curriculum and materials simplification; development, and testing
- Teacher education; pre-service and in-service training
- Primary 1 intake; Primary 1 through Junior Secondary 3 enrolment targets
- Health status and ability to learn
- Textbook provision and community libraries
- Infrastructure/ rehabilitation
- Evaluation/MIS/research
- Costs and financing/ sustainability

Forum participants were tasked with conducting studies and analyses needed to address each issue in a sector strategy. A lead funding agency and link persons for follow-up actions within the ministry were identified for each issue. The lead funding agency would provide the management and resources needed to de-



velop a medium-term plan for addressing the issue. The lead agency was not expected to take financial responsibility for full resolution of the issue but simply for preparing the plan to address it over the next few months. This agency would identify which agencies would provide the funds, facilitation, and technical assistance needed to prepare a program. Such preparation would entail field studies and workshops to highlight the true nature of sector constraints. Link persons were expected to coordinate follow-up actions in the ministry.

The forum succeeded in helping ministry officials and funding agency representatives lay the foundation for collaboration in developing FCUBE. The partnership formed was characterized by openness and frankness in the proceedings and a program that reflected the collective efforts of all relevant stakeholders. This was the keystone of a long-term success story in ministry-funding agency collaboration.

### **A workshop for collaborative FCUBE planning, February-May 1995**

In January 1995 Parliament received a preliminary draft of the basic education sector strategy, FCUBE. But much work remained to be done before a fully developed strategy was in place. In February 1995 the ministry convened a meeting of ministry officials and funding agencies to review the status of studies that had been agreed upon at the July 1994 forum. The review also took account of the Education Review Commission Report of October 1994 and a number of consultancy reports carried out with funding agency support. At the completion of the review, the ministry asked for a revised work plan for building on studies mapped out in July 1994.

In May, a workshop was conducted over three days to define key areas for further analysis, to create joint ministry-funding agency working groups, and to develop work plans for these studies. Workshop participants articulated a policy goal for FCUBE: To provide effective teaching and learning in primary and junior secondary school with equity and efficiency, and to expand access and participation to achieve Education for All targets.

They reviewed the studies that had been conducted and organized them into four key areas for further analysis: (1) teaching and learning, (2) management and quality assurance, (3) access, participation, and infrastructure, and (4) costs and financing. Within each of these key areas, the cross-cutting issues of girls' access and participation in basic education and the reduction of regional and urban/rural disparities were considered. Each of the studies conducted involved local expert participation and funding agency counterparts.

Workshop participants synthesized central findings from the studies in each area. These findings were presented in a status report, which also proposed elements in each area to be considered for a sector strategy.

### **Developing an FCUBE implementation framework, July-**

## **October, 1995**

A task force was appointed by the Minister of Education in 1995 to develop a plan for implementing the FCUBE. Once completed, the plan was formally approved by the Ghanaian parliament in December of 1995.

The FCUBE program was planned for implementation within a ten-year period, beginning in 1996 and running through 2005. It would be implemented in two phases of five years each. The original plan, which was used at the Credit Agreement negotiations with the World Bank, had undergone a number of revisions and was eventually characterized as a “revolving plan”, which would evolve as activities were developed within the FCUBE objectives.

## **Collaboration in implementing FCUBE**

Implementation of the FCUBE program officially began in June 1996 with the minister’s inauguration of the Implementation Overview Committee. By that time, government had both a policy document and an operational plan. A large and complex program, FCUBE engaged education officials at every level of the ministry, including district officers, teachers, and school community members. International funding agencies play a large role in the program’s implementation, as witnessed by the size of their grants and loans and the nature of their interventions.

### **Funding agency loans and grants**

During the two major reforms that preceded FCUBE (in 1974 and 1987), government had to negotiate with each funding agency for its potential support. The ministry sometimes had to adjust its own implementation plan to accommodate the funding agency’s proposed program, and negotiations among different ministries were often tedious. With the advent of FCUBE, that process changed. Within the policy framework and implementation plan agreed upon by government and funding agencies, the latter now find their areas of interest and provide funds in those areas. Each agency has offered to help in its area of comparative advantage.

- The World Bank (IDA) provided a credit of US\$50 million, effective in November 1996. It supports the implementation of all the three components of the FCUBE Program (enhanced quality of teaching and learning; management of efficiency; and access and participation).
- USAID granted US\$53 million to help the government achieve two strategic objectives: (1) Quality education through Model Schools to develop and refine school quality standards that are cost effective and replicable on a national scale (330 model schools, three in each of the 110 districts in the country will be established); (2) Implementation of improved policies for quality education.

- Germany granted DM41 million for rehabilitation and equipment of 35 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and the transformation of six TTCs into Special Primary Teacher Training Colleges.
- The African Development Bank (ADB) made a credit of approximately US\$17.3 million from the African Development Fund (ADF) to construct and equip 500 primary schools.
- The European Union (EU) granted of 1.25 billion cedis for the rehabilitation of school buildings and the provision of library books for basic education schools.
- The Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom (formerly ODA) pledged a grant of £15 million to support the implementation of the FCUBE Program. At the national level, DFID will assist in teacher training. At the district level, it will fund support and supervision systems and build financing and budgeting capacity. At the community and school level, it will support the activities under the Schooling Improvement Fund (SIF).
- UNICEF agreed to continue its support to girls' education, curriculum development, and district and school-level support.

### **Government and funding agency Consultative Panel, February 1997**

Though some funding agencies tend to limit their interventions to central offices of the ministry, others work at district and school levels. It was thus imperative that the ministry coordinate funding agency activities with the FCUBE program. Funding agencies had begun meeting on a monthly basis in February 1996 in UNICEF's offices. In October, the meetings moved to the Ministry of Education, under the chairmanship of the minister.

In February 1997, soon after the FCUBE program was approved by Parliament and thus officially sanctioned, the minister launched the first meeting of the Government of Ghana and Funding Agency Consultative Panel. Participants reviewed the status of program implementation, the operational plan for 1997, future implementation arrangements, and the cost and financing of the program. They emphasized that FCUBE would be the only basic education improvement program for Ghana in the coming decade, and all domestic and external sources of technical and financial support for basic education would be applied through it. They reiterated that the various procedures of the implementation process would be harmonized. The meeting was enhanced by the active participation of representatives from other relevant government ministries. A second meeting was planned for about six months later.

## Summary and lessons learned

The convening in February 1997 of government and funding agency officials at the first Consultative Panel marked the institutionalization of aid coordination to basic education in Ghana. During three years of planning FCUBE and working ad hoc with funding agencies, the minister and his staff had set up a structure of management, oversight, and implementation in which funding agencies were effectively integrated. The key loci of their collaboration are the Consultative Panel meetings and the Projects Management Unit. The former provides a role for funding agencies in policy implementation, and the latter for an efficient system of managing funding agency resources that flow into the ministry.

Coordination of external assistance has led to a reduction of low priority programs, better planning of aid missions and less duplication of effort. Because government has made it clear that FCUBE is the only program for basic education over the next ten years, all external funding support for basic education is now being channeled to support that program. This has led to the various external funding agencies interested in supporting a particular aspect of the FCUBE program to work closely together in a cooperative manner with the ministry to support that aspect of the program in a complementary manner.

The burden of many external visits from funding agency representatives to Ghana has been drastically reduced. The purpose and timing of such visits is now reviewed and controlled. Common reporting and disbursement procedures have been agreed upon and are in place, while discussions on common procurement procedures are in progress. The expertise and human capacity of the PMU are facilitating the process.

In the long process of creating institutional channels to facilitate funding agency participation in FCUBE, the ministry and funding agencies learned several lessons:

- Strong leadership is essential to overcome inertia to change. Such leadership must be demonstrated at every stage of the reform process.
- Funding agencies appreciate organized and structured means of communicating with the government and with each other. This helps to avoid duplication of effort.
- The establishment of a single unit to procure and disburse funds that flow between funding agencies and the government budget is a more efficient use of local human resources than is an arrangement in which each funding agency has its own project implementation unit. The Projects Management Unit allows ministry staff to specialize and to maximize consistency in administering funding agency project activities.
- The process of building a forum for ministry officials, funding agency representatives, and other stakeholders in the education system is likely to be a

gradual one. In Ghana, funding agencies began to work with each other and with government through a series of ad hoc meetings well before an official structure was established. Thus, the Government of Ghana and Funding Agency Consultative Panel became the institutional culmination of a working relationship that had already evolved.

The stage has been set. The problems have been identified. The strategies have been carefully formulated. The machinery and relevant structures have been put in place. The FCUBE program has taken off, and monitoring and evaluation for successful implementation properly planned. Above all, the political will to press forward towards attainment of the final objective is assured. It is up to each actor in the field to play their part well to ensure successful implementation.

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# **Social Partnerships in South Africa: the Case of Education**

**by Nick Taylor**

We live in truly interesting times, even if they are often somewhat confusing. On the one hand, the speed of communication and travel pull people from around the world together in common understandings and enterprises in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres. On the other hand, we have lost faith in grand ideological plans: we are rediscovering small scale, locally driven approaches to specific problems.

Under these circumstances, new forms of social action are emerging. We do not understand these well, and many are lumped together under the general name of 'partnerships.' Because of this confusion it is difficult to recognize general patterns in these new forms of social cooperation. I will look at one example of a partnership, the Joint Education Trust (JET), in the education sector in South Africa. In discussing this case, I want to test some general rules that seem to be emerging.

## **What is JET?**



JET was formed in 1992, prior to South Africa's first post-apartheid elections and the establishment of the government of national unity. Since the inauguration of the new government, JET has begun to engage in new forms of activity. Thus, the history of JET has two distinct phases.

### **Transition to democracy: 1992-1994**

JET was launched with a commitment of R500 million (at that time worth about US\$140 million) from twenty of South Africa's largest private companies. These corporate partners formed a non-profit trust with ten of the country's most influential civil society organisations, including the largest political parties, which represent those oppressed by apartheid, organised labour, as well as a number of educational and business organisations.

JET's mission is:

- To harness and coordinate resources across civil society and between the civil and public sectors;
- To serve the development of the most disadvantaged groups in South African society;
- To improve the quality of education and the relationship between education and world of work;
- To contribute to the process of long-term fundamental change to the education and training system;
- To show measurable results within five years.

JET made a policy decision not to work with the apartheid government. It began to collaborate with NGOs in developing and supporting programmes aimed at creating alternatives to the existing system and filling gaps left by apartheid education. Because of the fragmented nature of educational provision in the system, JET introduced quality assurance measures such as the certification of learners, accreditation of programmes, and evaluation of the impact of innovative projects.

Another major achievement of JET was to provide a mechanism through which parties with widely diverging backgrounds and interests could work together. For example, business and labour were close to a state of war with political parties. Intense negotiations were being conducted around a new constitution for the country. Against this background, JET provided a welcome space where, through their participation in the common enterprise of education, these parties learnt to cooperate with each other.

### **The new South Africa: 1994 to present**

With the inauguration of President Mandela and the Government of National Unity, the policy decision to work with government fell away. In addition, many offshore donors began to see JET as a convenient vehicle for managing country-

to-country agreements signed with the new government.

At the present time, JET is involved in partnerships with five sets of actors: the corporate sector, a variety of civil society organisations, government (at national, provincial and local levels), donors, and a large number of NGOs. The first two sets of partners are bound together by means of a standing agreement, while partnerships with the remainder are contracted on a project by project basis.

## **What drives these partnerships?**

The different parties bring complementary contributions to these collaborations. Each party also derives particular benefits from them; otherwise they would not participate. Let us turn to an examination of the respective contributions and benefits.

### **Corporate partners**

Private companies contribute finances and business skills in the form of management capacity and knowledge of the educational needs of the workplace. This latter perspective assists in making the education and training programmes supported by the partnership more relevant to economic development.

What the corporate sector gains from these arrangements is a better educated workforce. In addition, through association with this kind of socially conscious development work, the companies gain positive publicity, both in the marketplace and the political sphere. These are longer term, somewhat indirect benefits. A more immediate benefit to business comes in the form of tax concessions for donations to approved programmes. A problem in this regard is that the present tax laws make such approval difficult to obtain.

### **Civil society partners**

The political parties, labour unions, and other civil society organisations that participate in JET bring a broad-based legitimacy to the partnership. They also give direction and focus to its activities through their on-the-ground knowledge of the needs of the most undeveloped sectors of South African society. In return, the partnership delivers services to these communities that they would not otherwise get.

### **Donors**

Since 1994 foreign governments have shown a great deal of interest in assist-

ing the new South Africa in meeting its development objectives. In addition, a number of private off-shore donors have shifted their emphasis from supporting NGOs in their opposition to the state towards aligning NGO priorities with the development objectives of the new government.

All these donors face a two-fold problem in relating to government. First, the major priority of the new state has been to reorganise the labyrinthine apartheid civil service into an instrument more representative of the population and geared towards national and individual development needs. Enormous progress has been made in achieving this goal, but this effort has not left much capacity for engaging with donors. A second problem is that the state financial systems, while appropriate for the public budget, are too cumbersome for managing donor funds effectively. Both problems are addressed through the use of NGOs to engage with donors and to manage their grants on behalf of government. Because of its widely representative board and its record for financial probity, JET is ideally suited for these purposes.

## **Government**

One of the most important functions of government is to provide a policy framework based on an accountable, democratic political process. Without such a framework, many projects originating in civil society could all too easily be directed towards serving private interests rather than the public good. This is not to say that all such projects need state approval, but public policy offers a guiding light to follow, elaborate, or even question and improve upon.

The state is also the only social institution which has the resources to provide educational services to scale. It is estimated that local South African and offshore donors together contribute some R1 billion each year to educational development, which amounts to less than 3 percent of the state budget.

However, small as they may be in terms of total provision, these donor resources are important in two ways. First, they supplement state services, thus providing communities with opportunities they would not otherwise have. Second, because they are carefully targeted to specific needs and generally closely monitored, they provide government with lessons that could be replicated and expanded on a large scale where appropriate.

It is therefore in the interest of government to promote JET's activities, through both concrete means, such as tax concessions, and more symbolic measures, such as public recognition of the parties involved in development partnerships.

## **Non-government organisations**

South Africa is blessed with a well-developed NGO sector. This is particu-

larly true in the field of education, where thousands of bodies undertake activities such as literacy classes for adults, in-service teacher training, entrepreneurship programmes for youth, policy development, and advocacy.

These organisations work best when operating on a small scale and close to the community they are serving. Under these conditions they are able to exercise flexibility and efficiency in solving particular local problems. This is not to gainsay the existence of large effective NGOs, but when NGOs do grow in scale they sometimes suffer from the same problem that besets any large bureaucracy, public or private: a diminished capacity to respond quickly and effectively to local or changing needs.

## **What holds the partnerships together?**

Partnerships involving a diverse range of social actors do not come together spontaneously. A great deal of effort and skill is required in:

- Ascertaining the priorities of the principal parties. For example, the European Union (EU) may approach the South African Department of Education about making a grant available for developing capacity at national and provincial levels. Before a project proposal can be developed, questions such as the following need to be investigated: Which parts of the huge education bureaucracy are most in need of such development? How do these needs accord with EU specifications? This can be a time-consuming process requiring considerable skill;
- Finding suitable partners, such as NGOs or private-sector consultants, to assist in such capacity building;
- Drawing up a project proposal that fits the stringent demands of EU headquarters in Brussels;
- Managing the work and the finances;
- Evaluating the results;
- Reporting according to the even more stringent requirements of Brussels.

JET has begun to manage a number of projects of this kind over the last two years, including a grant of some US\$20 million from the EU, and one of approximately US\$12 million from the British Department for International Development. In addition, it has disbursed some US\$70 million derived from its private sector partners to its own development projects.

Given the fractured nature of South African society and the fragile state of the new democracy, JET's work requires solid credibility. The widely representative nature of its Board of Trustees provides JET with this legitimacy.

## **Conclusion**

Collaborations of this kind are often driven by at least a degree of altruism. But they would not be sustainable if, through their contributions, the parties did not derive benefits of one kind or another. And the projects as a whole would not assume these particular forms if they did not produce more collectively than the individual partners could do on their own.

Much is being written about the role of government these days. Whereas Marxists used to talk about the withering away of the state, there is now talk, from a different point on the political spectrum, of the minimalist state. Our analysis shows that both views miss the mark. The role of government is as important as ever. And one of its most important functions is to facilitate the growth of the kinds of partnerships described above. It needs to create an enabling environment in which a diversity of approaches to local problems can grow and which facilitates the participation of the relevant parties in such projects.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Partners comprising the Joint Education Trust**

AECI Limited  
Amplats  
Anglo American Corporation  
Barlow Limited  
Caltex Oil (SA) Limited  
CG Smith  
De Beers Consolidated Mines  
E. Oppenheimer & Sons  
First National Bank of SA Limited  
Gencor Limited  
Johannesburg Consolidated  
Investment Company Limited  
Johnnic  
Reunerts  
Sankorp Limited

Sanlam Limited  
Sasol Limited  
Shell SA Limited  
South African Breweries Limited  
Southern Life Association Limited  
Standard Bank of SA Limited  
The African National Congress  
The Azanian Peoples Organisation  
The Congress of South African Trade Unions  
The Foundation for African Business and Consumer Services  
The Inkatha Freedom Party  
The National African Federated Chamber of Commerce  
The National Council of Trade Unions  
The Pan African Congress  
The South African Democratic Teachers Union

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Examples of partnership projects, managed by the Joint Education Trust**

#### **■ Ekuseni Youth Development Centre**

Development of rehabilitation centre for young prisoners, in partnership with the Private Sector Initiative (which contributed R43,6 million), the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, Rand Afrikaans University, and the national Ministry of Correctional Services. An evaluation of the programmes, resources and management of Ekuseni is currently under way. The first phase of the evaluation will be completed in December 1997, the second phase in December 1998.

#### **■ Workers Higher Education Project (WHEP)**

Development and assessment of pilot projects designed to expand access to and improve the quality of tertiary education for working adults, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, Tertiary Education Institutions, NGOs, organised labour and organised business. The success of WHEP in its first year of operation has led to additional funding from the Ford Foundation and a new two-year grant from the Kellogg Foundation.

#### **■ Northern Cape Primary School Workbook Project**

Development and assessment of new primary school learning materials; in partnership with provincial government (Northern Cape Department of Education), private sector companies and NGOs. The evaluation report on the Northern Cape Workbook Project is available from JET.

#### **■ Kathorus Youth Services Support Programme**

Project management and grant administration in support of youth organisations in Kathorus, in partnership with the national government (Reconstruction and Development Programme), provincial government (Gauteng Department of Local Government and Housing), local government (Mayoral offices of Greater Germiston, Boksburg and Alberton), and NGOs.

#### ■ **Impilot ECD Initiative**

Development of a cross-sectoral network connecting government departments, ECD centres, clinics, schools, communities and families in coordinated support for ECD, in partnership with the Bernard van Leer Foundation and provincial government, the Gauteng Department of Education.

#### ■ **The President's Education Initiative**

Audit, evaluation and assessment of existing teacher development programmes to develop and implement a coordinated strategy for systematic and effective teacher development per province, in partnership with the National Department of Education, nine provincial departments of education and twenty international donor organisations.

JET was appointed in November 1996 by the Department of Education to coordinate the first phase of the project. This was completed in June 1997, when JET presented funding proposals addressing the respective provincial priorities and a final report on the project to the DoE. JET has recently been commissioned to undertake the second phase of the project.

#### ■ **Eastern Cape Primary Schools Improvement Project (ECPSIP)**

Following proposals submitted recently, the Joint Venture, which involves JET, ITEC (Independent Education and Training Centre), and Crown Agents, was awarded funding from the British Department for International Development (DfID) to undertake this project. ECPSIP, which will run over a period of three years, provides an opportunity to realistically pilot the implementation of education reform policies, including the new curriculum, in 500 schools and colleges of education in the Eastern Cape. The project will focus on development of government management capacity at provincial and district levels; development of management, motivation, and organisations skills amongst school principals; training of maths, science and English teachers in terms of the new outcomes based curriculum; selection of appropriate materials; and mobilisation of community support to create effective school governing bodies.

## ■ The European Union (EU)

Management of funding from the EU, in line with the proposal prepared by JET, to provide technical assistance to government; aimed primarily at building government capacity in the Directorates of Early Childhood Development, Adult Basic Education and Training, and Development Support. JET is managing the project and administering the allocated EU funds, in close cooperation with the EU and the national DoE, subcontracting NGOs where appropriate.

## ■ Community Service Programme for Higher Education

With the support of the Ford Foundation, the Solon Foundation, and the Human Sciences Research Council, JET is researching the potential of a National Community Service Programme as a means to address the urgent demand for financial assistance to students for higher education. The idea of establishing a community service initiative was first mooted in the United States+South Africa Binational Commission and was taken up in the draft White Paper on Higher Education. Drawing on expertise from leaders in government, the private sector, donors, higher education institutions, student organisations and communities, JET has prepared an initial concept paper on the community service initiative. Copies of the concept paper are available from JET.

# **Widening the Circle: Enlisting the Collaboration of New Partners in African Educational Development**

*by Peter Easton*

## **Introduction**

One critical starting point for the effort to develop and improve patterns of collaboration among the educational system in Africa and its many present and



potential partners is to get a better understanding of the collaboration—recognized and unrecognized—already taking place within the sector itself.

Nonformal and adult education plays an important part in overall system behavior in Africa and has essentially done so by drawing on and collaborating with a variety of partners who are not always as well represented in the rest of the system. In this paper, we want briefly to examine five important types of collaboration that presently characterize African nonformal education programs and may have useful implications for better partnering throughout the educational system:

- (1) Public-private sector collaboration in educational improvement
- (2) New partnerships between development agencies and education providers
- (3) Collaboration with and among communities themselves
- (4) Collaborative research with African scholars and practitioners
- (5) New complementarities between formal and nonformal education systems

These remarks are primarily based on three series of studies recently completed under direct sponsorship of the ADEA Working Group on Nonformal Education (WGNFE) or in collaboration with partner agencies: the PADLOS-Education inquiry into decentralization and local capacity-building in West Africa;<sup>1</sup> the ABEL-funded studies of new forms of knowledge acquisition in East and West Africa;<sup>2</sup> and the ADEA-funded studies of relations between formal and nonformal education in Southern and Eastern Africa.<sup>3</sup> For each we outline the central issues, summarize key recent findings, and suggest a few practical implications.

## **Public-private sector collaboration in educational delivery**

### **The issues**

In an era of shrinking public budgets, “rationalized” (if not rationed) foreign aid, and increasing government decentralization, it has become critically important to mobilize and coordinate all potential sources of support for education.

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1. PADLOS is the acronym for *Projet d'appui au développement local dans le Sahel* (Support Project for Sahelian Local Development), a program initiated by the *Comité Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel* (Inter-State Committee for Drought Abatement in the Sahel), based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The study was jointly supported by the CILSS, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and WGNFE. See Easton, *Sharpening Our Tools*.
  2. ABEL stands for Achieving Basic Education and Literacy, a long-term research project funded by USAID and coordinated by the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC. WGNFE took an active role in piloting a series of six studies under this aegis in 1996-1997. See also Easton and Closson, *Multiple Avenues to African Learning*.
  3. See Closson, Capacci, and Mavim, *Synthesis of ADEA Research in Nonformal Education in Eastern and Southern Africa*.

The role of the state in many African countries is dramatically shifting, and other actors have come on stage or have enlarged their involvement in social service provision. The entry into the educational field of growing numbers and types of private organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit, is a major case in point. It is also a phenomenon that has been developing in nonformal education for many years, and lessons from that experience may now be of use to the entire education system.

Though nonformal education has always been an arena of private endeavor and highly varied supply, the collapse of funding for public programs of this nature in the early 1980s, coupled with rapid growth in the number and activity level of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and in local community initiatives to make up for the shortfall in government services, began fundamentally transforming the “topography of literacy and training over a decade ago.

## **The findings**

Several studies conducted under WGNFE aegis in eastern and southern Africa focus on emerging patterns of relationship between private and public providers of nonformal education and reveal both great potential and major pitfalls.

- Private for-profit enterprises (PFPs) of training and nonformal education, many established by Africans in recent years, are a growing though distinctly minority presence, most evident in sectors of middle-income African countries where there are both relatively abundant resources and strong training needs (for example, in the rural water management domain in Ghana).
- Private nonprofit agencies, generally termed nongovernmental organizations, have proliferated over the last decade, particularly in lower income countries, where opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavor remain quite restricted. They account for an increasing proportion of education service provision and enjoy a flexibility and sometimes an efficiency that can enhance performance. At the same time, they are frequently in competition with each other for funds and are sometimes perceived by local actors and associations as parasitic. NGOs may also adopt conflictual policies that undermine other sustainable development efforts. In one case studied in East Africa and also encountered elsewhere, an NGO practice of paying local teachers well above market rate, and above what community associations could possibly afford, sapped energies for an innovative and locally-owned alternative schooling program.
- Together these private actors are now responsible for a major proportion of the great variety of local nonformal education services in African countries. Though inter-group coordination and efforts at facilitative State supervision are more common in education, and in literacy and nonformal education in particular, than in any other sector of development, they still leave a great deal to be desired. Governments have manifestly not yet mastered the facilitative, regulatory, and coordinating role that they are called upon to play, despite laudable pronouncements in favor of “faire faire” (help them do it) poli-

cies, as in Senegal. The bureaucratic model of public behavior still prevails and clearly does not fit the new situation.

- Local beneficiaries continue to be the most underrepresented group in nascent efforts at NGO and PFP coordination. Participatory evaluation and planning are not yet the rule. Yet in the long run local actors are those most concerned, for they must sustain whatever is to be sustainable. As a Moré proverb (Burkina Faso) reminds us, “The one who sleeps on a borrowed mat must realize he is lying on the cold, cold ground.”

## **The practical implications**

Effective yet minimally-intrusive coordination, plus a judicious balance between regulation and stimulation, are obviously sorely needed, characteristics of a new kind of public-private sector relationship that uses the authority of the former to nurture and orient the dynamism of the latter. Playing such a facilitative role requires much greater competence of public sector personnel than does a traditional bureaucratic model of behavior and so poses the question of the training and incentives of public sector staff. Even in the best of cases, however, it seems highly unlikely that appropriate models of public-private sector collaboration can be developed and monitored strictly from a national level or without the active intervention of beneficiary representatives and local groups. That argues strongly for greater decentralization of decision-making and more subregional responsibility for system coordination.

## **New partnerships between development agencies and education providers**

### **The issues**

The development of civil society throughout Africa and the movements of economic and social decentralization that currently traverse the continent are creating a pronounced demand for training as well as rich new opportunities for learning among the members and leaders of the nascent local enterprises, community associations and non-governmental organizations involved. For local men and women to assume new responsibilities in activities as diverse as health services, crop marketing, credit mutual administration and natural resource management, they must also acquire new skills and knowledge.

That reality has stimulated an unprecedented level of three-way collaboration among local communities and associations, agencies and NGOs concerned with development, and providers of literacy, education and training for adults and for those beyond school-entry age. In such circumstances, education for human development is no longer just a slogan and credo. It is becoming an integrated local approach in which developers and educators share critical and

complementary roles. Increasingly, development services are realizing that economic investment and resource management activities at the local level are simply not sustainable unless local people understand, appropriate and staff them. At the same time, communities and new civil society associations are realizing that education does not serve their purposes unless it prepares them and their children to control the stakes and levers of their own local development as well as to qualify for further learning. And both wish to partner with educators in accomplishing these goals.

## The findings

This new level of collaboration with development agencies and communities, and the factors driving it, were the subject of a two-year study in which the WGNFE took part on Decentralization and Local Capacity Building in West Africa.

*From October 3rd to 6th, 1994, over 200 peasant members of 100 peasant organizations from all 30 provinces of Burkina Faso held their first national meeting for and by peasants themselves . . . . The peasant organizations were able to broach matters that are of weightiest concern to them:*

*. . . Fifth, the peasants are determined to seek with and from their partners, the kind of support that will enable them to assume their responsibilities. It is first and foremost a question of responding to their need for training, particularly training in financial and organizational management, training in technical topics appropriate to the new conditions of agricultural production. The peasant organizations seek partners who recognize and respect their experience and their needs . . . .”*

*(From the closing declaration of the Congress of Rural Organizations held in Dédougou, Burkina Faso in October 1994. Devèze 1996, pp.173-174.)*

As these pronouncements suggest, civil organizations are pressing for greater autonomy in management of their own development activities. Without increasingly functional levels of literate competence, whether in African or international languages, in Latin or Arabic script, local people have great difficulty getting beyond the rudimentary levels in assumption of new responsibility or instituting systems of democratic accountability.

Developments in southern Mali over the past decade, closely examined in the PADLOS-Education Study, illustrate the potential that intersectoral collaboration and community empowerment may unleash in such circumstances. The upward spiral began with the transfer of responsibility for local management of crop markets and agricultural credit facilities to villages with enough literate adults to absorb the necessary training. Revenues that the new village associations accumulated in this process served then to fuel local investments in areas such as natural resource management, animal husbandry, health services, and

community governance, each decided by villages representatives and requiring (or preceded by) further training of association members. The detonator for this cycle of locally-directed capital generation and use was thus *direct collaboration among education providers, rural development agencies, and the communities themselves*. And in southern Mali as elsewhere, each time viable development activities and pertinent training are blended and interleaved, numerous local communities have begun financing and replicating the education undertaking on their own from the proceeds of the new economic and social activities that it has allowed them to direct.

## **The practical implications**

Thanks to the impetus of decentralization, we are witnessing on the part of development agencies and civil society organizations alike radically increased interest in education as a means for achieving locally-managed and locally-sustainable development, as well as a vehicle of cultural enrichment and access to urban labor markets. This is an extremely hopeful sign. The focus of that interest is on education in its broadest connotations, that is, the entire set of training and learning activities that provide the competencies and confidence required for self-directed development, and on improved interleaving of education and development. Nonformal educators are increasingly required to master this key linkage between the economic and the instructional domains, an area where private providers that embrace multiple branches of local development may therefore have a comparative advantage.

## **Collaboration with and among communities: Brokering new social contracts**

### **The issues**

In a period of African history when social tensions may be exacerbated by the transitions and dislocations of uncertain growth, education has an increasingly important role to play in promoting renewed collaboration with (and within) communities, as well as better partnering across their natural diversities (age, gender, ethnicity, religion.). WGNFE studies over the last two years have focused on areas where this bridge-building has been underway.

### **The findings**

In recent years, local schools across Africa have happily sought increased levels of parent and community participation in their governance and a closer

relationship between classroom and social environment. But the role of education in defusing conflict and brokering new social contracts can and should go beyond this initial form of collaboration. A number of experiences in nonformal education, highlighted in studies conducted over the last two years, illustrate the potential:

- *Complementary roles for young and old in community enterprise:* In the central northern Ghana village of Nwodua, nonformal training in literacy and water management undertaken by returned emigrants resulted in creation of a local primary school and in development of a whole new structure of community governance, where elders advise a Town Development Council composed of newly-literate middle-age adults, while younger members assume technical tasks. Gerontocracy, a sometimes benevolent system in other circumstances, seems to have been progressively replaced by a new complementarity among age groups effected by local people themselves.
- *New opportunities for women in income-generating activities and in society:* A study of skill acquisition by women in income-generating groups in Burkina Faso, Mali and Sénégal demonstrated that the growth of such women's voluntary associations has increased the prominence of women in mixed groups as well and initiated some gradual redefinition of female roles and responsibilities in the communities concerned. In a few villages of the Thiès region of Senegal, newly-literate leaders of local women's associations took it upon themselves, after joint study of maternal and child health issues, to convince village authorities to ban female circumcision. Once they succeeded, they organized their own delegations to neighboring communities in order to enlist broader commitment.
- *Acquisition and application of conflict-resolution skills:* Nonformal training groups for women in rural Senegal affiliated with Tosta<sup>4</sup> studied conflict-resolution skills and began establishing unofficial tribunals for mediation that according to police records have markedly diminished the number and gravity of cases that come into the justice system in their regions.
- *Fostering new networks among local communities and groups:* In numerous communities studied throughout West Africa, nonformal training activities have provided a vehicle and venue for new forms of inter-community alliance, often traversing ethnic and religious barriers. In Burkina Faso, one organization, Song Taaba, founded as an outcome of literacy acquisition by women in an urban neighborhood of Ouagadougou to create food-transformation businesses has been reaching out to groups of women throughout the central region of the county to create women's marketing networks. In Senegal, a village association in Fandène supported by ENDA/GRAF<sup>5</sup> has

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4. "Tostan," a Wolof word for "breaking out of the egg," is also the name of an NGO located in Thiès, Sénégal and devoted to promoting nonformal education and training for women in rural and poor urban localities throughout the country.
  5. ENDA, *Environnement et Développement*, is located in Dakar, Senegal. GRAF, *Groupe de recherche, action et formation* (Research, Action and Training Group), is an ENDA affiliate.

developed a network of twenty credit mutuals across as many surrounding communities of differing ethnic composition, and has organized technical assistance teams to help similarly-inclined groups in poor urban neighborhoods.

- *Bridging local and international knowledge*: Nonformal education programs have habitually given prominence to literacy in African languages, both as a functional and cultural asset and as a stepping stone to international-language learning. In the process they have amassed a considerable reserve of African-language literature on local history and knowledge likely to enrich future primary and secondary schooling. Two of the studies carried out under WGNFE aegis over the past two years investigated this dynamic: one on bridges between traditional herbal medicine and modern medical training in Kenya, the other on learning from elders' knowledge in natural resource management projects in Mali.

## **The practical consequences**

To the degree that education becomes a truly local function rather than an import largely directed from central levels, it provides a critical platform for brokering and working out the new social contracts that sustainable development requires, in short, for facilitating new partnerships at the ground level. Localizing education in this manner without compromising genuine quality means well-supported and well-conceived decentralization, ample training, and increased collaboration between formal and nonformal education, a theme to which we shall return.

## **Broader collaboration in educational research and planning**

### **The issues**

“Where there is no vision, the people perish,” it is said. Yet how are we to make the vision-generating activities of education research and planning a more relevant and integral part of the conduct of African education, a more collaborative endeavor? Some of the experience gained by the WGNFE in conducting such activities and forging new research partnerships may add insight to this arena, which is of concern to all branches of the education system.

### **The findings**

Three major observations stand out from our experience with broadening collaboration in education and related research and planning.

The first concerns the *importance of involving local actors in applied research endeavors through participatory methodologies*, and of enlisting na-

tional researchers in the necessary technical support and guidance. Several WGNFE-affiliated studies over the last two years have modeled precisely this approach. National researchers were contracted to identify, contract, train and coordinate local research teams (generally selected in turn by their communities or local associations) in areas where particularly innovative nonformal education experiences were under way. The researchers then assist these local participants in the definition of inquiry topics within the general area of interest, the development of research plans and the execution and interpretation of studies. Though there are inevitably a multitude of difficulties to be resolved in the decentralized research process, such approaches have two enormous advantages:

- making local actors direct stakeholders of educational research; and
- providing them, and the national researchers involved, an intense hands-on training experience in the generation and use of locally-relevant research.

The second related lesson of experience concerns the kind of institutional configuration that can sustain such local involvement and national researcher direction. The best example in this regard comes from WGNFE studies recently completed in five countries of southern Africa. The system established was, in effect, four-tiered. Within each of the countries, *national* researchers from selected institutions developed topics and helped organize and train *local* participants. They were in turn assisted and coordinated by an African technical support institution with a *regional* focus, in this case, a research institute of Specis College in Zimbabwe with an assist from the SACHED Trust in South Africa. Further logistic and research support for the development and exercise of this new regional field of action was provided on an *international* basis by a northern research institute, in this particular case, the Center for Policy Studies in Education of the Florida State University (U.S.A.), contracted by the WGNFE Steering Committee. A combination of international and cross-national African collaboration thus provided the momentum for completing and disseminating a series of critical studies that involved both national and local contributors.

The third arena of experience is that of participatory educational and social planning. In their frequent role of training organizers for development operations, nonformal educators have been involved over the years, though less regularly than might have been optimal, in piloting participatory evaluations of those operations, often relying on their own local trainees as the fulcrum point for this collective reflection. Such initiatives typically provide an entry point for greater local participation in planning development operations as well.<sup>6</sup> A new effort of this nature conducted with ADEA participation under CILSS direction over the last two years furnishes some additional evidence of the high interest and great capacity of local actors for enhanced roles in educational policy and planning. Educators developed across five countries of West Africa Sahel 21, the prototype for a large-scale exercise of envisioning future possibili-

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6. Easton, *Sharpening Our Tools*.



ties, in which selected local communities were asked to examine:

- what had changed in their environment over the last thirty years from an ecological, demographic, economic, political and educational point of view;
- what factors underlie such trends and where they might be leading;
- what futures different groups in the community would prefer to those projected; and
- what might be done at local and national levels to move toward the desired scenarios.

This undertaking elicited a high level of enthusiasm among participants of all ages and categories at the local level and provided critical fresh input for the planning process within CILSS.

## **The practical implications**

One excellent way of developing the competence of national educational researchers and planners while helping them enhance the relevance of their work is to grant them (generally through specific contracts) responsibility for organizing and training local partners in the execution of participatory research and planning endeavors, activities that are shaped by local perceptions of problems and genuinely locally owned. There are few more effective ways of widening the circle or of giving voice to the ultimate artisans and beneficiaries of educational improvement. As a Zimbabwean proverb succinctly puts it, “Stories of the hunt will be stories of glory until the day when animals have their own historians!”

## **New complementarities between formal and nonformal education**

### **The issues**

Collaboration fundamentally means broadening the company of those concerned with, and actively contributing to, education improvement. In this realm, as in so many others, charity surely begins at home: we must start by broadening our own image of education and its key participants. It is high time that the education system in fact become a system, that is an integrated network whose parts in fact mesh. Or, to choose a less mechanical metaphor, it is high time for the education system to grow into the flexibly-knit organ of social renewal that it most certainly can be.<sup>7</sup> How can we nurture better partnering among the varied formal, nonformal and informal dimensions of the educational enterprise on the

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7. Recall the story of Mahatma Gandhi’s arrival in London in 1946 to sign the agreement leading to the independence of India from British rule. Asked by a reporter on his descent from the airplane what he now thought of Western Civilization, he responded simply, “I think it would be a good idea.”

8. Hall, “Rich and Vibrant Colors.”

African continent?

## **The findings**

Studies conducted with ADEA participation over the last two years have focused on a variety of emerging complementarities between formal and nonformal learning, as well as a variety of hidden dimensions of the educational system. They have covered topics like the following under-researched issues: the practical applications of Koranic learning in Islamic West Africa; the experimentation of mature-age entry and equivalency schemes for older higher education applicants throughout southern Africa; the development of alternative African-language based forms of primary education in Burkina Faso; the acquisition of new skills by informal sector apprentices in Chad; training in transformative learning for local church leadership in Kenya; grafting formal vocational training centers on nonformal educational bases in Ghana; and a series of related topics chosen to broaden our vision of what education is, of the variety of modalities through which it is created, and of the mutually-supportive roles that the formal and nonformal sectors can play in catalyzing this larger social reality.

The results of these studies paint a picture of education in “rich and vibrant colors,” to quote the title of Budd Hall’s 25th anniversary article on the evolution of nonformal education in the international review *Convergence*,<sup>8</sup> a picture of a pluralist but potentially collaborative and highly dynamic system, which might be rather drably presented as a series of concentric circles. Here formal education lies in the center, but is surrounded on all sides by the many varieties of nonformal training. Both are in turn embedded in the myriad daily habits and resources of informal learning, and the entire system is squarely set within the larger social context. Few formal school graduates or drop-outs actually assume productive roles in society without passing through some form of nonformal apprenticeship and informal learning. Lessons learned from life and in nonformal venues are often best acquired on a foundation of formal education or brought to fruition by subsequent cycles of schooling.

## **The practical implications**

One of our greatest and most exciting challenges in increasing collaboration for education renewal over the upcoming decade is certainly to perfect collaboration and complementarity within the broader education system itself. Education is a broad social process that, unless purposefully obstructed, proceeds with or without the support of specific external forms and institutions, though it advances furthest and meets social needs most fully if collective resources are mustered and a variety of interlocking institutional venues created to facilitate it. The variety of the system is its strength, and collaboration among its diverse parts the lifeblood that allows it to grow. Nonformal education provides a laboratory for new modes of instruction, a bridge between formal education and the

social context, a needs-based and flexible modality for spreading learning throughout the community and for encouraging the continual use and development of the kind of abilities schools seek to foster. Formal education supplies the structure to generalize access, a standards-based modality for ensuring quality, and a hierarchy for scaling new heights in technical prowess. Informal learning undergirds both.

It follows that developing equivalencies, passages and reciprocities among these three arenas, and the multitude of specific forms inhabiting them, must be high on the agenda of educators in the new century. Let there be greatly increased collaboration for educational improvement Africa-wide, and let it be modeled at home!

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# Society and Education: a Challenge for the Twenty-First Century

**by Rodolfo Stavenhagen**

In November 1991 the General Conference of UNESCO invited the Director-General "to convene an international commission to reflect on education and learning for the twenty-first century." The mandate of the Commission included the formulation of "suggestions and recommendations in the form of a report which can serve as an agenda for renewal and action for policy-makers and officials at the highest levels." The Report of the International Commission on

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1. Page numbers in subsequent paragraphs refer to pages in this book.

Education for the Twenty-First Century was completed at the beginning of 1996, and has since been widely distributed in several languages, with the title: *Learning: The Treasure Within!*

The Commission believes that education has a fundamental role to play in the world of tomorrow, but it is also well aware that education by itself cannot be expected to solve all or even many of the social ills and deficiencies that befall our societies. As Jacques Delors, the Commission's president, has said, we "*do not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula but rather as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development.*"

In order to better face the educational challenges of the early twenty-first century, we felt it necessary to take a prospective look at the principal tendencies of social and political life. While it is clear that there is much diversity in the world, the Commission considers that the process of globalization and the accelerated pace of technological innovation based on the rapid accumulation and application of scientific knowledge constitute two major trends that shape the social and economic environment in which the educational challenges of the twenty-first century will have to be met.

While these far-reaching tendencies are frequently hailed as inherently beneficial for the well-being of the world's populations, the Commissioners also realize that there are widespread feelings of disenchantment, if not pessimism, concerning world development, and that serious unresolved social problems underlie many of today's achievements. If remedies are not undertaken to tackle them, they are likely to become more acute and therefore more difficult to handle in the coming years. A number of recent United Nations world meetings have alerted us to many of these crises: the Rio Conference in 1992 sounded the alarm on environmental problems and the need for sustainable development; the Vienna Conference in 1993 bore testimony to the fact that human rights are still widely abused in many parts of the world; the Cairo Conference in 1994 recalled the danger of uncontrolled population growth; the Copenhagen Summit in 1995 underlined the need to combat persistent poverty, growing social inequalities and widespread unemployment; the Beijing Conference of 1995 reminded us of the continuing gender gap in many parts of the world; and so on.

What can and should education do about these matters? The Commission believes that it indeed has a role to play, and that it must address them squarely. Higher school enrollments do not lead automatically to economic growth, nor does economic growth necessarily imply improvements in the well-being of the population. More public investment in education is surely needed, but for what purposes will it be used and by whom remains an open question. In an increasingly interrelated, changing and complex world, in which uncertainty has almost become a constant, educational systems must become more flexible and innovative. While basic education must be expanded considerably in the poor countries, multiple educational opportunities need to be considered over an

individual's entire life span in all countries. We must strive to become a "learning society," because education cannot simply be considered a means to other ends. The Commission is convinced that education is an end in itself—a cherished and shared value—and that it ought to be so recognized in all contemporary societies.

Many proponents of change argue that in order to meet the technological challenges of tomorrow, education must emphasize the natural sciences and technological disciplines. Some people even hold that humanistic concerns should decidedly take a back seat in tomorrow's education. While some of these arguments are persuasive, the Commission does nevertheless advocate a strong humanistic, spiritual, historical and social scientific content in education, which is deemed to be a necessary antidote to overemphasis on purely technical and material concerns. Commission member Karan Singh from India reminds us that "*knowledge is expanding but wisdom languishes.*" He argues for a holistic educational philosophy for the twenty-first century, including strong emphasis on religious and spiritual values. (p. 225-227)

## **The four pillars of learning**

Seen in this context, the four pillars of learning which the Commission proposes for consideration relate directly to the major challenges facing education today and tomorrow.

- (1) *Learning to live together* in this new interrelated world, with its massive migrations and the ethnic conflicts that challenge established conceptions of the nation-state, appears to have become an increasingly essential element in the search for integration and harmonious development. Are education systems doing their share in preparing the young for life in tomorrow's multicultural societies? Unless we learn to live with each other—and to live with ourselves—we will not be contributing to the establishment of that culture of peace which the world desperately requires. Bronislaw Geremek, Commission member from Poland, argues that education dealing with universal history, societies and cultures all over the world, combined with a genuine education in civics, may be effective and lead to a better understanding of social otherness ". . . to inculcate in the young a spirit of tolerance and dialogue." (p. 211).
- (2) *Learning to know* is, of course, the classic, traditional objective of education. But we do not here refer to simple rote acquisition of information (which in today's computerized environments becomes actually less and less relevant), but rather to the development of students' competence in sifting and weighing information, of analysing, interpreting and explaining facts, of rational thinking in order to acquire not only knowledge, but also wisdom, about the world we live in. This means of course learning about scientific method, and about

humanistic and spiritual values; knowing about the natural world and about the cultural world as well.

- (3) In a rapidly changing economy, students can no longer rely on the magic of a degree, a diploma or a certificate, to get a job and enter upon a career for the rest of their working lives. *Learning to do* means acquiring the competence to face changing technologies and shifting labor markets, to handle complexity rather than routine tasks, to take part in effecting changes even more than in adapting to them, to work with people and ideas, and not only with material things and inanimate objects. Learning to do is more than acquiring marketable skills, it means learning to cope effectively with uncertainty and to play a part in creating the future.
- (4) Finally, we must return to the subject and ultimate object of education: the child, the youngster, the adult: the human being in all his/her variety, the individual person but also the member of a community, a culture, a society. *Learning to be*, to be oneself and to be with others, to be for oneself and to be for others. Developing one's full potential as a free individual and as a responsible member of a larger society. A task that education can never relinquish, no matter how acute the economic pressures, how heavyhanded the bureaucracies, how limited the resources, how demanding the polity or the market might be.

We do not know how well prepared our educational systems are to take up these challenges. To be sure, whatever changes have to be effected must be the responsibility of each nation, of each particular school system, or of each local community. There are no general reforms applicable at all times in all places, and nothing is further from the Commission's mind than to attempt to impose a particular point of view on educational systems worldwide.

## **Education is a social institution**

It has become clear, moreover, that education reforms do not take place in a vacuum, and they will not succeed without the active involvement of other key sectors of the society. In sociological terms, an education system covers much more than the formal institutions of schooling, whether public or private. It includes the varied programs of informal education, extension services, on-the-job training and labor recycling schemes, as well as the vast potential for teaching and learning provided increasingly by the audio-visual media. And in many traditional societies education also includes oral transmission of knowledge from generation to generation, teaching by example and learning through participation, even when no formal educational process is involved at all. Rural youth in agricultural areas as well as children and youngsters in urban neighborhoods often learn more immediately useful and practical things outside school than within its walls. It is well known that in many countries young people spend more time in front of the television set than in the classroom, and observ-

ers have suggested that in many respects the audio-visual media are becoming substitutes for formal schooling. Are schools, then, to become relics of an earlier age? Is our classical conception of a formal educational system hopelessly outmoded?

The Commission does not think so. On the contrary, it stands squarely behind the need for improving and extending however possible the formal institutions of learning, and it reaffirms its conviction that the schoolteacher, from pre-primary to post-university levels, with particular emphasis on secondary schooling, is the indispensable and irreplaceable link in the educational process. Nothing can replace the personal encounter between teacher and student. We can all remember a teacher in our youth who somehow or other changed our lives, opened up the doors to a wider and exciting universe for us. However, this being said, the Commission is also convinced that the traditional “frontal” scheme of teaching (in which a teacher imparts his/her knowledge to passive students) is no longer adequate—if it ever was—for today’s complex challenges.

This is where the question of how to link formal schooling with the rest of society has to be considered, a devilishly complex issue because despite some outstanding examples to the contrary, the evolution of formal education systems, particularly those pertaining to the public sector, has generally followed its own, internally generated pattern, in splendid isolation from the contradictory demands of the outside world. Establishing such linkages can be a trial-and-error, piece-meal approach that may or may not succeed, or it may be part of a wider planning process in which government as well as non-governmental actors must intervene. Education is a collective good and the total society must be involved in it.

## **Towards constructive partnerships**

In a world attuned to the needs of business enterprise, it has become fashionable to speak of partnerships. By reaching out to other sectors of society, the education system can indeed enter into partnerships that may be mutually beneficial and reinforcing and that are conducive to the improvement of education and hence of the well-being of an entire society. Who are the natural partners of the education community as a whole, including students, educators, administrators? What kind of partnerships are necessary and desirable in order to improve education overall? Who might become new partners in tomorrow’s redefined educational systems? Perhaps we should look beyond partnerships at the possibility of multi-stranded interrelated networks in which the needs of the beneficiaries and participants can be met by the educational system’s possibilities to satisfy them. This is more than posing the supply and demand of education in quantitative terms: it means looking carefully at the social, cultural, economic and political requirements of a society and then refashioning the education system accordingly, within a fully democratic and participatory frame-



work. That is why the Commission tried to take a hard prospective look at tomorrow's world (the demography, the economics, the culture of societal changes) in order to ask "*What kind of education for what kind of society?*" which also means "*What kind of partnerships, what kind of networks, what kind of participation?*"?

## **Education and the productive sphere**

The relation of any education system to the world of productive economic activities seems self-evident. Completing an education means for most people acquiring the skills and competence needed for obtaining a job in later life. Conversely, productive enterprises require specialized, skilled and able labor to increase productivity and output. It sounds simple, doesn't it? But is it, really? Do today's schools and universities produce the kind of worker or professional that the labor market can absorb? Does the labor market demand the kinds of skills and competence that education institutions are supplying? It may be so, but it does not always happen that way, particularly as the parameters of labor and work are rapidly changing. The Commission has noted the tendencies that the nature of work is undergoing profound transformations. More and more workers are active in the services and information sectors than ever before, less and less are required in the traditional areas of agricultural and industrial production. This "dematerialization" of work goes hand in hand with the changing nature of the "job." Economists are now speaking about a jobless future, of increasing flexibility, of outsourcing and downsizing, all of which are expected to raise productivity, lower costs and increase profits. This may of course be fine for the owners, managers and directorates of the world's conglomerates, but what happens to people, to those who work eight or ten or fourteen hours a day to make a living for themselves and their families?

What happens when a youngster with a brisk new diploma or certificate cannot get a job for which she/he was trained? Or when someone who has developed a particular skill over the years, suddenly finds himself, at middle age, "redundant", as losing a job is now euphemistically called in some places? Is this only a question of career-choice or of re-training, or are there some larger issues at stake? There is certainly scope here for a wider look at the interrelationships between the world of enterprise and the world of education. Might this not be an opportunity for building partnerships between the education community and the business sectors? Many private secondary schools and institutions of higher learning are becoming increasingly geared to this relationship, their particular objective being to provide the business sector with the kind of graduates that are needed. We have seen them in action. They seem to be saying: more technology training, less humanistic disciplines; more administrative skills, less social sciences; more practical concerns, less grander visions. This, the Commission believes, is a worrisome trend in some countries, because it reduces educa-

tion to its bare-bones instrumental aspect and imperils some of the wider objectives that society as a whole assigns to education.

A recent study in Mexico shows that among graduates from technical and business schools, corporate enterprises prefer to hire those who come from private institutions rather than public universities. Unemployment rates are higher among the latter than the former. This difference is not due to any noticeable difference in academic level among the graduates, but rather to the fact that a diploma from a private university carries a certain social distinction which opens corporate doors more easily, than a similar diploma granted by a public institution, regardless of the relative quality of education at the two institutions. The study concludes that these practices tend to reenforce socio-economic inequalities among university graduates of different social strata.

A partnership between the world of business and the universe of education must take into account the economic interests of one and the social mandate of the other, but it cannot subordinate one to the other. When the Commission speaks of *learning throughout life*, it suggests the possibility that people be given the opportunity to transit between the world of work and the world of education at different times in different stages of their lives. Not only for specific economic purposes, for example retraining or updating their competencies, but in order to help make human development the central objective of economic growth, as the Commission suggests. Increasing the involvement of the private sector in education (particularly at the university and post-university levels) is not only useful in lowering the amount of public financing that higher education requires, but it might also help the community at large to redefine the major characteristics of the education system in tune with the challenges of tomorrow's realities. The Commission states clearly that "*education is a collective asset that cannot be left only to market forces.*" (p. 160)

What is true for training in specialized competencies is even more relevant for scientific research. In the industrialized countries, a growing share of basic as well as applied research takes place in private research and development institutions funded by business enterprises, and much new scientific knowledge is generated in these centers. In the poorer countries, however, scientific research is concentrated—when it exists at all—in government-funded institutions, often linked to universities. To the extent that public resources are woefully insufficient to underwrite all necessary scientific research in these countries, their output and their quality leave much to be desired, notwithstanding some brilliant exceptions. Does that mean that science in the developing nations must necessarily lag behind, and become dependent upon, scientific progress in the industrialized countries? Many tendencies indeed point in this direction. But here again there is need to re-evaluate national policies on scientific and technological development. There is much to be said in favor of strengthening the universities' role in this field, especially in the developing countries, where economic development often is contingent upon suitable scientific and technological inputs. The private sector could become much more involved in this area through

appropriate partnerships with universities, research centers and institutions of higher learning, sharing the costs and the benefits of this highly essential field of knowledge. Still, the involvement of public institutions, such as national councils for science and technology, for example, is essential as well, because they can provide the overall guidelines that express the public interest for scientific and technological research, provided, of course, that these institutions are truly representative of the society as a whole.

*“Cooperation with industry and agriculture has proven to increase the quality of tertiary education” in the countries in transition in eastern Europe, writes Commission member Alexandra Kornhauser from Slovenia. She mentions that several university-industry projects show that “direct involvement of university students and teachers brings a wealth of advantages, for instance learning to work in a group, facing real problems which reach from the idea to the market . . .” (p. 219)*

## **The world of labor and education**

Partnerships can be of many sorts. The education system can become linked through agreements of cooperation, with, for example, the trade union organizations which in some countries are quite powerful and articulate. How do trade unions perceive the specific needs of their members and their families? What can they expect from their country’s education institutions? Do they have access to appropriate curricula and teaching methodologies, which might help to enhance the economic position of trade unionists? This, to be sure, falls in the traditional domain of adult education, but only in few countries, mostly in the industrialized world, are there any systematic attempts to structure a continuing and mutually reinforcing partnership between the education system as a whole and the trade unions as a significant sector of society. How do education institutions figure in the collective bargaining process between employers and workers, even when government agencies play an active part in it? How involved are national ministries of education?

In agricultural countries, by way of example, rural laborers’ associations usually express the acute economic and social demands of their membership. What are the specific needs that the education system can provide for, from pre-school initiation, through basic education, to technical and vocational schooling, to specifically problem-focussed research and specialized training, and university-centered rural extension services? Here there should be possibilities for continuing partnerships beyond an occasional pilot project, or the particular initiative of a local association and a sympathetic official in a ministry. These are issues that must be negotiated at the political level where the potential partners become responsible and respected actors in an ongoing process. If education throughout life is to be more than merely wishful thinking, then mechanisms must be found to bring the major social and economic actors together with

those responsible for making the education system function, in a network of mutually satisfying relationships. While efforts are currently underway to downsize the sometimes heavy government bureaucracies that weigh upon national budgets, still in numerous countries the professional associations or trade unions of civil servants could be prime partners in national efforts to improve professional skills and increase productivity in government services.

## **Schools and community partnerships**

The essential ingredient in the success or failure of any education system is the way it relates to the local community. The Commission considers that one of the main aims of any education reform is to involve the stakeholders in the decision-making process (p. 158). It favors a broad decentralization of education systems, based upon school autonomy and the effective participation of local stakeholders (p. 160). Different communities have different needs and different structures. Some are territorially distinct, cohesive, bounded, culturally integrated. Others are divided, heterogeneous, with mobile and shifting populations that have varying, sometimes competing, interests and needs. There can be no single scheme of community integration with the education system. But to the extent that the local community is by definition the prime stakeholder in education institutions, particularly in formal schools up to the secondary level, it is essential that education systems become increasingly community-centered. This is not easy when crucial decisions are made by “faceless bureaucrats” in far-away ministerial offices, or by the purely commercial concerns of private entrepreneurs who see a chance for profit, and for whom students are no more than individual “clients” paying for a service. Somewhere in between these extremes there is a social community with a cultural identity and a series of collective needs, which looks to the education system as something more than simply another “service provider” and something less than a bureaucratic, immovable Behemoth.

Community involvement in education is not a new concept. In some countries school districts, built around local communities, are in fact the principal stakeholders of their schools and are responsible for financial resources as well as curriculum content and teacher quality. In others, community schools and colleges have been at the forefront of educational innovation and have developed meaningful and satisfying links to the various social groups within their range. In some poorer countries, community involvement has been essential in mobilizing support for basic education as well as technical training. In many other countries, however, where over the years and decades education was considered the fundamental responsibility of central governments, links with local communities weakened or became non-existent, whereas a hierarchical, top down management of education institutions discouraged local participation, which school bureaucrats often consider more of a hindrance than a help. That is why

decentralization or devolution of education services plays such an important part of the new thinking around education reforms.

But when community involvement is given more lip service than serious attention, and when decentralization is ordered by decree without sufficient preparation, results often backfire. It has been noted in several regions, especially in Latin America, that decentralization measures may increase regional inequalities in education services and may not benefit local communities at all. Rather, they may fact they strengthen intermediate bureaucratic structures, for example at the provincial level, where special interests may be just as powerful in averting serious education reform as at the national level.

Democratic community participation is essential for today's and tomorrow's modernized education systems as it is for economic and social development in general. Whilst it cannot be obtained by decree or executive fiat, neither can it be produced without political will, at the national as well as at the local levels. Building community involvement in education appears to be one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century, in the Commission's opinion. This is certainly not a recipe for action, but simply a suggested framework for the long-term planning of education systems.

Commission member Roberto Carneiro writes that the twenty-first century is faced with a major challenge: the rebuilding of human communities. Education, he reminds us, has always been and is still a highly social exercise. *"Thus, on the principle that education is, or comes close to being, a public good, the school should be defined first and foremost as a social institution or, more precisely, as an institution belonging to civil society . . ."* (p. 203). Carneiro concludes that *"it is only through the establishment of plural education communities, governed by rules of democratic participation, in which emphasis is placed on dialogue between different points of view and in which the resolution of naturally occurring conflicts by any form of coercion or authoritarianism is rejected, that education for a fully fledged citizenship can be provided."*

Communities are the building-blocks of a healthy society; in today's multicultural and multiethnic world, it is at the community level that tensions, frictions and uncertainties must be resolved. When communities falter, the whole social fabric is torn asunder, as is evident in so many conflict-ridden nations. And when communities are strengthened or reconstituted, then there is hope for the wider society. Education systems will flounder without community support, and they will flourish with community involvement. A successful education system is the one that is able to draw upon the strengths and resources of the underlying community and it will, in turn, contribute to that community's vitality. Here is a window of opportunity for the education systems of the twenty-first century. The four pillars of learning referred to in the Commission's report must be solidly anchored in the life of the community, a task in which many social actors can cooperate.

## **Education and the new information technologies**

While some of the issues considered by the Commission are as old as public concern with education, others are specific to the late twentieth century and will become even more relevant as we enter the next millennium. The most prominent of these issues is the relation between education and the new information technologies, including the audio-visual media and the computer. Like most technological innovations, computers and television sets are ethically neutral. However, the use they are put to is directly related to social ends and moral values. Therefore we cannot consider technological progress, particularly as it impinges upon education systems, as entirely value-neutral. Public debates over television and computer technology have become quite heated and at times even strident over the last few decades and are likely to become more so in the future.

Some observers maintain that the media have increasingly taken over the educational function of society and, indeed, that they are doing a better job than formal schools. Others, on the contrary, consider that not only is most TV programming of execrable quality, but that it has a regressive effect on young people's values and intellect. Computer technology, on the other hand, opens up vast possibilities for handling information and knowledge but, the critics say, it makes learning too easy (for example in mathematical operations and the use of data bases), thus depriving students of the possibility to develop rigorous methodological discipline on their own. Combining news, information, entertainment and education in a single package, as many TV programmers say they are doing, is certainly a wonderful way to reach out to the minds of young people. As these programmes become more interactive, students are not only passive recipients but can actually interact on-screen, becoming directly involved in the technologically innovative virtual reality. Their curiosity and inventiveness can be stimulated much more than through traditional teaching aids. Yet there are shadows in the brilliant picture too.

A brief look at TV programming in most countries reveals that educational content is generally insufficient and inadequate. Unless they are able to receive subsidies, educational TV channels are not competitive with other kinds of programming, and private entrepreneurs who have tried their hand at them soon discover that the market will discard them. Moreover, the program content tends to be so culture-specific that in numerous countries there is resistance to the international distribution of such programmes on cultural and ideological grounds.

Similar concerns have been voiced regarding computer connections to the internet, the technological potential of which is only just now beginning to make an impact on the way people learn and work. There will be vast changes in social and cultural behavior around the world in the coming years when com-

puter, communication and media technologies combine to provide ever widening possibilities for working, learning, communicating and playing. Education institutions that have the possibility to take full advantage of this technological revolution will soon be far ahead of others. On the other hand, as the price of this new technology decreases, no longer requiring costly infrastructures, education institutions in poorer nations will also be able to take advantage of it.

## **International cooperation**

The Commission believes that there is urgent need for responsible cooperation between the media and computer industries and the education system. A new partnership must be brought into being between the powerful multimedia industries, the providers of communication services, the generators of computer and TV programming, and the education community around the world. These linkages cannot be left to chance alone nor to the sole imperatives of the market. Too much is at stake here: the education of future generations. A case in point is the programme developed by the Iberoamerican Association of Educational Television (AEI) in collaboration with more than 250 education institutions in the region, including ministries of education and TV networks. ATEI has developed a new style of cooperation and participation in the dissemination of Iberoamerican culture, a powerful tool to train teachers and professionals, and a new concept of interactive distance education.

In Latin America, as in other parts of the so-called “developing world”, international cooperation can play a significant role in education development. Multilateral agencies, or bilateral cooperative schemes may provide financial and technical resources, consulting missions, research and study groups to cooperate with countries in their efforts to improve education systems. Increasingly these cooperative efforts are seen within a framework of participatory dialogue, rather than unilateral applications of pre-conceived schemes. One report on Latin America concludes that *“in spite of . . . structural constraints, innovative approaches can be negotiated. Because a participatory approach is so different from standard practice in this field, it is to be expected that it will face resistance . . . . Even people who are initially opposed to a participatory methodology can learn and change their minds.”* The author finds *“that it is possible to integrate processes of technical analysis into nascent democratic contexts. This requires recognizing the political nature of planning and identifying groups with a stake in the outcome (stakeholders). It involves creating spaces for collaboration between Ministries of Education and organizations representing civil society, such as NGOs, universities, and Advisory Committees . . . . The implementation of policy, and even policy definition, involves multiple participants . . . . [This is a process] of learning by discovery. Dialogue is an essential*

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2. Reimers 1996.

*condition for such learning. The expert must be willing to participate in this dialogue at a table with other stakeholders . . . .*"<sup>2</sup>

Numerous bilateral initiatives have contributed to channel cooperation and aid from the rich to the poor countries. As the Commission underlines, "We are currently witnessing a shift in the conception and functions of international aid. The conventional forms of aid and co-operation are being contested and acknowledgement of the need for changing "assistance" into "partnership" is gaining ground (p. 184). The Commission identifies a number of common themes in international cooperation, such as the need to see education systems as a whole and to conceive reform as a democratic, consultative process related to an overall social policy concerned with respect for democracy; the alleviation of poverty, meaning in the field of education that people who have traditionally been excluded from learning opportunities, will be reached; the need to build up long-term capacity for research and reform within poorer countries; the free circulation of persons and of knowledge. There is a need to offset the North-South imbalance with increasing North-South and South-South cooperation. From debt-for-education swaps, to regional exchanges of teachers, researchers and students, to setting up regional research and training centers (such as the United Nations University has done), to facilitating the poorer countries' access to the new information technologies, to building-up basic education infrastructure and teaching capacity—the possibilities for international cooperation in education are vast, and the Commission believes that new partnerships can be built along these lines with UNESCO's involvement and among member states directly.

## **A case in point: Latin America**

Building partnerships for quality improvement in education requires more than an administrative decision at some governmental level. It involves research and dialogue with potential partners about the different needs and possibilities of the various segments and groups in the local, national and international community. For example, in most Latin American countries rural schools lag well behind urban schools in every respect, and among the former, schools in areas with indigenous populations are even less better off. While some of the causes of this situation can be found in inadequate resources, lack of trained teachers, and shortage of education materials, much of the problem is due to inadequate understanding by education officials of the social and cultural needs of the local communities. In a number of countries serious efforts are underway to develop a truly bilingual and intercultural education for indigenous children, but the problem arises when there are only very few well-trained teachers who speak the indigenous languages, and when local officials or even teachers coming from other areas hold indigenous cultures and traditions in contempt. For decades, official education policy in Latin American countries (for example Bolivia, Peru,



Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, where a good part of the population is made up of indigenous Amerindians) aimed to assimilate the indigenous population and disdained their languages and cultures. Consequently, education levels and outcomes among indigenous children were poor, whereas school desertion rates were high. As a matter of fact, a similar situation prevails among Hispanic children in many parts of the United States.

In situations such as these, partnerships with the local community imply first of all, knowledge of and respect for local culture and vernacular languages. Before imposing a new curriculum or education agenda on rural school systems, education officials need to establish trust and mutual respect with local communities. This is not always an easy task, because it takes time and cultural sensitivity, something which stressed bureaucrats do not always possess in sufficient quantity. But beyond that, it sometimes means redefining the concept of the nation and the national culture, an issue that elected or appointed officials are not always eager to take on. Fay Chung, a Commission member from Zimbabwe, points out a similar concern in Africa. She speaks of the rejection of a role in the education system for African languages, saying that in many countries for the elite that graduate from missionary schools, African culture was synonymous with superstition and backwardness, and was generally rejected as “uncivilized” (p. 206).

## **EDUCO in El Salvador**

To improve the quality of its rural education, the government of El Salvador decided in 1991 to transfer funds from the Ministry of Education and delegate management of new rural preschools and primary schools to parents and community groups through a special Program called EDUCO. Schools are operated by a locally elected Community Association for Basic Education (ACE), whose members are drawn from the parents of the school’s students. The Association, which has legal status, hires and fires teachers and closely monitors their attendance and performance, while ensuring direct feedback about pupils’ progress, and it also receives funds to buy limited school supplies. The role of the ministry of education is to help organize the ACEs and to train teachers and supervise their performance. The ministry also establishes the criteria for teacher selection: all teachers in EDUCO must be college graduates. By 1992 the program had ex-

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3. Reimers 1997.

panded to 958 schools in all fourteen departments of the country, and over 45,000 pupils, 10% of all rural students in grades one to three were enrolled in it.

The program has faced opposition, particularly from teacher unions and leaders in the zones formerly in conflict, during El Salvador's twelve-year long civil war which ended in 1989, where it is perceived as a strategy of political co-optation. In these areas an alternative form of teaching emerged during the war—the popular teachers (*maestros populares*), supported by the political opposition. These now see EDUCO as a strategy of the central state to neutralize the network of popular teachers who identified with the opposition during the war. Teachers unions also opposed being hired by community associations, which fragmented the relationship of the trade union with a single employer, the education ministry. There are also very high levels of teacher turnover, signalling a desire by teachers for more stable, permanent employment in the Ministry of Education.

An evaluation of teacher performance indicates that teachers in community-managed schools use more innovative practices and expose their students to more group work and pedagogical games than teachers in traditional schools. However, an assessment study concludes that performance on standardized achievement tests of children attending EDUCO schools is similar to that of children attending traditional schools, and there are no significant differences in repetition rates between EDUCO schools and comparable regular public schools. The study also found no major differences in school or teacher characteristics or student attendance; neither are there any statistically significant differences in teacher absences. On the contrary, many rural communities were not able to provide a local college graduate as teacher, thus requiring teachers to come in from the outside, sometimes having to travel long distances.

These findings are inconsistent with the expected effect of EDUCO, which has not made a difference in the number of class days or in the length of instruction students receive. The study concludes that while students in EDUCO schools perform at levels comparable to those of students in other schools, there is no indication that this innovation has substantially increased school quality, internal efficiency, or even community participation. EDUCO shows that school autonomy and local participation are not panaceas, and require a long time to mature and produce their expected beneficial effects.<sup>3</sup>

## Teachers as partners

Dialogue between officials and teachers is perhaps even more crucial. Teachers often feel that they are not involved in major decisions concerning educational programmes. They believe that their problems are ignored and their interests are left behind. Their view of education seen from the classroom may be quite different from that of an education planner negotiating budget approvals in ministerial offices. Education needs do not always coincide with political imperatives. A case in point: in the middle seventies, responding to criticisms about the

content of the official primary school textbooks used in the country, the President of Mexico decided to create a task force of social and natural scientists and other academics to rewrite the manuals. This ambitious objective had to be carried out in a few months, due to a specific political timetable. The Commission set about its task with great enthusiasm, and the books were published on time and distributed to millions of elementary school students at the beginning of the new school year. There had been no time to test them in practice, evaluate their effectiveness and correct their errors and defects. School teachers on the job had hardly been informed of these curricular changes when they were asked to use the new textbooks in class. Obviously, the major criticism came from the school teachers themselves, who demanded a return to the earlier programs. Within a few years, under a new government administration, the books were scrapped and the old system was restored and remains in place twenty years afterwards. The Regional Committee of the Principal Project in the Field of

Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, supported by UNESCO, considers that the first and foremost challenge in order to overcome the key causes of low quality education in the region, is to create public support for personalized and group learning. Once this is achieved, other challenges can also be met. But how is public support created? Will the ministries take the initiative? The teachers unions? What role will there be for the media? Do national parliaments have a role to play? (Doc. ED-96/MINEDLAC VII/3)

Education systems cannot flourish and achieve their main objective in society in isolation from other sectors. How to develop constructive dialogue with these other sectors and their various actors—local communities, social interest organizations, economic agents, ethnic and cultural groups—is one of the major challenges as we enter the twenty-first century. The Commission has high hopes that these challenges will be met successfully. Jacques Delors, the Commission's



president, affirms that there is “every reason to place renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimension of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the world’s erratic progression towards a certain unity . . . .” In this context, cooperation and dialogue are essential, because, as Delors points out, “. . . after so many failures and so much waste, experience militates in favor of partnership, [and] globalization makes it inescapable . . . .”

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# **Part II**

## **Partnerships for Capacity Building**

### **Capacity Building for Strategic Resource Planning of Girls’ Education in Africa**

**by Christopher Colclough**

## Introduction

Over the two decades ending in 1980 primary enrolments doubled in Asia and Latin America, whilst in Africa they tripled. Thus, over those years, the proportion of children enrolled in primary schools increased faster in Africa than in other regions of the developing world. This pattern was reversed, however after 1980, when rates of enrolment growth were cut sharply, to levels which in Africa were lower even than the rate of growth of population. By consequence, both the gross and net enrolment ratios at primary level, for Sub-Saharan Africa taken as a whole actually fell throughout the 1980s. Most available data suggest that this decline continued at least through 1992 such that by that year scarcely more than half of the primary school-aged population of Sub-Saharan Africa were actually attending school. Moreover, recent data for individual countries suggest that the fall in both gross and net enrolment ratios continued through 1995 in more than half of Sub-Saharan African countries, and in one-fifth the absolute number of children enrolled actually declined. Unique amongst developing regions, a majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa now have a smaller proportion of their children in school than in 1980.

School quality, too, in much of Sub-Saharan Africa is low. Children are typically taught in much larger classes than is compatible with effective learning, and the average number of pupils per teacher in Sub-Saharan Africa is higher than in any other world region except South Asia. Teachers are often unqualified; teaching aids are few, and textbook provision is desperately poor in many countries. In some countries, it is not uncommon for pupils to be taught in schools without desks, chairs or windows; nor is it unusual for classes to be held outdoors. Where quality is low, learning is slow and children are unable to meet the demands of the curriculum, causing repetition to increase. Low quality also leads to reduced effectiveness of schooling and thus to lower actual and expected benefits from the schooling process. By consequence, for any given level of first enrolment, more pupils will tend to drop out where school quality remains low or declines, thereby reducing to tiny proportions the number of those able to gain lasting benefits from primary schooling.

The problems of restricted availability of schooling and of low school quality, together with the associated high rates of repetition and drop-out, affect the enrolment, persistence and performance of girls particularly sharply. There is a

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1. T. Peasgood, S. Bendera, N. Abrahams, and M. Kisanga, *Gender and Primary Schooling in Tanzania* (Sussex: IDS Research Report No. 33, 1997); P. Rose, G. Yoseph, A. Berihun, and T. Nuresu, *Gender and Primary Schooling in Ethiopia* (Sussex: IDS Research Report No. 31, 1997); M. Tembon, I. Sory Diallo, B. Alpha, and B. Djernabou, *Genre et Fréquentation Scolaire au Primaire en Guinée* (Sussex: IDS Research Report No. 32, 1997).

strong association in Sub-Saharan Africa between low overall enrolments and high gender imbalances in enrolments: underenrolment is particularly concentrated amongst girls. Those countries with Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) of 70 or less have at least 20 per cent fewer girls enrolled than boys, and in almost half of them there are more than one-third fewer girls than boys. Thus, strategies to tackle the underenrolment of children in Africa must pay particular attention to the constraints affecting the schooling of girls.

Many countries with low GERs are very poor. However, low enrolment ratios and high inequality between male and female enrolments are not necessary consequence of poverty. This is demonstrated by the cases of Lesotho, Angola, Kenya, Madagascar and Rwanda. Although all of these countries have relatively low per capita incomes, most have high GERs, and all have high female enrolments relative to those of males. Hence, even a very poor country need not necessarily have low enrolments or high gender inequality in enrolment. The policies pursued are the most important determinants of schooling outcomes.

Over the past two years the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has initiated a major programme of work on Gender and Primary Schooling in Africa. This programme builds on the premise that even those countries farthest from achieving universal basic education, including the poorest and most indebted, can do much to free or create additional resources for primary schooling, that policies can be designed specifically to influence the enrolment and performance of girls, and that in all countries it would be possible to achieve schooling for all, given appropriate policies, within ten to fifteen years. This requires a careful approach to the use of resources and to the adjustment and reform of policies, a form of strategic resource planning.

Within this framework, the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, has conducted three major studies in partnership with national teams from each country.<sup>1</sup> The three countries in which this initial work has been undertaken, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Guinea, have each espoused a commitment to achieving schooling for all and gender equality within schooling. This work is intended to develop new solutions to the problem of securing a good quality primary school system for all children in each of these countries. Gender was identified as a critical dimension to explore because in these countries as elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa girls appeared to be disadvantaged relative to boys. In Ethiopia and Guinea, enrolments in the primary system were amongst the lowest in Africa, and girls accounted for only 25-35 per cent of total enrolments. In Tanzania, primary enrolment ratios had fallen back during the 1980s, although they remained well ahead of those in the other two countries. On the other hand, the gender balance of primary enrolments in Tanzania was closely equitable, which appeared to put it in a different category. Nevertheless, the persistence and performance of girls in the school system lagged those of boys, leading to differentiated outcomes and enrolments for girls and boys at secondary and tertiary levels of the system. Even in the Tanzanian case, then, gender appeared to be an important dimension to explore if the problems in primary schooling were to be



adequately addressed.

The broad questions posed in each of the studies were the same, and a common methodology was adopted for answering them. The principal objectives were:

- to examine the causes of low participation, persistence and performance of girls in primary schools, both absolutely and relative to boys;
- to identify the most promising policy choices facing states which wish seriously to universalise the enrolment of all children at primary level, and to investigate the resource implications of alternative policies.

Country research teams included internationally recruited team leaders, together with three national staff from Ministries of Education or Universities within each country. The international staff plus the most senior national from each of the country teams spent a period of preparation at the Institute of Development Studies in order to familiarise themselves with the relevant literature, and to be introduced to a range of research techniques to be used in the studies. Following this, an extensive period of fieldwork was conducted between August 1995 and February 1996, including surveys of and group discussions with school personnel, pupils, and parents, as well as those who had dropped out of school or who had never enrolled. Supplemented by a review and synthesis of earlier work on gender and education, these surveys were designed to identify the main constraints affecting the education of girls and boys in the three countries. The teams also collected and analysed a large amount of contextual information on enrolment trends, educational indicators, costs and expenditures which were used to identify the main policy options available to the governments, and to specify the cost and resource implications of alternative policy measures.

Since the three national studies have been completed, national seminars have been held in each of the countries, organised by the Ministries of Education. Each of them lasted for three days and involved sixty to eighty participants drawn from central and local government and from educational institutions concerned with primary education policy. Ministers themselves were in each case strongly involved in these national seminars, as were senior officials from education and planning ministries. The recommendations of the final reports were discussed in detail, and a high level of agreement was reached in favour of accepting the majority of the reports' recommendations. National Task Teams were established in each case, in order to plan a detailed schedule for the implementation of the reports' recommendations. These developments have demonstrated a high degree of commitment by the three governments to a process of policy change and reform, and the sense of national ownership of the studies by national governments has been strong.

Of critical importance to the success of this work has been the commitment demonstrated by the three Ministers of Education to the aims and objectives of the studies and, more generally, to those of FAWE. The fact that ministers were involved from the outset gave a strong profile to the work of the teams and ensured that the results of their work would be fully and properly discussed once

the studies had been completed. In each case the three national team members were involved in the preparation of the national seminars and in some of the seminar presentations. The use of local languages during seminar presentations also facilitated the dissemination of the results within the bureaucracy at central and local levels.

## **Lessons for capacity building**

One of the most important objectives for capacity building in connection with this work is strengthening analytical monitoring and planning capacity within the education sector. This requires both recognition and diagnosis of the most important constraints affecting the participation and performance of girls and boys in school, the design of policies which can target those constraints and the analysis of the resource implications of these different policy measures.

Each of the national teams produced a large amount of important factual and analytical information which was used to diagnose the most critical problems in the education sector. In addition an analysis of the different constraints facing girls and boys was made possible by schools surveys and focus group discussions, together with an assessment of evidence from earlier work. The studies demonstrate that there are a set of constraints which typically conspire to keep girls out of school. The most important of these are *high direct and opportunity costs, low perceived returns to the schooling of girls and parental concerns for their daughters' sexual and physical safety*. The importance of these factors varies among countries, as do the sets of policies which are most appropriate to tackle them.

Although these problems and their potential solutions are specific to the schooling of girls, the studies show that selective or targeted reforms need to be set within a broader diagnosis of problems affecting the whole of the education sector. In each of the three countries public finances are tight, and economic pressures have resulted in substantial variations in real per capita expenditures on education over the 1980s. Expansionary solutions which pay no heed to the need to reduce costs or to improve quality will succeed neither for girls nor boys. Each of the studies demonstrates and quantifies the potential for reducing unit costs and for raising additional resources for primary schooling via educational, budgetary, and fiscal reforms, using a model of the education system designed and calibrated for each country separately. This model is used in order to demonstrate the different ways in which schooling for all can be achieved and afforded over a ten to fifteen year planning horizon. In each country high population growth rates will increase future education costs, even with no change in GERs. If all of the primary school age group were to be enrolled in schools of minimally acceptable quality, the planning models demonstrate that at current levels of costs and using existing methods of financing, public expenditures would rise to insupportably high levels. The modelling approach therefore investigates the

possibility of reducing these resource gaps by the introduction of a range of cost-saving, cost-shifting and resource shifting reforms. Each of the packages of reform differ from country to country but the reports demonstrate that resource gaps can in each case be closed.

This approach to policy analysis has aimed at strengthening capacity within the education sector in a number of different ways. Team members have been trained in both research and planning methods. A very wide discussion of policy problems and potential solutions involving a number of ministries and departments has been initiated. A planning method and model has been established which is held within the Ministries of Education, and which can be updated on a periodic basis to readdress problems and provide new potential solutions on a continuing basis. The tasks of policy design and reform are ongoing and do not stop with the completion of a particular report. Ministries of education will need regularly to reassess their basis for policy and their policy strategies. The strategic resource planning approach recognises this and attempts to provide tools which can inform the continuing policy process rather than focusing on one-time solutions.

A strategic resource planning approach also contributes to capacity building by helping to locate the gender debate within the mainstream of day-to-day business of education policy making and planning. The reports themselves show clearly that a gendered approach to educational policy is necessary if universal basic education is to be achieved. The studies have led to a more widespread awareness of this across government than had previously been the case.

In all these ways the experience of the first three countries has been encouraging. As FAWE moves towards a next phase which will involve six new countries it becomes necessary to address a number of capacity building aspects in new ways, drawing on the lessons of the first round. Aspects of capacity building which are likely to be particularly important are discussed below.

## **Recruitment**

One of the most critical requirements for ensuring that the objectives of capacity building are attained is the appointment of appropriate people to the national teams. During Phase II the recruitment of national team members will be an openly competitive process. Posts will be advertised, and applicants will be interviewed. The suitable candidates will need a background in education or economics and have an interest in and understanding of gender issues. One or two members of each team will need technical skills, including computer literacy and some knowledge of statistics. Ideally the national team leader, to be designated Principal National Researcher, should be a senior official in the Ministry of Education with some previous experience of education planning. Although not all team members will be drawn from the Ministry of Education, links between it and their own institutions (for example, Ministry of Finance or Planning or a local university), need to be genuine and strong. The recruitment

process will assign high priority to achieving gender balance amongst team members.

## **Training of national staff**

Notwithstanding the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced people, it will be necessary to train all national staff in the use of the research methodologies which they will be expected to use in the field. To this end all the twenty four national team members will attend a specially designed three month course to be held at IDS, Sussex during January–March 1998, prior to the commencement of fieldwork. This course, which will be bilingual, will ensure that all team members are exposed to relevant literatures on gender and education, educational planning and the use of statistical and research methodologies, questionnaire design and qualitative survey techniques. All team members will also become familiar with the use of the simulation model which will be used to investigate viable policy options in each of the national contexts. There will be a thorough study of lessons from the three national reports completed during Phase I.

Although the general objectives of the studies will remain the same, the design of each of them will reflect national circumstances. Some of the core methodology will remain common to all studies: fieldwork involving a mix of quantitative and qualitative survey methods will be needed, although its extent and emphases may differ among countries.

The modelling approach will also be used in all cases in order to simulate the resource implications of policy reforms for achieving gender equity and SPA. National staff will bring to the course recent documentation on education plans and policies which will be utilised in planning the fieldwork in each country, and which will inform seminar discussions on educational problems in the participating countries. The intention is that by the end of the course the national researchers will have participated in the design of the national studies and will have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the fieldwork in their own countries under the supervision of international staff who will visit national teams and participate in the work at key stages in the process.

## **Organization of work**

During Phase I international staff acted as Team Leaders for each of the National Reports, and were responsible for their successful completion. It is intended that this change during Phase II, when Principal National Researchers will be fully responsible for managing the work in each country and ensuring that it is conducted properly and on schedule. They will be in close contact with one of the International Research Coordinators, each responsible for supervising the work in three countries, who will visit the national teams at different stages in order to offer guidance and analytic support as appropriate.

This pattern of organisation will ensure that the Principal National Researchers are formally and fully responsible for the successful conduct and delivery of the studies. It also follows that the success of the endeavour will require all team members to be seconded from their present jobs on a full-time basis for the duration of the project work. This seldom happened during Phase I, which did not help the efficacy of the training effort. It is intended that by the end of Phase II, the Principal National Researchers will have the necessary experience and expertise to replicate the exercise in future, either at home or by providing technical support to similar efforts in other countries.

## **National ownership**

In order to achieve national ownership of the strategic resource planning **process** rather than just the results of the studies, it is necessary to go beyond merely ensuring the technical capacity of national researchers. National commitment to the process requires involvement of a broad body of officials at each stage. As noted above, the support of and involvement of ministers was important to the success of the Phase I studies. During Phase II even broader consultations and interactions with senior officials will be sought. Although such consultations occurred at the end of fieldwork during Phase I when some of the main findings and policy options were discussed with key officials and again and much more comprehensively during the national seminars, such discussions at an earlier stage would have been desirable.

Accordingly, it is intended that a workshop will be held by the national team at the outset of fieldwork during Phase II to brief key officials on the plans for the work. During this workshop the main aims and objectives of the research and its methods and likely outcomes will be presented. This will allow an opportunity for officials and policy makers to review the work plans and to provide suggestions for new questions and emphases. Further discussions will be scheduled during the course of the work as necessary. By its end, the main issues and policy choices to emerge would thereby have been extensively discussed with a cross section of people at different levels of the bureaucracy. This will help both to inform the team of nationally perceived priorities and to prepare participants for a policy debate at the national seminars, thereby enhancing their quality.

## **Institutional capacity**

The depth and extent of capacity building which can be achieved during the

strategic resource planning process is not only a function of enabling national researchers to develop the requisite skills nor of achieving broad understanding and support within the government machine. It will also be influenced by the extent to which an institutional capacity can be created within participating countries which is capable of supporting, replicating, and in due course extending the strategic resource planning process itself.

It will be the intention to identify in each country a non-governmental institution, probably a research institute or a university department which is likely to have a longer-term interest in the content of the study. Ideally, at least one of the



national researchers will be a staff member of that institution. She or he would be encouraged during the process of the work to involve others from that institution in various support roles, as critics of draft documents, as sources of research and policy ideas, or as sources of research support, for example during the national surveys. Copies of documentation from the national seminar and of documents produced during the fieldwork will be lodged with those institutions. Other professional interaction with members of the national teams will be encouraged throughout the study period, and resources will need to be made available to institutions to provide both incentives and capacity to enable them to participate in these ways.

It is, however, desirable to identify up to two research or university-based institutions within the region which could have a more formal and structured relationship with the progress of the work. The intention is to help establish sufficient institutional capacity and expertise at these institutions, so as to be able to provide the necessary support and research leadership to underpin a future Phase III of the strategic resource planning work. This will require the formal recognition of these aims within the institutions' work programmes. It is desirable that these regional institutions be located in one of the participating countries during Phase II, and that at least one of the national researchers be drawn from their staff. It is also desirable to identify one person from each institution who could join the IDS team prior to the training seminar to participate in and perhaps to lead some of the training sessions. These individuals could also contribute to the work of the national teams in ways to be determined, and they could take an active part in the process of workshop debate, commenting on draft reports and participation in national and international seminars.

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Rose, P., G. Yoseph, A. Berihun, and T. Nuresu, *Gender and Primary Schooling in Ethiopia*. Sussex: IDS Research Report No. 31, 1997.

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1. The strategic ideas that launched the Working Group on Education Statistics joint programme were formulated initially by Ingemar Gustafsson (Sida), Ko-Chih Tung (Sida/UNESCO), Edward Heneveld (the World Bank), Gabriel Carceles (UNESCO) and Aklilu Habte (World Bank/UNICEF). Subsequently, the technical orientation was supplemented with further ideas on institutional capacity-building, policy-issue focus, network-building and decentralization as suggested by Kjell Nyström (Sida), Jean-Claude Balmes (French Cooperation), Fay Chung, Manzoor Ahmed, Gareth Jones and Aster Haregot (UNICEF), Kees van den Bosch and Wim Zoet (the Netherlands), Carol Coombe (Commonwealth Secretariat), Ash Hartwell and Julie Rea (USAID), Geraldo Nascimento, Anna Eriksson and Wim Renkema (UNESCO), Joyce Mook and Katherine Namuddu (the Rockefeller Foundation), Jefferey Fine (IDRC) and especially the pilot country leaders, S. Kasanda and M. Nkamba (Zambia), Glory Makwati (Zimbabwe), Teferi Hagos and Tegegn Nuresu (Ethiopia), Bakary Diawara (Guinea), Sow (Mauritania), Helen Perry (South Africa), Soobas Daby (Mauritius) and many others who took part in the WGES meetings.



# **Partnership for Capacity Building of Sus- tainable National Statistical Information Systems for Education Policy<sup>1</sup>**

**by Ko-Chih R. Tung, Bakary Diawara and Glory Makwati**

Working through country teams, the Working Group on Education Statistics (WGES) has gained considerable experience with processes and approaches developed to build the sustainable capacity of policy-relevant statistical information services. Based on the lessons drawn from these experiences, WGES has addressed basic questions relevant to partnership for capacity building: How can we, the countries in Africa and the funding agencies, together build national capacity to provide to policy makers and planners more accurate, relevant and timely data about the education system? How can an information system be developed so that it responds to and serve the needs of the policy agenda? The response of WGES is a *strategy based on the principles of country leadership, ownership and partnership*.

## **The central issues**

Lack of policy-relevant statistical information and analytical capacity was identified from the start as a serious hindrance to informed policy formulation and decision-making in many Ministries of Education, the largest national organisation entrusted with the task of knowledge management. As in the hu-

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2. For a concise discussion on the role of efficient and relevant information flows for the functioning of the ministries of education, see Sack and Saidi, 44-48.

## **DIAGRAM A-1: Dimensions and components of NESIS**

### **(a) Core Data Subsystems**

- pupils
- teachers
- school facilities
- education materials, and
- revenue and expenditures

### **(b) Phases of Information Production**

- source records management
- data collection and reporting
- data base management
- data processing and retrieval
- statistical analysis
- information dissemination
- applications

### **(c) Information Production Factors**

- humanpower and skills
- administrative organization
- procedure and task management
- material, facilities and logistics
- financial support for operations

### **(d) Strategic functions**

- directive
- executive
- reproductive

man nervous system that enables the brain and other organs to orchestrate purposeful and responsive actions, the quality and efficiency of information condition the level of intelligence of the organization and the decision-makers' ability to formulate reliable, timely, relevant and coherent response to the demands of leading and managing the development process.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the Working Group on Education Statistics was formed in 1989 and a joint-action programme for 'Strengthening National Education Statistical Information Systems (NESIS) in Sub-Saharan Africa' was initiated in 1991.

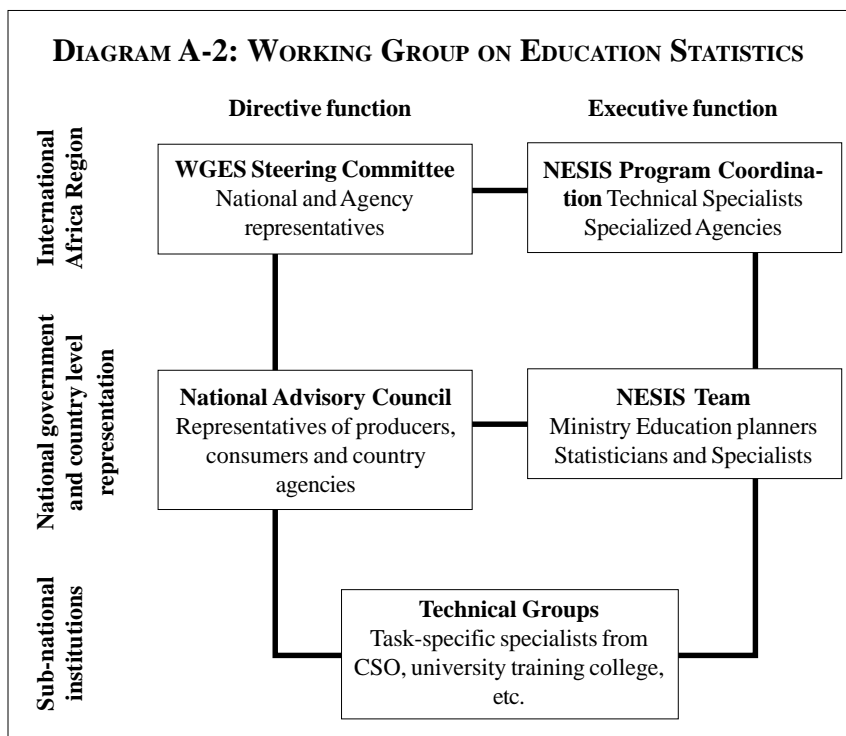
Dr. Kjell Nyström, the WGES leader and Sida Head of Education Division, explains

*"Since the beginning, the WGES has been concerned with one overriding question: how can we, the countries in Africa and the funding agencies, together build up national capacity so that policy makers and planners, get more accurate, relevant and timely data about the education system? How can an information system be developed so that it responds to and serve the needs of the policy agenda?"*

## The complex problems

To address these questions, WGES analyzed the bottlenecks in the existing information systems. Using a systems approach, WGES examined four dimensions of existing national education statistical information systems: the data subsystems; phases of the information cycle; factors of production; and strategic functions (See **Diagram A-1: Dimensions and Components of NESIS**).

During the first stage of the NESIS program, 21 countries systematically reviewed their national education statistical information. A thorough analysis of the diagnostic surveys detected many weaknesses, leading to the lack of good quality, timely and relevant educational statistics. Factors causing bottlenecks in the information flow were identified, such as inadequate or inappropriate hardware, software, organizational structure and management, work procedures and human competencies. Ultimately, many of these weaknesses stemmed from deficiencies in the strategic functions of the information systems. Hence, in addition to strengthening technical components and individual skills, the NESIS program focuses on reinforcing strategic functions of the information systems, in particular the directive, executive and reproductive functions.



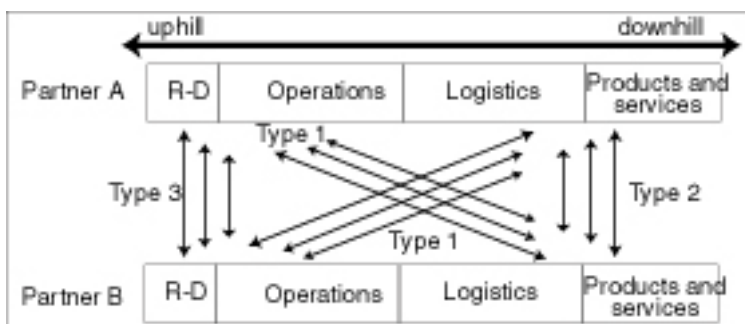
3. See Moore, Stewart and Hudock, 1994, and OECD, Club du Sahel, Cooperation 21, 1997.

Review of the past development efforts also revealed that with a few exceptions many were not sustainable beyond the project phase supported by external technical assistance. Even the few exceptions are now outdated and have failed to respond to changing needs. Why?

The interdependence of many different highly technical components that make up the entire education information system makes it difficult to build sustainable capacity in this area. Even where there has been attention to education statistics, previous efforts have generally been fragmented, addressing only segments of the system, for example, by introducing personal computers for data-processing. This complexity has also led to heavy reliance, sometimes nearly total dependence, on foreign experts and imported turnkey solutions, which has often resulted in ignoring the importance of directly involving national producers and consumers of statistical services. In this mode development cooperation has often been narrowly technical and therefore self-limiting. Commonly, funding agencies have contracted the services of technical organizations that have in turn sent foreign consultants to deliver the technical solutions. Moreover, where there were several different externally funded projects, there often arose problems of redundancy, incompatibility and even mutually corrupting dependency between the providers and the receivers of assistance.

The failure of North-to-South resource-transfer, skill-transfer and blueprint approaches was glaringly evident in the graveyard of collapsed, abandoned and outdated systems. They left behind no enhanced capacity for national policy makers to lead and manage, no specialists and technical teams to design and develop the system, and no training institutes to regenerate knowledge and skills needed for development. These approaches are now generally discredited.<sup>3</sup>

**Diagram A-3: Types of Alliance**



*Chakravathy & Lorange (1991): Managing the Strategy Process, p. 217, slightly modified*

## The partnership organization

WGES' response was a pragmatic and results-oriented strategy based on the principles of country leadership, ownership and partnership and focused on process and impacts at country level (**See Diagram 2: Working Group on Education Statistics**). Its membership includes both funding agencies and ministries of education at both policy and technical levels. Inherent in this diverse membership are the synergetic potential of pooled resources and know-how as a learning organization and the possibilities of different types of partnership for a joint action program. By enabling the partners to play an active role in the areas of their respective competency, WGES' organizational framework enhances co-operation at both international and national levels.

At the international level, the WGES Steering Committee assumes the directive function, setting the objectives, formulating strategies and mobilizing support for joint action through the NESIS programme and for bilateral support at the country level. The NESIS coordination unit, together with cooperating technical specialists of specialized agencies, has the executive function.

At the country level, the pilot countries set up their own directive and executive bodies. National advisory councils, representing the major consumers and producers of statistical information in their respective countries, perform the directive function, while country technical teams, consisting of national experts, perform the executive function. These experts come from various institutions such as ministry departments, central statistical office, universities, technical colleges, and teacher training colleges. In this way, country activities are led by national advisory councils and executed by country technical teams. They define the problems, set the agenda and priorities and execute the pilot projects to develop and test country-specific solutions.

## The rationale for partnerships

Although the overall motivation for participating in this joint program is the common goal and the expected synergy of cooperation, the loose framework of the ADEA supports different types of partnerships, grounded in the different motivations and expectations of the various participants.

In "Managing the Strategy Process: A Framework for a Multibusiness Firm," Chakravathy and Lorange describe three important aspects of the strategic process required to manage an alliance:

- the delineation of the strategic rationales for a joint venture, and its reconciliation with the business objectives of the two parent organizations;
- the step-wise process of forming a joint venture; and

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4. Edward Heneveld (World Bank), Ingemar Gustafsson (Sida), Gabriel Carceles (Unesco) have been the pioneers, active in the core strategy group.

- the process of managing a joint venture.

## The three prototypes of strategic alliances

Different rationales for a joint venture can be derived from the figure above (See **Diagram A-3: Types of Alliances**), which portrays the value chains of the business units of two prospective partners or, in our case, different aspects of development cooperation between two prospective agencies or countries within the ADEA. Along this value chain, upstream refers to development strategies, technical know-how and operational capabilities, and downstream refers to logistics, products, and services. This continuum can also be understood as capabilities for resource inputs on the upstream side, processing in the middle, and outputs on the downstream side. The important point is the variety of capabilities and resources that each may contribute to and gain from the partnership.

### ■ *Type 1: Upstream-downstream alliance*

The first type of strategic alliance seeks to combine the upstream know-how of one agency with the downstream strengths of the prospective partner. An agency may be motivated to join the partnership to gain insight and access to the partner's development strategies and technical know-how or to benefit from the partner's established position in the field, as for example, access to its wide membership.

One of the most valuable contributions, especially at the initial stage, to the formation of an effective alliance is the pool of knowledge gained from years of field experiences of past successes and failures. Key individuals have contributed substantially to the formulation of the strategy and modality of development cooperation that became the foundation for the subsequent joint-action programme.<sup>4</sup>

The first partnership formed within the WGES framework was between Sida, the lead agency, and UNESCO, the coordinating agency. Based on a formal contract, this alliance seeks synergies in the combination of Sida's considerable experience in development cooperation focused on the development of statistical capacity and UNESCO's global mandate in the area of education statistics and its network of statistics units of the member states. Country-level pilot projects for developing and testing technical modules for the priority areas are executed by national technical teams under the supervision of national advisory councils and advice of the WGES-NESIS team. In these councils, UNESCO's and Sida's country-level representatives support the joint program.

UNICEF's sponsorship of an education indicators module development project is also a Type 1 alliance. The joint development of an indicators module benefits both UNICEF's own downstream activities in the countries where it operates and those countries' own monitoring systems. UNICEF's field offices, for instance, greatly helped some countries collect data for the Education for All forum's mid-decade report and have supported country implementation of the indicators monitoring system. Hence, like other participants, UNICEF has some-

thing to contribute and something to gain from this cooperation.

Contrary to common expectations, potential synergies and complementarities among African countries are abundant. Uneven development and differing practices among African countries also provide opportunities for combining the upstream know-how of one country with the downstream strengths of another. A pilot project to develop a technical module in one country may be shared and tested in other countries. For example, the University of Zambia has acquired expertise in records management that can be applied to the development of a school-records-management system, and the Ministry of Education of Zimbabwe has expertise in developing computer application software. The Education Management Information System Center of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education has a long tradition of developing and conducting training programmes in education planning and statistics for the regional and district education staff. These skills and experiences were used to develop technical modules not only for Ethiopia, Zambia and Zimbabwe but also to be shared with other countries.

#### ■ *Type 2: Downstream-downstream alliance*

The second type of strategic alliance combines the downstream activities of two cooperating firms or organizations. This form of alliance facilitates merging application product lines and services at the country level. Thus, the alliance is able to offer a broader product line and to provide systemic solutions to target-clients of both partners.

This type of alliance proved to be important for WGES because of the complexity of building national capacity in information systems able to reach from school records, through data-collection and processing, to applications, to education planning and management. The initial diagnoses of information systems indicated that many countries had similar problems. Yet time and available resources did not allow each country to implement a major effort to resolve these problems. Instead, the entire spectrum of problems was addressed through pilot projects in several countries, matching the priorities of countries and funding agencies.

Learning from past lessons and promoting good practices, the joint program clearly stood to benefit from sharing experiences, expertise and application software. Thus, some countries used Sida support to develop a school-records-management system and data-collection methodology, while other countries used UNICEF support to develop indicators and application tools for monitoring their education system. By sharing the methods and tools developed by these two pilot projects, ten participating countries were able to produce the mid-decade reports on progress toward the goals of Education for All.

Cooperation on downstream activities has been intensive and rewarding for the participating countries. Thus, starting from a very limited base, Zambian NESIS developed rapidly and has reached a level of experience where its NESIS country leader has recently helped to organize a diagnosis and action plan workshop in Malawi. Moreover, Sida, UNESCO, the World Bank and UNICEF also cooperate through mutual consultations and coordination in the selected pilot

countries.

### ■ *Type 3: Resource-sharing alliance*

The third type of strategic alliance combines the research and development capabilities of the partners or their operational capabilities to exploit economies of scale. The African Economic Research Consortium is such an alliance of networks of funders, researchers, and teaching institutions, enabling the alliance to provide graduate degree programmes in economics. Likewise, WGES itself can be regarded as an alliance between African ministries of education and funding and technical agencies to exploit economies of scale and a pool of specialized resources, enabling the alliance to promote the development self-managed and sustainable national education statistical information systems.

At the initial stage of the WGES-NESIS programme, the research and development capabilities and the technical know-how of specialized agencies in the funding countries played an active role in the design of some parts of specific technical modules. French Cooperation, for example, is sponsoring the development of methodology and tools for education finance statistics. The French partnership is formalized as a contract, administered by UNESCO and executed by a French research and development institution (IREDU). USAID is sponsoring two activities, school quality indicators and computer-aided dissemination of statistics, with the work undertaken by U.S. technical agencies (IIR and AED).

African training institutions and centers of excellence are also partners in the training phase of the NESIS program, using the results of the pilot projects for the development of training programs in Africa. In this alliance, the technical know-how of the pilot project teams combines with the training know-how of these institutions to develop the teaching materials and programs. The training activities will be managed by the African institutes. In Zambia, for example, the school records management system developed by the pilot project has been combined with training modules that are being tested in the teacher training colleges. There is a similar effort for training education officers and teachers in Ethiopia, where the partnership is between the country NESIS team and the education bureaus of the provincial governments.

## **The process of alliance formation**

Now let us consider the process of alliance formation within the analytic framework outlined above. Chakravathy and Lorange identify

*“four critical activities in the formation of a joint venture: ensuring that the venture has the support of key stakeholders, sharing the overriding premises for cooperation with one’s partner and articulating the win/win benefits from the joint venture, selling the joint venture to key members at all levels of the participating organizations, and specifying strategic plans and implementation responsibilities within the joint venture.”* (p. 219)



Formation of various types of alliances within the WGES did not occur in one flashing moment of common vision but through a long process of consensus building. Formed in 1989, the WGES, consisting initially of only funding agencies, held a series of meetings over two years. Used to working separately and perhaps viewing each other as competitors or, in some cases, even as scapegoats for the poor state of statistics in Africa, participants in these meetings found it difficult to agree on a common goal and strategic fit among the prospective partners.

Only two agencies that had for many years been working together to train education statisticians in Africa found a strategic fit between their interests. Those two agencies proceeded to the full-scale negotiation phase. This broke the deadlock among the agencies. Sida (the lead agency of the Working Group) and UNESCO (the UN body mandated to collect global statistics on education, science and culture) took the initiative to form a national-capacity-building program to be managed by a professional development strategist well-known and accepted by the major stakeholders.

The general strategy was presented at the Donors to African Education meeting held in Manchester at the end of 1991. A year later, when the initial pilot countries presented their diagnostic findings, national action plans and policy priorities, it became apparent to the members that a concerted effort was necessary and that there were potential roles that they could play in a joint programme. After another year, when the initial five pilot countries presented their progress reports and their products, most members became convinced of the effectiveness of the NESIS strategy. The pivotal factor was that the strategy enabled African partners to make an immediate impact in their countries.

Since then, pilot countries have increased from five to thirteen, and most of African countries have participated in some of the WGES-NESIS activities. Faced with application from over 30 countries, WGES recently decided to expand its membership and set progressive membership criteria. In addition to Sida and UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, France, USA, the Netherlands and the Rockefeller Foundation became active partners in the joint programme, and WGES began behaving as a working group. Lead agencies of other working groups, for example the Commonwealth Secretariat, IDRC, and ILO, also participate regularly in the formulation of the WGES programme and strategy as well as in progress reviews. Thus, through the demonstration effect of the Sida/UNESCO initiative and the advisory board function of WGES, internal support for the joint venture was tested and the strategy was delineated, evolving into the present structure.

This development required that a few agencies and countries take the initial risk and demonstrate the partner approach in practice before WGES could progress in alliance formation. Only when the success of the joint approach became apparent through results obtained at the country-level did other members con-

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5. See, for example, Hilderbrand and Grindle; Moore, Stewart and Hudock; and OECD.

vincingly realize how the partners can complement each other, how the joint venture supports the strategies of the cooperating partners, and how each of these strategies can fit within the overall strategies of the partners.

Chakravathy and Lorange advise that

*“top management teams of the cooperating firms inform key members of their organizations about the prospective joint venture early, even though no agreement may have been reached. Several of these key managers should be drawn into the task forces charged with analyzing the proposed joint venture. This early buy-in and the establishment of multiple points of contact between the cooperating firms are important to the eventual success of a joint venture.”* (p. 120)

Fortunately, the member organizations assigned highly qualified and genuinely concerned staff to WGES. The diversity of its membership has meant a pool of not only resources but also experiences of the various agencies and countries. The lessons that are now documented in various review and evaluation articles were discussed in the WGES and applied long before these articles were published.<sup>5</sup> The experienced members, even the most skeptical, understood immediately the significance of the new strategy once the initial results were presented.

## **Managing a strategic alliance**

For WGES the most difficult part of the cooperative effort is managing the various joint ventures. Ideally, as Chakravathy and Lorange say, *“The strategy process used by the two parents must be synchronized: their objectives-setting, strategic programming, and strategic budgeting steps must take place in a common time frame”* (p. 120). Even in a two-partner joint venture, management functions are demanding.

In practice WGES incorporates several different and separate partnership arrangements between and among agencies and countries. Matching demands and supply has required matching priorities of countries and agencies. This has resulted in different types of alliances, each with its own rationale, procedures, and accountability. Each partnership requires staff-time demanding negotiations, contract arrangements and administrative accountability. Each partner has its own project cycle, expectations, justifications, reporting, accountability, and performance requirements. Each event or undertaking involves contracting some combination of funding agencies, coordinating agencies, executing agencies, host countries and specialists.

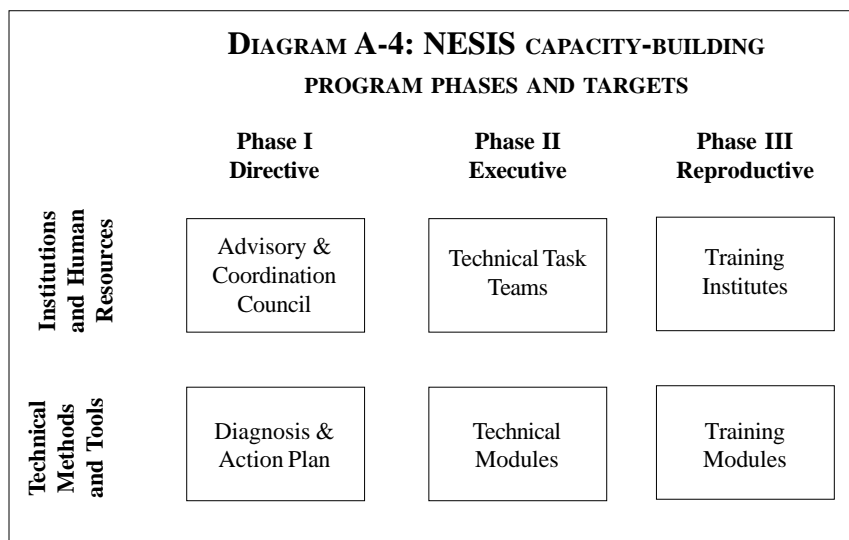
In addition to the contract-based alliances, there are many informal arrange-

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6. Networks of this sort and their management are described by Jeffrey C. Fine in “Networks for Research and Learning: A Strategic Approach to Capacity Building in Sub-Saharan Africa” and Ko-Chih Tung in “The ADEA Working Group on Education Statistics as a cross-national network for capacity-building in Sub-Saharan Africa.”

ments for joint actions. These are more like networks of organizations and individuals within ADEA. These activities and services also require management support, often rather more complex and time-consuming than those regulated by formal contracts.<sup>6</sup>

Management has been the responsibility of a small coordinating unit located at the UNESCO Division of Statistics in Paris, staffed by a professional coordinator, a programme specialist and a secretary, initially financed by Sida



during the four pioneer years and subsequently co-financed with UNESCO. While the programme has continuously expanded since then, the staff has remained the same, with the addition of a short duration Associate Expert provided by the Netherlands.

Rather than further expanding the central coordinating function, WGES has decided to introduce a decentralized structure based on subregional network nodes in Africa, each of which will be advised by a subregional WGES-NESIS committee. Agencies and countries will provide management staff support within this framework, and coordination will be much closer to the field operations. This arrangement does, however, introduce the risk of fragmentation, to which WGES and its partners must be attentive.

## **The strategy of embedding capacity in institutional change**

The experiences of many efforts focused on information system develop-

ment have shown that providing tools and training individuals, valuable as that may be, is unlikely in itself to lead to sustainable capacities. Realizing this, WGES' NESIS program has pursued an approach that embeds the development of human resources in a wider framework of institutional change.

## **The strategic goal and phased objectives**

The strategy of the NESIS program is to introduce and activate catalytic processes that will lead to the self-managed and sustainable development of effective and policy-relevant statistical information systems for education. The objective of this goal is to build national capacities in directive, executive and reproductive functions, to enable policy makers to lead and manage, specialists and agencies to implement, and training institutes and centers of excellence to regenerate knowledge and skills of human resources needed for development.

The strategy addresses two mutually supportive and dependent dimensions of development: the first pertains to institutions and human resources; the second, to technical methods and tools. These dimensions are dealt with in three phases (**See Diagram A-4: NESIS Capacity-Building Program**). In the first phase, the directive capacity to lead and manage is institutionalized in a policy-level framework in the form of a national advisory council. At this level, the tools used are a systems diagnosis and a national action plan.

The second phase addresses the executive capacity to implement. At this level, the practice of task-oriented teamwork among specialists and within institutions is institutionalized. The tools used are the good-practices technical modules.

In the third phase, the reproductive capacity for regenerating knowledge and skills is institutionalized in training programs carried out by training institutes and centers of excellence using the training modules.

## **Guidelines for capacity building**

This strategy includes guidelines for capacity building. Capacity building functions are to be integrated into existing institutions. For example, school records management for teachers is to be introduced as a subject in national teacher training programs. Highly technical subjects, such as computer applications development, can be more effectively managed through a cooperative approach within a regional or sub-regional context. A more rapid, cost-effective and wider impact can be achieved by creating a forum to enable specialists, trainers and institutions in the subregion to undertake training the trainers.

Course development teams, consisting of subject specialists, trainers, training managers and training media specialists, will develop training packages. Aside from the technical subjects, the core curriculum will focus on how to use the training modules to organize and manage national training programs. The printed media should be supplemented with teaching-learning aids and support,

using video, computer software, and the internet.

A multiplier method is expected to spread innovations from pilot countries to other countries. Experienced teams will train trainers and managers on how to use the technical modules and the training packages. Subsequently, a cascade method will disseminate the training programs from national central institutions to provinces, districts and schools. Ongoing training activities that could host such a sub-regional program already exist. For example, the Ethiopian Education Management Information System Center has for many years trained ministry and provincial staff in education planning and statistics. Zambia has introduced school records management as a subject in its teacher-training curriculum. These trainers and course managers could host a sub-regional holiday session for the training of trainers and managers from other countries.

## **Principles of partnership**

The WGES principles of cooperation are country leadership, ownership, self-regeneration, synergetic partnership. In this process, WGES regards its own role as catalytic.

### **Country leadership**

In NESIS participating countries, major education stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in the development process. The NESIS Advisory Council responsible for setting priorities and monitoring progress is composed of policy-level representatives of the major information producer and consumer departments and institutions as well as development agencies. This forum for consumer–producer dialogue enables key decision-makers and stakeholders to play a leading role, and has initiated institutional change in information system development. National experts were involved in the design and analysis of the diagnostic survey and in the formulation of national action plans. By involving all of the major education stakeholders, NESIS has fostered a process that sensitizes the education community to the production and use of educational statistics.

### **Country ownership**

National ownership is reflected at several stages. Priority areas are defined by the advisory council and dealt with by national technical teams. The technical teams are themselves composed of specialists from the ministry of education, the central office of statistics, universities, teacher training colleges and other institutions. A distinctive characteristic of the NESIS strategy is its innovative methodology in the development of technical modules, training packages and programs. The products resulting from the pilot projects are not designed by outside

technical experts in foreign agencies, who may be far removed from day-to-day practice and reality. Rather, African teams of specialists design and test tools and methods in their own working environment. Those tools and methods are then shared and improved during sub-regional workshops with specialists involved in other pilot projects. National team specialists thus become accomplished and recognized experts, capable of handling new assignments and assisting other specialists.

## **Self-regeneration**

The shortage of skilled staff and venues for training in the region has been identified as one of the main obstacles to developing sustainable capacity. Staff turnover is relatively high among those with professional skills and individual-oriented training, especially that received abroad. This situation often accelerates brain drain, thus exacerbating shortage of skilled staff. How is it then possible to foster human resources development with insufficient skilled staff and training venues?

Contrary to common perception and misrepresentation, there exist highly experienced and trained Africans, surely too few, whose knowledge and skills are underemployed or bypassed in the usual technical assistance mode of development projects. As the biggest employer in many African countries, the ministry of education commands a vast corps of subject specialists and trainers in universities, technical colleges, professional schools, and research institutes, spread across the country and the region. The strategy of self-regeneration looks to national and regional institutions as sources of experts and trainers to serve on advisory councils, to implement task groups and to train and manage their human resources. The objective is to create a corps of indigenous experts, trainers and training institutions, who can then play a key role in national capacity building.

## **Synergetic partnership**

By pooling efforts and resources, the partnership approach aims to achieve more than would be achieved if each partner worked separately. National experts, institutions and local agencies work together in task-oriented teams and networks and share experiences, expertise, training and other forms of support related to project management and technical know-how. Based on the principles of partnership (between and among national professionals, institutions and external facilitators) and African ownership, this methodology is a bottom-up, process-oriented strategy.

## **A catalytic role in the process of development**

The role of the NESIS program has been to initiate catalytic processes of development, primarily by bringing together institutions, agencies and experts in joint ventures and networks as agents of change. In this kind of partnership, the role of funding and technical agencies is to activate and facilitate the process of self-managed development. The experts of the North and the South cooperate as professional colleagues. The North-South skill-transfer or blueprint approaches are being replaced by a South-South alliance, in which the lessons, the products, the experience-based knowledge and skills are shared among the participating African countries. For WGES, the measure of success is not what funding agencies have produced, but what Africans have produced.

## **Next step: building network structure in Africa**

Referring to the NESIS program, Ingemar Gustafsson, Chair of ADEA said, “The promotion and development of national educational statistical information systems is a long-term continuous process. The exchange of experiences has emerged as one of the program’s key strategies and NESIS as the engine of networking.” Along this line, there have been further developments, including building regional and subregional networks and relocating NESIS coordination in Africa.

In preparation for the next phase involving extensive training and technical support services in the field, the WGES meeting in Abidjan in May 1997 decided to establish a regional network with sub-regional nodes for coordinating support activities for capacity building and country implementation, exchange of experiences and clearing house for mutual assistance and training opportunities. Among these tasks is also the responsibility, in collaboration with training institutions and centers, for institutionalizing training capacity in the subregions. In view of the available staff, the support expected from funding agencies and the importance of participating countries’ input, it was proposed to establish a structure consisting of an overall coordination unit and network nodes in three subregions, West, Central and Eastern-and-Southern Africa.

Creative proposals developed during the course of this effort included strengthening country and sub-regional steering capacity mechanisms, thereby

making the nodes demand-driven; delineating responsibilities and tasks among the co-ordinating secretariat, the nodes and the participating countries; and improving office and communication facilities as well as resource flows. Feasibility and thereby implementation of these proposals will depend on actual commitments of support from the potential host countries and the members of WGES.

## Conclusion

How successfully has this strategy been applied in the pilot countries in Africa? The contrasts between spectacular progress in some countries and lack of progress in others show that the most important determining factors for success are: policy-level commitment and support; an active working relationship between consumers and producers; a national action plan based on a systematic needs and feasibility analysis; and partnership between national institutions, experts and supporting agencies. These are the fundamental prerequisites for starting and maintaining a process of institutionalizing a framework for the continuous development of a consumer-producer working relationship that can formulate and manage effective policy for the development of education systems. All other components proceed from this starting point.

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# **African Classrooms: Leapfrogging into the Information Age**

*by Linda McGinnis and Samuel C. Carlson*

## **Introduction**

Rapid developments in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the uses of this technology for educational purposes have been a defining feature of the 1990s in many middle-to-higher income countries. In fact, many would argue that the term “basic education” has taken on a new meaning against the backdrop of revolutionary changes in technology, business, and society emerging in the Information Age. In a rapidly changing world of global market competition, automation, and increasing democratization, basic education must contribute to an individual’s capacity to access and apply information. As the Economic Commission for Africa reported in its African Information Society Initiative, this ability to access and effectively use information is “no longer a luxury, it is a necessity for development.”

Unfortunately, most of Africa has been left behind in the information revolution, particularly in education. In past years, the concerns expressed by both developing countries and international aid agencies towards introducing ICT—and particularly computers—into the classroom have been many: high costs, unquantifiable benefits, early negative experiences, and the danger of increasing the gaps between the rich and the poor within developing countries. Put simply, why should a country invest in bringing computers and connectivity to its classrooms when it can scarcely afford to purchase chalk and textbooks?

While these concerns are valid, they should not allow us to ignore the expo-

stantial expansion of the information gap between rich and poor countries. That expansion shows no sign of stopping. African countries must adjust quickly to this new imperative or risk exclusion from the global economy. Fortunately, the very technology that is forcing these changes also offers opportunities for solutions to many of the concerns, and in many cases, can allow African countries and their education systems to leapfrog directly into the Information Age. The explosion of the free educational resources available on the Internet, the lessons learned from the experiences in classrooms in higher income countries, advances in satellite technologies allowing for greater reach into remote rural areas, dramatic declines in prices for computers—all of these can contribute, if applied appropriately, to improving education quality and learning outcomes, and to moving the next generation of Africans into a global knowledge era.

What follows is a brief summary of the benefits and challenges for African countries choosing to incorporate ICT into their classrooms. It is not an in-depth analysis, but rather an attempt to provide as many lessons learned from the experiences of countries which have already introduced ICT into their school systems, and apply those to an African context. It is our hope that African countries can leapfrog their educational systems into a new era at considerably less expense and frustration by avoiding earlier mistakes.

## **What is information and communication technology?**

While information and communication technology in fact encompasses a wide spectrum of technologies, ranging from radio to video-conferencing, from one-way distance instruction to real-time live exchange, we have chosen to focus primarily on the impact of the use of computers and the Internet in the classroom for the purpose of collaborative learning. The reasons for this are twofold. First, while much has been written on distance learning in developing countries using a variety of technologies, little has been written on the specific use of the Internet in the classroom. Second, we wish to emphasize the collaborative, two-way learning potential of the Internet, including electronic mail, and its impact on educational outcomes.

### **ICT in context**

It is essential, however, to emphasize the obvious: a computer is not a magic elixir that fixes an under-performing educational system simply by being unpacked, plugged in, and turned on. By itself, technology solves nothing at all. Educational technology experts worldwide agree that in allocating funds, the bulk of attention should be placed on human factors, especially training and ongoing technical support for teachers. The usual error is to use all the available funds to buy computers so that more children or schools will have access to

them. However, more is not better if hardware goes unused, and the vast potential of the Internet serves no purpose if no one knows how to access it effectively. *The teacher remains the most important factor in classrooms around the world, including Africa.*

The relative priority of ICT versus other uses of educational resources is another important issue. Improving access and quality of basic education (commonly, grades 1-9) remains the highest priority for most African educational systems, as well it should. Indeed, basic literacy and numeracy are in most cases preconditions for using ICT effectively. However, for those African countries wishing to improve the quality of learning, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, ICT can be a powerful and cost-effective tool. Such qualitative improvements may eventually serve to improve primary education, as well, for example when secondary schools with ICT access act as satellite resource centers for surrounding primary schools, when teacher trainees skilled in ICT join the primary level teaching force, and when ICT enables the development of primary level educational materials in local languages.

## **Benefits: What can ICT do for education and the learning process?**

What follows is a summary of the principal benefits that schools, teachers and students have derived from the use of ICT in the classroom. While certainly not exhaustive, these are drawn from evaluations of thousands of classrooms in middle-to-high income countries which have attempted to measure the impact of the use of information and communication technologies on learning.

### **■ Opens classrooms to a world of educational resources:**

The Internet provides a nearly infinite source of information, and many of the educational resources on the Internet are free of direct cost. For schools in many developing countries which have no access to libraries, museums or even textbooks, this simple access to educational resources is phenomenal. Many of the educational web sites have organized their information by subject matter, ranging from math and science to music and actualities. Teachers and students have the opportunity to explore the Louvre Museum or the Planet Mars, or peruse the shelves of major libraries around the world, or listen to the music of Bach and Djembe, or read the entire works of Shakespeare, all without direct access costs and all from their own schools.

Teachers can access and use a variety of lesson plans, activities, databases, and resource materials in every possible subject matter. They can use real video footage of chemistry or biology experiments in their classrooms. They can access texts of literature they may never find in their own country. These resources

are currently available on the Internet in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and increasingly, in many of the world's other languages.

### ■ **Facilitates teaching and learning for teachers:**

Teachers in developing countries generally have very little opportunity to exchange ideas, lessons, activities with each other in their own country, much less with teachers outside their nation's borders. Moreover, because libraries are usually poorly stocked with outdated resource materials, if they exist at all, teachers must often rely on their own textbooks, or even memories, as their sole source of information. This sense of isolation can contribute to low motivation, poor use of each teacher's comparative advantage, and low quality of teaching materials (and teaching).

The introduction of ICT in the classroom can:

- promote teacher exchange, both domestically and abroad
- allow the best teachers to reach more students
- help overcome teacher isolation, permitting distant teachers to collaborate, complement each other's strengths, access subject matter expertise, resources and high-quality learning activities
- broaden discussion to include more viewpoints
- provide access to other lesson plans, activities and teaching techniques (both within the same country and internationally)
- support group learning activities, allowing collaboration among schools for collection and analysis of data, using electronic mail and the internet
- offer support for instructional management, promoting integration of curriculum, standards and assessments
- offer administrative support for attendance, accountability, management of educational supplies (for example, textbooks)
- facilitate teachers' need to address students with different learning styles or special needs.

### ■ **Improves students' learning and motivation:**

A number of longitudinal studies have demonstrated that through using information and communication technology, and particularly by engaging in collaborative distance projects, students:

- learn more, learn faster, and enjoy their classes more
- become independent learners and self-starters
- broaden their horizons in all subjects, but particularly about the world beyond their community
- develop a more positive attitude towards computers, and towards technology in general
- communicate more effectively, and want to write more (especially when they know they have a receptive audience and something meaningful to say)
- are exposed to a wider world of information and experts

- strengthen problem-solving skills
- broaden their scientific literacy and mathematical understanding
- contribute to personal responsibility, integrity and initiative
- develop workplace competencies that include working with resources, acquiring and evaluating information, working with others in groups or teams, understanding complex relationships and systems
- learn skills that are currently sought in the job-market learn how to learn.

■ **Preserves local culture and contributes to the body of world knowledge:**

The use of the Internet is not just a one-way street, with developing countries receiving information from elsewhere. Equally if not more important is the opportunity to promote and preserve local culture by producing materials for worldwide consumption. Any information created for the World Wide Web may be immediately accessed by anyone anywhere in the world. In the past, much of what was written on Africa for worldwide consumption was written by non-Africans. The Internet presents an unparalleled opportunity for Africans to produce and disseminate their own view of the world to the world, their own history, music, art, religion and philosophy at virtually no direct cost. It can also be used to encourage students to reach out into their own communities in order to record and preserve traditions for posterity.

ICT also presents exciting opportunities to facilitate developing country efforts to reinvent education to suit local needs and values. In many developing countries where there are intensive efforts underway to move the education system inherited from former colonial powers to a more nationally based and often local language-oriented system, the ability of the Internet to facilitate development of collaborative materials across a nation, as well as the capacity for rapid and low-cost dissemination of information, creates a revolutionary tool for systemic change. Dependence on foreign printers and book publishers can be significantly reduced, and the ability to keep information current is immediate.

■ **Improves internal efficiency of the education system:**

In addition to the improvements in student learning mentioned above, many school systems have noted a marked increase in school attendance, and a decrease in drop-out rates after a period of sustained use of computers and the Internet in the classroom. This appears to be linked to increased student interest, possibilities for self-learning, and perceived improvement in employment prospects both from students and parents. Given that low student through-put is one of the greatest challenges of many African school systems, this is an important factor to consider and measure.

■ **Encourages progressive pedagogy:**

The schools and education systems which have most effectively integrated ICT into the classrooms and into their education strategies have noted a funda-

mental shift in pedagogy to the type of teaching that has proven most effective for promoting learning among students. In other words, the educational process changes from:

- top-down, teacher-directed, passive, rote-based instruction to bottom-up, student-centered, project-based, interactive learning
- teachers as the “sage on the stage” to the “guide on the side”
- memorizing facts for tests to emphasizing learning how to learn.

#### ■ **Enhances opportunities to build community links:**

Many of the current collaborative education projects available through the Internet rely on students’ reaching out into their community to obtain information, conduct surveys and interviews, and bring in local experts to enhance the teaching and learning of various subjects. In addition, because schools may in fact be the first point of entry for ICT in many developing country communities, there are countless opportunities for the school and its surrounding community to mutually support one another. The examples are many. Students can report to local farmers on crop prices or weather patterns. Students can train others in the use of computers. Schools can open their doors after school hours to provide Internet access to the community (and perhaps generate revenue to recover costs), to students, and to teachers who are providing their services to local businesses for web site creation in return for “sponsorship” of their school.

## **Factors of success/lessons learned**

While there is no single formula for success in introducing information and communication technologies into the classroom, there are many lessons learned from the successes and mistakes of others who have attempted similar programs. What follows are some of the common success factors associated with successful efforts that have been observed in countries as wide-ranging as the United States, Chile, Canada, Argentina, India, Egypt and Australia.

- **Start with a pilot:** Success in introducing educational technologies depends on starting small and demonstrating effectiveness at each stage of expansion in order to test approaches in a local context, develop local capacity, identify solutions and build political support. Many of the most successful programs have piloted the introduction of ICT in a few schools first (approximately 10% of schools) before gradually broadening the effort. Pilot schools and teachers need flexibility from rigid curricular, class time and examination guidelines in order to experiment and identify the most effective ways to integrate ICT into their teaching. In the words of Wadi Haddad, UNESCO Education Advisor, pilot schools need to be “de-regulated.”
- **Find Champions:** The most successful programs, either locally or nationally, have consistently had leadership which was extremely motivated and sustained. Change is very difficult for anyone, and particularly so for someone

who has no desire or incentive to change. Hence, the importance of finding advocates—teachers, principals, and ministry officials who will move the agenda and implementation forward above and beyond the call of duty. Their enthusiasm is usually infectious and can often motivate other less enthusiastic teachers to follow suit. Clear and sustained commitment from the highest levels of the Ministry is also an underlying factor for long-term success, particularly when developing a nationwide effort.

- **Promote private/public collaboration:** Even in the wealthiest countries, private sector involvement (for example, in-kind and financial donations, “Adopt-a-school” programs, free technical assistance and advice) have been essential to proceed beyond the pilot stage. In developing countries, this is even more crucial, given the scarcity of public resources available for even the most fundamental inputs into an education system. Basic education is and should remain a priority for most developing countries’ public sector expenditures. The extent to which the private sector can contribute additional support to will determine the pace at which a program can expand into new areas and schools. Ministries of Education need to reach out to the private sector and include it as a true partner.
- **Promote telecommunications/infrastructure policies which support education:** In the most successful cases, telecommunications policies specifically aim to develop the use of information and communication technologies in the education sector, often through free or highly-subsidized access and usage rates to schools. Without this, the recurrent costs become unsustainable for schools to support. Current technology relies primarily on telephone lines for connections. Technology is advancing so rapidly, however, that satellites and wireless computers should be feasible in the most remote areas by the year 2000. Nonetheless, this means that the policy environment in developing countries should be liberalized enough to allow the free entry of such technologies.
- **Emphasize appropriate teacher training and ongoing teacher support:** It has been shown time and again that initial and *ongoing* teacher training and technical support are essential to any successful introduction of ICT into the classroom. It is virtually impossible to cover everything that a teacher will need to know in one training session, and often the types of questions that can literally bring a program to its knees can be answered with a simple telephone call. Some education systems establish help lines, others have school-based technical support, while still others provide in-service training on a regular basis. Insufficient attention to this issue creates “white elephants”—too many classrooms across the globe have rooms of computers gathering dust because teachers and technology support staff have been inadequately trained and supported over time. Training and technical support deserve at least as much attention as hardware.
- **Reflect and respond to local values:** A key factor is designing a system that resonates with the values of the community and intended users. Rather than

importing another culture's use of ICT, teachers, students, parents and administrators need to consider how ICT can best serve their own needs and values.

- **Appeal to the self-interest of teachers and administrators:** If an information technology program can demonstrate to teachers that their jobs will be made easier, it has a much greater chance of success. Ironically, it may be useful to downplay at first the empowerment of students. ICT must facilitate a teacher's job, not make it harder; teacher training should focus on this.
- **Incorporate Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation should be an integral and ongoing part of integrating information technologies into classrooms and should be directly linked to the overall goals of the education sector. Furthermore, given the inevitable controversy surrounding the costs versus benefits of an ICT program, it is essential to monitor and evaluate both the ongoing and long-term impacts on learning outcomes of such an investment on learning outcomes. But it is also important to remember that the standard tools for measuring educational outcomes (for example, standardized tests or exams based on national standards) are insufficient for measure the new types of skills that students will be acquiring through the use of ICT. Consequently, the most successful programs have developed additional instruments which begin to measure these new skills and inform the educational system of what is working and what is not. These results inform and guide each new phase of expansion.

## Hurdles

Even with the best leadership, financing and lessons learned in hand, there are still enormous barriers to effectively introducing information and communication technologies into the classroom in any country, and those barriers are even greater in Africa. What follows are some of the key factors to consider when designing any such program.

- **Costs:** Although the prices of most information and communication technologies have declined dramatically in recent years, they are still too expensive for most developing country public sectors to support. While encouraging private/public collaboration is part of the solution to this concern, it is also important to explore many other opportunities to recover costs, in particular recurrent costs (for example, opening school computers to the community on a cost recovery basis after school hours and on weekends, requesting parental contributions—people tend to pay for what is important to them, providing fee-based ICT training to community members, even designing private companies' web pages). A key factor here is reducing the cost of telephone and Internet access by allowing open competition among Internet Service Providers and liberalizing the provision of telephone services.
- **Rigid educational systems:** Many countries, and in particular most developing countries, have very rigid education systems which measure educators'



productivity primarily in terms of students' test scores. Moreover, there is often deep resistance to shifts in pedagogy and learning strategies. This makes it particularly difficult to encourage teachers to try something new which may in fact jeopardize their own standing in the education system. If education policy could broaden its evaluation tools to incorporate innovation, this could ease the limitations placed on teachers and provide incentives to adopt new technologies. At the very least, pilot schools integrating ICT need to be given the flexibility to experiment without fear.

- **Low teacher motivation:** Not all teachers take to technology rapidly, especially if they feel that it is forced on them and that they will no longer have control or even a role in the class. If, in addition, they feel that they are rewarded only on the basis of student scores, they are not likely to use new technologies. Finally, teachers who are already underpaid, and who must take on second and third jobs to make ends meet, will probably not find the time to learn something so new.
- **Avoid increasing the gap between rich and poor within a given country:** When education information technology programs are first piloted in developing countries, they often start with schools that are more privileged because they have the telephone access and other essential infrastructure to support the program. However, technological advances are such that even the most remote areas of a country will be accessible in the next few years at affordable prices (even without telephone lines). It is important to design an ICT program which can eventually reach the poor, even if in the first stage it reaches primarily wealthier students.
- **Telecommunications policies and pricing:** In most developing countries today, the lack of adequate telecommunications infrastructure, and the extremely high cost of using the little infrastructure that exists present a huge barrier to any widespread use of information technologies in schools. It is essential for the telecommunications policy to target the education sector for growth in this area.
- **Tradeoffs in the education system/fungibility of funds:** Because of the competing demands on any education system for scarce resources, there will always be a valid question of whether public resources should be used for computers rather than education basics. The tradeoffs are potentially devastating to any sustainable school financing scheme. Moreover, the use of ICT in the classroom is so new that there is little consistent longitudinal data which can guarantee that investing public resources in ICT will bring a better return to the education system and the economy as a whole. For this reason, even the higher income countries have opted to rely heavily on private sector resources to cover the bulk of investment costs, and have asked the community to contribute to many of the recurrent costs associated with ICT. This public/private partnership has proven quite successful in many communities around the world, as the private sector increasingly realizes the competitive benefits of a well educated and trained local work force.

- **Operations and maintenance of ICT:** Although many of the investment costs associated with ICT can and should be financed by the private sector where possible, the operations and maintenance of ICT is more difficult to acquire from private sources. For this reason, it is essential to assess the capacity of the education ministry’s recurrent budget, as well as that of the community and the school to cover the basic costs of electricity, paper, ink, and telephone lines. As noted above, some of this can be covered through new forms of cost recovery. In most developing countries, the maintenance budget line is often the first one cut when there are fiscal constraints. However, as with most investments, maintenance is crucial to the success of any ICT program sustainability. Any education ICT strategy must build both the financing and the human resources necessary to support operations and maintenance.
- **Public/private collaboration building:** Virtually no ICT schools program that has successfully expanded beyond the pilot stage has done so with public resources alone. The private sector is increasingly interested and aware of the role it can play and the benefits it can derive at relatively low cost. In most African countries, this type of private/public collaboration is very new, if not non-existent, and many officials are sceptical of its potential. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated time and again that the private sector in developing countries, if presented with a coherent and well-monitored strategy from which it can gain some recognition and can clearly see the benefits, is more than willing to contribute. These contributions can be in-kind (for example, used or new computers, servers, shipping costs, technical assistance) or financial (contributing to a fund to finance ICT in schools, adopting a school), but they require an open mind on both sides of the table and a willingness to demonstrate a long-term commitment towards showing that schools can use resources efficiently.

## Conclusion

Information technologies offer a host of potential benefits to education and economies around the world. The rapid pace of technological change offers hope that education in developing countries can leapfrog into the new era of global knowledge at considerably less cost than the industrialized countries have experienced. However, the mistakes of the past must be avoided. It is worth reiterating here that experience shows that several factors are key:

- Clear leadership or “champions” at all levels (national, community, school and teacher).
- Start small with demonstration schools, learn from experience, and tailor to local needs.
- Emphasize the human factors over the technology factors: teacher training and support.
- Ensure sustainability of covering operating costs: to expand beyond pilot ef-

forts, get the private sector involved to promote a low-cost telecommunication environment and to reduce the claims on scarce public resources.

What is clear is that the Information Age is upon us and that education must prepare students for the work place of today and tomorrow. All countries want their children to learn the skills they will need to succeed. All governments want to spend scarce tax dollars prudently, getting the best value for what they invest in. Educational information and communication technologies can help make this possible.

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# **Developing National Capacities for Assessment and Monitoring Through Effective Partnerships**

*by Dhurumbeer Kulpoo and Paul Coustère*

## **The two organizations**

The Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) is a collaborative effort involving southern African ministries of education and culture. This consortium works in close partnership with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to build institutional capacities for cooperative educational policy research. Five fully active members of SACMEQ (Mauritius, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania (Zanzibar), and Zimbabwe) have participated in all phases of SACMEQ's initial educational policy research project. As well, a number of partially active or observer countries (Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania (Mainland), South Africa, and Swaziland) have been involved in various SACMEQ-related research and training programs. Registered as a non-governmental organization in Zimbabwe in January 1997, SACMEQ is now housed within the UNESCO Harare Office.

The *Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs des Pays de la CONFEMEN* (PASEC) operates a network for sharing information on educational evaluation

instruments and results for African Francophone countries. Participating countries are assessing performance of students in grades 2 and 5 in Mathematics and French. The countries involved are Congo, Djibouti (1993/94), Mali, Central African Republic (1994/95), Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Senegal (1995/96), and Madagascar (1996/1997). The central coordination office for PASEC is located in the Dakar offices of the Conference of Ministers of Education in Francophone Countries (CONFEMEN).

## **How the organizations were started**

SACMEQ has its roots in Zimbabwe, where in 1990 the IIEP provided the expertise and leadership to a team of education planners to design and implement a national survey to develop a detailed analysis of effective educational inputs, educational outcomes, and the nature of linkages between inputs and outcomes. The success of the Zimbabwe survey, widely known as the "Indicators of the Quality of Education Project," generated much interest among many education ministries. In 1992 the IIEP commenced a series of follow-up training programmes to provide the technical skills to conduct similar surveys for over 50 education planners from 10 countries in southern Africa. The final version of the formal proposal for launching SACMEQ emerged during one of these workshops when a team of education planners from Zimbabwe, Zanzibar, Swaziland, Zambia, and Malawi prepared a research design for a cooperative study that envisioned a cross-national view of education policy focused on improving the quality of education. This document was used to develop an overall framework for SACMEQ's initial educational policy research project. SACMEQ's future research activities will be guided by an Assembly of SACMEQ Ministers of Education and administered by the SACMEQ Sub-regional Coordination Centre in Harare.

The PASEC program was initiated in 1991 by CONFEMEN, the Conference of Ministers of Education in Francophone Countries. It was conceived as a response of Francophone countries to the 1990 Jomtien world conference on education for all. While PASEC's structure is more centralized than that of SACMEQ—the Permanent Technical Secretariat of CONFEMEN has coordinated the programme for several years—it has adopted an equally innovative partnership approach.

## **Goals and strategies**

The main challenge for education ministries in both Anglophone and Francophone Africa is to move from away generalized expressions of commitment and support for diffuse goals such as education for all towards a willingness to take firm and immediate action to improve the quality of education.

SACMEQ's and PASEC's initial projects have addressed needs in this area by building the capacity of African education planners to monitor and assess the quality of education at a national level and to develop the capacity of a broader community to discuss, debate, and use the results of such studies to analyse and develop policies for improving the quality of education.

Through a programme of sustained, hands-on training in sample design, instrumentation, fieldwork, data entry, data cleaning, data analyses, and reporting, PASEC and SACMEQ have embarked on programmes aimed at improving the operational efficiency of primary schools. They focus on providing policy advice to key decision-makers on educational quality issues considered to be of high priority by the participating ministries. They function as cooperative ventures that provide education planners in the regions opportunities to work together and to share experience and expertise. They contribute to the development of an informed decision-making culture that has for too long relied upon the excessive use of external consultants.

The expertise needed to monitor and evaluate the progress and evolution of education systems in a scientific manner is scattered across many African countries. By pooling scarce human resources, SACMEQ and PASEC have developed low cost initial projects (about US\$50,000 per country) that use modern scientific survey research methodologies for providing timely information that can be used to monitor and evaluate national progress towards reaching high-priority education goals. The organisations have facilitated the promotion of innovative approaches in on-going exchanges of expertise and experiences.

The strategies adopted by SACMEQ and PASEC to undertake useful international comparisons of education systems have included efforts to create standardized survey procedures and instruments and, as far as possible, to apply these across several countries. This approach has, for example, supported valid comparative statistical analyses that have permitted identifying more effective modes of education.

SACMEQ requires that each National Research Co-ordinator (who is responsible for the implementation of SACMEQ projects in his or her country) be assisted by a National Policy Steering Committee and a National Technical Committee. The involvement of the Permanent Secretary or Director of Education and other senior members of the Ministry ensures consensus on directions to be taken and on technical details and logistics. Anchoring the monitoring and implementation of these projects within ministries has therefore had a direct impact on general awareness and capacity building at senior management levels.

PASEC has neither the mandate nor the means to equip national ministry structures with the capacity to perform advanced tasks such as statistical sampling and causal modeling. Primarily by demonstrating that a complex evaluation can be done with national resources and at reasonable costs, CONFEMEN hopes to encourage needed institutional changes.

## **Ownership and shared commitment as guarantors for successful implementation**

SACMEQ and PASEC projects have always encouraged the involvement of senior decision-makers in the identification of education policy issues that need to be addressed in national research reports. This has generated a sense of ownership at high levels, which in turn has ensured that research findings from these projects always feature strongly in current policy debates. Another factor that has fostered a strong partnership in both SACMEQ and PASEC countries is the commitment of participating ministries to cover their own research costs, such as printing data collection instruments, conducting field work operations and data entry, and paying the overhead of the National Research Co-ordinator and the cost of publishing national research and policy reports.

## **Using policy reports to prepare agendas for action**

SACMEQ's initial projects have focussed on the preparation of educational policy reports. As the following two examples illustrate, these projects have had a substantial impact on participating ministries.

The fifteen education planners from eight countries who prepared SACMEQ's initial project plan worked collaboratively to produce a policy agenda for the primary education system in Zimbabwe. Their report, "The Analysis of Educational Research Data for Policy Development: An Example from Zimbabwe," was presented to Zimbabwe's Permanent Secretary of Education and Culture, who subsequently convened a meeting with his senior staff to review the report's policy suggestions and to identify an agenda for action. The results of the SACMEQ project were thus used to stimulate debate and make policy decisions that challenged established management procedures and long-standing administrative and planning approaches. The Zimbabwe report, along with reactions by the then Minister and Deputy Permanent Secretary, were published during 1995 in the *International Journal of Educational Research*, reflecting the technical quality of the research and the very high standard of the policy debate that it generated.

Based on evidence provided in the SACMEQ report for Zimbabwe, the following measures were adopted (see the *IIEP Newsletter*, vol. XII no. 4 Oct-Dec 1994).

- Conditions of schools: substantial increase in the budget allocated for repairs to school buildings;
- Classroom conditions: special funds for classroom supplies for schools identified as having the poorest conditions;
- Classroom furniture: expansion of coverage of a pilot scheme for communi-



ties to provide low-cost furniture to schools;

- Access to books: a joint training programme on the management of school libraries for heads of schools with the collaboration of the National Library and Documentation centre;
- Norms for equipment and supplies: the planning section of the Ministry disseminated to all school heads a document on the approved 1994 standards for equipment and supplies;
- Classroom space and toilet facilities: the planning section was commissioned to survey all primary schools in Zimbabwe to identify those where inadequate classroom space and toilet facilities required immediate action.

In Mauritius, the findings of SACMEQ's initial project were reported in a draft working document, "The Quality of Basic Education in Mauritius: Some Policy Suggestions Based on a National Survey of Schools." This document was discussed at a senior policy workshop organised in mid-1996 that was attended by heads of divisions, senior officers of the ministry, and some heads of primary schools. Several actions followed directly from these discussions:

- Launching a national campaign on "Reading for Pleasure";
- Initiating a national debate on strategies to mitigate the damaging role of the Certificate of Primary Education, which has become highly competitive due to its dual purpose of certification and ranking for admission to lower secondary schools;
- Improving the pupil-to-book ratio in every primary school to a minimum of one to one;
- Stimulating a national debate on policy actions needed to address disparities among schools.

These, and other positive impacts of SACMEQ on policy, have encouraged the IIEP to explore possibilities for extending the educational policy debate for southern Africa to broader cross-national settings. To work toward this objective a SACMEQ Policy Forum was organized at the IIEP, including ministers, permanent secretaries, education planners and researchers and focused on exploring the national and sub-regional policy implications arising from the results of SACMEQ's initial educational policy research project in Namibia, Zanzibar (Tanzania), Zambia and Zimbabwe.

PASEC has put together several summary tables of its findings; results are available in printed documents or from the CONFEMEN's Internet site at [www.confemen.org](http://www.confemen.org).

## **Creating a favorable environment for policy review**

SACMEQ and PASEC are creating favourable policy environments within the education ministries of participating countries by encouraging a three-step approach to transforming information into action. Initially, policy suggestions

are prepared on the basis of the analysis of reliable data (as contrasted with relying on anecdotes, myths, and stereotypes). These policy suggestions are then discussed with decision-makers, and the results of these discussions are used to prepare realistic agendas for action, including, where possible, time-frames and approximate cost estimates. The development and implementation of educational policy decisions is a complex process that now more than ever involves a number of partners and requires explanation to, and consensus among, a host of stakeholders. The SACMEQ and PASEC programmes have positively oriented these processes both upstream and downstream from the policy decision by providing usable information that has promoted confidence among the various partners.

Transparency, openness to scientific criticism, and special efforts to include non-specialists are all necessary conditions for nurturing this confidence. Perhaps everyone cannot participate in the development of sampling procedures or the choice of a certain mathematical algorithm. Non-specialists can nevertheless be involved when observations are to be interpreted, without sacrificing scientific rigor. For example, lay persons can and should participate in discussions of the implications of findings that link particular types of school to a observed achievement levels. The PASEC program has organized country-level seminars to discuss and debate study results among education stakeholders and decision-makers.

## **Reinforcing the capacity to access information**

The efforts of programmes such as SACMEQ and PASEC must now expand to include the recipients as well as the producers of information. The usefulness of a particular study must not be conceptualized in isolation. The end user's capacity to access, understand, and critique also requires attention.

We believe that today's changes in information technology give cause for much optimism in this regard. These advances provide new ways to disseminate and draw attention to particular findings. At the same time it must be recognized that SACMEQ and PASEC operate in a development context where access to computers and the Internet is often problematic. Therefore we must not forget that a concerted mobilization of new information and communication technologies does not preclude more traditional forms of dissemination. Printed documents will therefore probably remain for several years an important form of dissemination for SACMEQ and PASEC research products.

## **Use of new technologies**

SACMEQ (via CD-ROM data storage) and PASEC (via Internet access) have

established plans to use new technologies so that all the information that they generate can be accessed by the widest possible audience. For example:

- Education officials and stakeholders will be able to consult the principal conclusions of studies in summarized form. This can be done by country or by theme depending on the entry.
- Experts and researchers will be able to access databases collected during different research cycles in order to conduct their own analyses. They will be able to apply any data analysis methods they choose and compare their results and methods to those given in published SACMEQ and PASEC reports.
- Evaluators and researchers will have an array of instruments at their disposal (for example, Reading Literacy (SACMEQ) and French/Mathematics (PASEC))

tests for primary grades, standard questionnaires, methodological and practical guides, data entry and analysis software) that can considerably reduce the time needed to conduct studies. These instruments will also provide points of comparison for qualitative analyses.

## **Consequences of new technologies on partnerships**

It is essential to recognize that improvements in technology often increase the distance between the “info-rich” and the “info-poor;” particularly if the targeted interlocutors (planning and evaluation units and pedagogical institutes) do not have access to the Internet, CD-ROM facilities, or to computers and printers to adapt databases to their own needs or projects. These issues have been the focus of much discussion. What is rarely mentioned, however, is that the existence in the south of additional nodes of information and communication will lead to an extraordinary contribution to the global knowledge base on education systems. Over time, the mutual enrichment resulting from a greater availability of information will serve as an example of a development partnership that is mutually reinforcing. This will also contribute to a more balanced north-south flow of ideas and more dynamic south-south exchanges.

Of course, no single project, however ambitious, can address all the initial equipment and training needs implied by the above discussion. However, the common interest of all partners should make such an objective a common priority. This in turn should lead to the elaboration of a realistic programme to be implemented over a reasonable timetable.

One of the benefits to a more abundant and organized availability of information will be the demystification of expertise. In the often exclusive relationship between sponsor and expert, the opaque nature of the conditions of knowledge production regarding education systems often reinforces tendencies towards confidentiality. This is particularly the case where the partnership excludes the non-initiated.

If information is accessible to all education stakeholders, it follows that there will be increasing demands for greater accessibility and analytical rigor. Everyone from the consumer to the producer must have access to useful information about our education systems in order to produce an atmosphere of positive criticism among equals, an environment for collective learning and for national development that is far too often absent from debates on education policy.

## **Conclusion**

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1. World Bank 1991, 1996a, 1996b, UNDP, 1994.
  2. World Bank (1996b, p. 12)

As we move towards the year 2000 it has become more evident than ever that coherent and effective policy for education ministries in Africa can no longer be the product of a small number of actors or decision-makers, and can no longer grow out of data-poor crisis management models. Rather, there must be a sincere commitment to greater transparency in decision-making and increased efforts to ensure the systematic use of valid and accessible information systems. We believe that these issues are being addressed successfully by the SACMEQ and PASEC initiatives through their application of world-class education policy research projects and through their determination to have these projects designed, applied, and used in Africa. In order to maintain and improve momentum in this critical field of education planning there is clearly a need for concerned agencies to be supportive of SACMEQ, PASEC, and similar high-quality education policy research projects in Africa, so that their dual roles as providers of policy-relevant information and as catalysts for capacity building at all levels of education systems can be maintained and strengthened.

# **Capacity Development through ADEA Working Groups: Applicable Practices and Lessons**

*by P.T. Mmantsetsa Marope*

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3. See World Bank, 1991, 1996, UNDP, 1994.
  4. See Kwapong, (1989) for a detailed overview of efforts made during the 1980's.
  5. Kwapong, (1989), World Bank, (1991, 1996), UNDP, (1994), DAE, (1996), CIDA Policy Branch, (1996).
  6. Naturally then, the conceptualisation of capacity development and its processes comes from external agents and their experiences rather than from the experiences of those whose capacities are supposed to be developed. This also suggests that the definition of modalities for developing capacities remains largely with agencies.
  7. Case studies were conducted in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Comoros, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

# Introduction

Capacity development has been identified as one of the main strategies for attaining long-term and sustainable development in Africa.<sup>1</sup> This reality notwithstanding, theoretical and empirical literature suggests the persistence of weak and even deteriorating capacities across African countries' public and private sectors since independence. Education and training systems are seen as having a causal relationship with these weak capacities. On the one hand, poor African capacities seriously weaken the development of education and training systems; on the other, poor education and training systems perpetuate the weakening of capacities.<sup>2</sup> Part of the mandate of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) is to promote collaboration between African governments and external development agents to enhance and reinforce capacities of ministries of education. Operationally, this aim is addressed through the work programs of the ADEA Working Groups.

The objective of the study presented here is to document capacity development approaches used by the ADEA Working Groups, explore their effectiveness and highlight applicable practices and worthy lessons. An analytical framework was used to identify useful approaches. This framework postulates that capacity development can be undertaken at five different levels: Individual, organizational, institutional, national and international. Specific strategies used within each level are identified and illustrated with examples from the activities of selected Working Groups. Information on Working Group activities were collected from Botswana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Sources include document and literature reviews, interviews, discussions, and participant observations.

## Background: Africa's development crisis and capacity development

African countries have received billions of dollars and substantial technical support from bilateral and multilateral development agencies since the first decade of independence. This assistance was expected to complement Africa's political independence and, ultimately, economic independence. As we come to the close of the fourth decade of independence, many Sub-Saharan African coun-

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8. World Bank (1996b).

9. Refer to opening speeches of the 1997 ADEA Biennial Meeting, Dakar, Senegal.

10. World Bank, 1989, 1996a, 1996b, UNDP, 1990.

11. World Bank, 1991, 1996b, UNDP, 1990, 1994.

12. World Bank 1996b.

13. See the *Report of the African Governors of the World Bank to Mr. James D. Wolfensohn*, President of the World Bank Group (1996).

tries are still dependent on external assistance sometimes, even for recurrent budgets. The financial and technical assistance that Africa received over the past forty years therefore seems to have had a less than desirable level impact on development.<sup>3</sup>

Impelled by persisting failure to attain sustainable economic and social development, African governments and their external partners continue to make concerted efforts to identify causes and solutions to Africa's development crisis. Prominent among these efforts have been consultations, debates and intervention programs.<sup>4</sup> From these debates and consultations, a fair consensus has been reached that *capacity development* is one of the key strategies for Africa's long-term and sustainable development.<sup>5</sup> It is logical, therefore, that capacity development has received greater attention from development specialists. However, it is striking to note that, while consultations continue between the development agencies and African governments, the former are the major contributors to the written discourse on capacity development and relatively little comes from African governments themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Also noteworthy has been the development agencies' efforts to bring African experts to the forefront of consultations on capacity development in Africa. The 1989 *Roundtable on Capacity Building and Human Resources Development in Africa* is one such example. In 1995 and 1996, the World Bank engaged African experts to conduct country-specific case studies that sought to identify capacity development needs and challenges.<sup>7</sup> Several meetings were held with African stakeholders and experts to build a consensus on the constraints affecting capacity development and strategies for alleviating observed constraints.<sup>8</sup> Since the late 1980s therefore, substantial contributions raised the level of analysis applied to the international aid relationships that emerge in the process of developing capacities. An observation made by both African and international experts is the persistence of weak and, even, deteriorating capacities across African countries' public and private sectors since their independence.

Pervasive as it may be, this observation deserves to be called into question. The discourse is replete with innuendoes of ineffective use of existing African capacities, lack of appreciation of such capacities and even the undermining of African capacities by unequal international partnerships. Also echoed in the

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14. This Initiative is supported by the African Development Bank, the UNDP, and the World Bank.

15. World Bank, 1991, p. 5.

16. World Bank (1996b).

17. Support for the pivotal role of education in facilitating development and capacity development comes mainly from the works of economic historians and from the literature on international development (see. Easterlin, 1981, Mbowe, 1989, Hilderbrand and Grindle, 1994, World Food Program, 1995).

18. ADEA, 1996, p. 1.

19. World Bank, 1996a.

20. World Bank, (1996b, p.12).

discourse is the call for the recognition and utilisation of diverse African and international capacities. In contrast to the claimed paucity and deterioration of capacities, this call suggests that Africa does have capacities, but of a different nature—and not inferior quality—from those of the international communities,<sup>9</sup> and that such capacities need to be tapped.

Two significant constraints to the development of African capacities are identifiable in the literature: One, is the *limitations of prior capacity development strategies* and the other is the *weak capacities of education and training systems*. Prior efforts, it is claimed, have failed to promote sustainably the development of indigenous African capacities and to make effective use of existing human and institutional capacities.<sup>10</sup> At worst, such efforts, particularly technical assistance, have actually undermined the development of indigenous African capacity and have eroded existing capacities.<sup>11</sup> Two key factors explain the ineffectiveness of prior efforts: (i) *the lack of visionary African leadership*—which left the field open to donors; and (ii) *the tendency of external agencies to take charge of the development process*, thereby setting development priorities, articulating planning goals, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development activities and, thus, denying Africans not only opportunity for capacity development but also ownership of the development process.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps in recognition of these criticisms, the World Bank has sought to improve its capacity development strategies. Aspects of the strategy include: *the “definition of environments that are conducive to capacity development, priority areas for action, strategies and tools for developing capacity, and ways of making partnerships with the World Bank and donor agencies more effective tools for building capacity in Africa.”*<sup>13</sup> One step to operationalize and maybe even institutionalise, concern for capacity development has been the establishment of the *Africa Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI)*,<sup>14</sup> which aims to build policy analysis and economic management capacities in Africa. The initiative uses a double-pronged strategy of placing investment on human capital and institutions high on the agenda of African governments and donors, and mobilising commitment and resources of the two partners for the implementation of specific programs.<sup>15</sup> Other Bank initiatives are the *Capacity Building Partnership* and the *Partnership for Capacity Building in Africa Initiative (PCBAI)* launched at the 1996 World Bank/IMF annual meeting. Other proposals include the establishment of the *Capacity Building Trust Fund (CBTF)* which would support the initiative of the *PCBAI* and of *Regional Centers of Excellence* to develop capacity.<sup>16</sup>

The second constraint derives from the weak capacities of education and training systems of Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>17</sup> This weakness was forcefully brought

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21. Exceptions are the Working Groups on research and policy analysis and on female participation which both seek in various ways, to directly enhance capacities of African researchers. The Working Group on female participation also endeavours to enhance human capacities, especially those of females by improving the leadership capacities of those in tertiary institutions and by catalysing the improvement of educational opportunities for girls and women.



to attention by the 1988 World Bank study on *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion*. Nearly a decade later, it may be argued that findings of a 1988 study are dated and as such, provide an inadequate base for current interventions. However, more recent works suggest the persistence and further weakening of capacities. For instance, the eighth volume of *ADEA Newsletter* highlighted the persisting capacity problems by noting that “most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa lack the strategic capacities—analytical and management capacities as well as adequate and substantial structures and institutional procedures—needed for the formulation, the development and the implementation of effective policies based on in-country processes”.<sup>18</sup> The World Bank paper on *Partnerships for Capacity Development in Africa* also observed that “the total collapse of educational systems and training capacity in the continent has considerably weakened the capacity of African countries to effectively redress their capacity constraints.”<sup>19</sup> The link between education/training, and capacity development is interactive in the sense that “on the one hand, poor capacity to design and deliver quality education and training results in poor education and training institutions; on the other, poor education and training institutions produce poor graduates, whose knowledge and skills are inadequate for further training and for the world of work. ... Education and training, ... constitute a major constraint on the development of capacity.”<sup>20</sup>

## Findings

The analysis showed that the ADEA Working Groups exploit a variety and combination of approaches to develop/enhance capacities at virtually all the five levels of the framework. Although not without exceptions,<sup>21</sup> Working Groups focus their efforts more directly on the development of organizational and institutional capacities. Individual human capacity development and the improvement of national and international contexts are undertaken mainly as support for organizational and institutional development.

Organizational capacities are developed and/or enhanced using the following approaches: the use of broad based consultations to clarify the mission of the Working Groups; the use of research to clarify and define Working Group tasks relative to their African partners; the identification and creation of organizations that can collaborate in the undertaking of tasks; the allocation of tasks to collaborating organizations based on their expertise; the creation of task-based organizational networks; the mobilization and allocation of human and non-human resources for effective task performance; the creation of conducive and enabling organizational environments—through incentive and reward systems, support services, and resources; and the strengthening of existing organizations.

Institutional capacities are developed through the following approaches: changing national policy environments, changing legal frameworks, changing decision making processes and through the mainstreaming of activities, pro-

cesses and procedures.

Although not always given prime attention, a wide variety of human capacity development approaches are discernible from the activities of the groups. These include: creating new awareness and understandings; education, training and skill transfer; and strengthening existing capacities through incentive systems. On the negative side, there was evidence of overuse of existing capacities.

Working Groups also make substantial contributions to the improvement of national and international contexts within which their capacity development efforts are nested. At a national level, they contribute to the alleviation of the effects of harsh national economic contexts by mobilizing external human and non-human resources essential for the effective undertaking of tasks especially those tasks that are normally under-resourced, such as research. Effort to improve educational resource provisions is not limited to external sources. Some of the Working Groups significantly assist ministries of education to improve negotiation skills, especially with ministries of finance, to secure more resources for education. Ministries of education are also assisted with effective strategic resource planning and allocation. All such efforts should ensure improved resource mobilization—from both internal and external sources—and utilization. The Working Groups also facilitate the creation of conducive socio-cultural environments so as to facilitate capacity development in diverse areas such as female education, inclusive consultation and dialogue, and maintaining literate environments. Substantial effort is also expended toward the creation/enhancement of national policy environments conducive to successful operations of the Working Groups and their African partners.

Internationally, the Working Groups provide forums for better coordination and collaboration of development agencies from different countries in supporting education in Africa. This creates a better international climate not only for the North/South but also for South/South and for North/North collaboration. The Working Groups facilitate the breaking of the normative isolation of African professionals by opening national boundaries for regional and international collaborations. Owing to such collaborations, the seeking of Pan African solutions to common problems is greatly facilitated. Working Groups are also making reasonable progress toward fostering a more collegial cross-fertilization of knowledge systems derived from contexts of the north and of the south.

## **Purpose, scope and procedures for the re-**

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22. Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994).
  23. Morgan and Taschereau, (1996, p. 1).
  24. World Bank (1996b), p. v.
  25. Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994, p. 5); UNDP (1994, p. i)
  26. Qualman and Bolger (1996).
  27. *Ibid.* p. 19.

## view

The purpose of this review is to document capacity development approaches used by the ADEA Working Groups. Eight of Working Groups were covered: education statistics, teaching profession, female participation, education sector analysis, education research and policy analysis, books and learning materials, nonformal education, and finance and education.

The review proceeded in four phases. The first comprised a document and literature review, conceptualisation of capacity development, and the development of an analytic framework. The second was pilot field work during which extensive discussions were held with members of the Working Groups and country Working Groups on Female Participation, the Teaching Profession and Education Statistics, based in Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. This phase was also used to trial test and refine the analytic framework. The third included data collection on all the eight Working Groups using discussions, a document/literature review, a survey questionnaire, and telephone interviews. During this phase South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia were also visited. The last phase was the analysis and reporting of findings.

## Conceptualizing capacity development

*What is capacity development?* Considering the high premium placed on capacity development as one of the key strategies for getting Africa out of its crisis, the overuse of the term, and the scholarly attention it commands, this is by no means a trivial question. The literature that addresses this question shows an evolution of the concept from the unidimensional and restrictive perspectives that equated capacity development to *education and training* or to *institution building*, to such broad views that hardly distinguish between capacity development and development *per se*.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to unidimensional views, capacity development has been differentiated from institution building which is more “concerned with the performance of individual organizations and their ability to make effective use of the human and financial resources available. ...Capacity development on the other hand goes beyond individual organizations focusing on broader systems, groups of organizations, networks, policies, values, culture and the enabling environment leading, in many cases to multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral responses.”<sup>23</sup>

Capacity development is also viewed as including “more than training or the building of institutions. Increased capacity entails learning by doing, and the development over time of more effective practices. Capacity building is the investment in human capacity and institutions and practices, and is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.”<sup>24</sup> Beyond the development of human beings and institutions, capacity development also entails the use and continuous re-

finement of effective practices.

Other qualifiers used to characterize practices appropriate for capacity development are *efficiency* and *sustainability*—i.e., the ability of organizations to perform appropriate tasks and functions efficiently, effectively and sustainably.<sup>25</sup> Another perspective of capacity development practices is that they fall broadly under good governance and institutional economics methodologies. In terms of governance, *participatory techniques, stakeholder representation, indigenous ownership, consensus building and commitment* feature high. With respect to institutional economics, the importance of *rewards and incentives, examining products and services in terms of demand and supply* are also used descriptors.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond appropriate practices, capacity development is viewed as long-term process that involves “continuous development and effective utilization of human resources, constructive management of task-oriented organizations, institutional contexts that facilitate problem solving and economic, political and social conditions that help sustain capacity.”<sup>27</sup>

The language used in expressing the concept is also under constant refinement. For instance, the UNDP document, *Capacity Development: Lessons of Experience and Guiding Principles* argues for the use of the phrase *capacity development* over *capacity building* or *capacity strengthening*. This preference emanates from an argument that capacity building and strengthening connote the recruitment or improvement of existing capacity (through training). The connotation neglects the importance of *retention of existing capacity, improvements in the utilization of existing capacity, and the retrieval of capacity which has been eroded* (p.i). To this list of connotations of capacity development, Qualman and Bolger (1996) add *reducing the demand on available capacity and eliminating old capacities*.

In sum, capacity development has evolved from a simple focus on institution building, and on the education and training of individuals, to a multifaceted concept which encompasses the development of: *human resources, non-human resources, and the improvement of contexts of varying levels*. As a process, it is *continuous, enduring, tenacious, and long-term*. It also espouses democratic practices such as: *transparency, open consultation and dialogue, substantive participation, mutual trust and respect, etc*. Capacity development has diverse results but its ultimate result is *sustained development*.

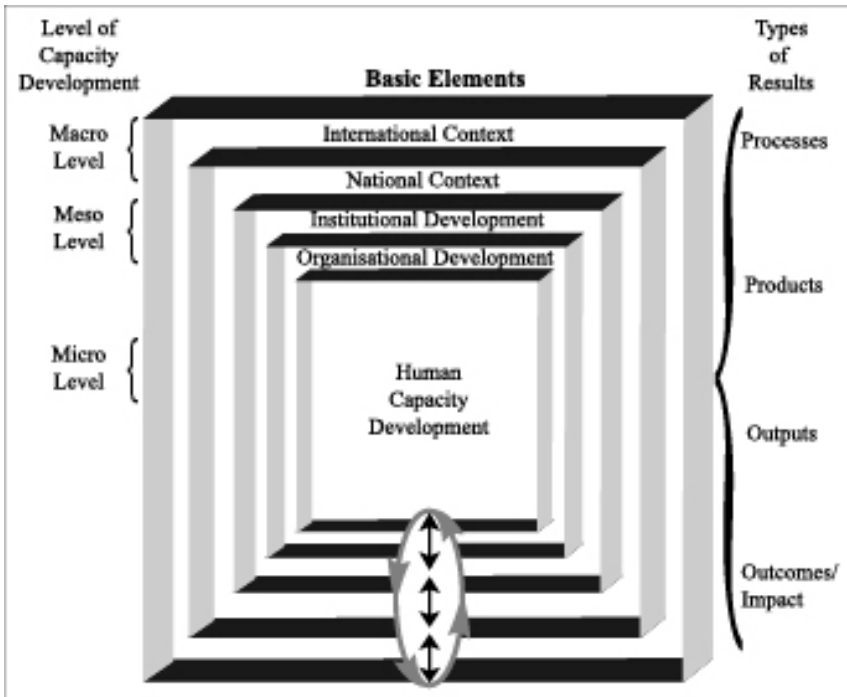
## Analytic framework

This framework refers to capacity development rather than capacity building. It is informed by conceptual notions outlined, in particular by the works of

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28. World Bank, (1996a, 1996b).

**DIAGRAM B-1. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:  
BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK**



Qualman and Bolger (1996), UNDP (1994), and Grindle and Hilderbrand (1994, 1995). It has three key features: First, it emphasizes the need to pay balanced attention to individuals and to the environments within which they operate. Therefore, it strikes a middle-ground between broad views that underplay the capacities of individuals and the more narrow views that tend to equate capacity development with education and training.

Second, the framework looks at capacity from both the supply and the demand sides. Although not without exceptions, existing frameworks were developed out of a norm of failure in Africa. They have, therefore, focussed attention on the weaknesses of those needing assistance (this is demand side, African governments) than on those rendering the assistance (the supply side, the development agencies). Therefore, inadequate attention has been paid to the analysis of the capacities of “facilitators” to develop the capacities of “recipients”. The point made here is that a substantial part of the failure of African governments to attain sustainable development has been the lack of strategic capacity of those assisting them—the development partners. Such a one-sided analysis could only provide partial answers and, thus, partial solutions. The same questions that are raised with respect to “beneficiaries” have to be raised with respect to

“benefactors”. For example, *Are the personnel qualified to deliver the assistance? Do they work within enabling environments? Are they committed to facilitating and developing capacities? Do they have adequate resources and are the resources appropriately deployed and utilized? Do their practices uphold principles of good governance and institutional economics?* In a nutshell, *do they have the capacity to develop the capacity of those they are supposed to assist?*

Related to the norm of African failure, current understandings have ignored the capacities of “beneficiaries” to develop the capacities of “benefactors”. An underlying notion therefore has been that of a unidirectional flow of resources and expertise from the north to the south, ignoring the reverse direction. By downplaying the transfer of expertise from Africa to international experts, existing frameworks of capacity development have implied knowledge hierarchies under which “Africa-based knowledge” is of less worth. Such knowledge hierarchies have in turn inhibited the potential integration and complementarity of Africa-based with foreign-based forms of knowing and forms of knowledge. In cases where foreign expertise takes precedence over African expertise, contextually irrelevant interventions can emerge. Where African expertise puts up enough resistance, potentially useful intellectual inputs can be shut out, leading to interventions that are intellectually and strategically wanting.

When left unchecked and implicit, it is the capacities of external agents that get developed. This has led to situations where the development agents become the latent-but-real beneficiaries of capacity development efforts explicitly intended for Africans. It is desirable that external technical experts learn the field. However, current capacity development frameworks have not taken this into account. There is no critical analysis on the processes by which the intended benefactors become the prime beneficiaries of the investments in capacity development.

More recently, the literature on capacity development has been more critical toward both beneficiaries and benefactors. As noted above, Africa leadership has been faulted for its lack of vision which in turn led to donor take-over of much of the capacity development process. This, in turn, has led to the loss of ownership by Africans, lack of commitment, and erosion of existing capacities. Specifically criticized has been the technical assistance under which international expatriates have maintained their costly positions by their unwillingness to prepare Africans for the take over of their roles.<sup>28</sup>

Third, our framework has a hierarchically nested structure with potential for intra-, inter- and cross-level interaction effects. For example, human resources are nested within organizations which are nested within institutions ... which are nested within the global context. As such, efforts made at any one level will affect and be affected by those made (or not made) at other levels, depending on the situation. These effects can facilitate or inhibit.

## Elements of the framework

*Individuals, organizations, institutions, national context, and the international context* constitute the elements of the framework. **Diagram B-1** (See page 148) provides a graphic presentation of the nested nature of these elements.

### Capacity development at the level of the individual

In contrast to the conventional wisdom that equates individual human capacity development with formal education and training, this framework posits that human capacities are also developed through less formal and sometimes less observable processes, including: *on-the-job skill transfer, creating new awareness, cultivating new understandings, sharing information and experiences, inducing vicarious experiences, retaining existing capacities, diversification of capacities, provision of incentive systems, avoiding “brain drain”, avoiding “drained brains”, effective utilization of existing capacities, etc.*

Effective human capacity development is holistic in terms of (i) the personnel levels to be developed (e.g., policy, managerial, professional, technical and support levels), and (ii) the domains (cognitive/intellect skills, and affects such as dispositions, interests, aspirations, ambitions, attitudes, heightened self-efficacy, empowerment) to be developed. Specific attention should be paid to the development of those levels of personnel that have the potential to facilitate or thwart opportunities for further capacity development. Also, it is necessary pay attention to the complementarity of the human developmental domains.

Individual capacities can be sustained and sharpened by, among others, a careful match between the needs and opportunities of collective contexts (organizations, institutions, national and international contexts) and individual interests and aspirations. Individuals are more likely to sustain a culture of self-improvement if their development is in areas that match their interests, aspirations and ambitions. Otherwise, capacities once attained could be eroded through lack of interest and disuse. Collective contexts can provide the necessary environment for nurturing and enhancing, or for inhibiting and eroding individual capacities. On the other hand, inhospitable organizations, institutions, national and international contexts cannot sustain appropriate and relevant individual capacities. In conclusion, therefore, effective capacity development requires analyses of both the individual and contextual needs.

### Organizational capacity development

Organizations provide the network of roles and functions to which the development of individual capacities is tethered. They can also offer environments

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29. see Kaufman, (1983) for a detailed discussion of types of results.

that are nurturing or eroding for the development of individuals. Characteristics of constructive, effective organizations include: *clarity of vision and mission, clearly defined tasks and well defined task networks; appropriate matching of actors to tasks; supportive management and leadership styles; effective and efficient recruitment, retention, and utilization of human capacities; effective and efficient mobilization and utilization of non-human resources; adequate human and non-human resources; purposeful and strategic distribution of incentives and rewards; creation of opportunities for further development;, along with concern with accomplishment of tasks.*

Increasingly, the fulfilment of organizational roles is attained through the support of other organizations. Equally feasible, is that the successful undertaking of organizational tasks may be sabotaged by non-supportive organizations. Competent organizations carefully identify and foster collaboration with their working partners and effectively search out the collaboration and support of potential partners.

## Institutional capacity development

**TABLE B-1: ADEA WORKING GROUPS AND THEIR LEAD AND COORDINATING AGENCIES**

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Lead agency</b>	<b>Coordinating agency</b>
Education Sector Analysis (WGESA)	UNESCO, Paris	
Education Research and Policy Analysis (WGRPA)	International Development Research Centre, Dakar	
Higher Education (WGHE)	World Bank	
Books and Learning Materials (WGBLM)	Department for International Development, U. K.	
Non-Formal Education (WGNFE)	Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation	Commonwealth Secretariat
Education Statistics (WGES)	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	UNESCO, Harare
Teaching Profession (WGTP): Anglophone and Francophone sections	Commonwealth Secretariat French Ministry for Cooperation	
Female Participation (WGFP)	FAWE (until 1999, Rockefeller Foundation)	
Early Childhood Development (WGECD)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands	
Finance and Education (WGFE)	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	CODESRIA, Dakar
Distance Education (WGDE)	Ministry of Education, Mauritius	

30. ADEA, (1997, p.1).



Every organization operates within an institutional context which provides *tacit and/or explicit rules, regulations, procedures, norms, values, policy environments, legal, and constitutional frameworks* within which the roles and functions of any given organization are performed. Institutional capacity development, therefore, entails the development of an enabling environment for organizations and individuals.

Institutional practices that facilitate capacity development espouse principles of good governance such as *transparency and inclusiveness, broad-based and genuine consultation and dialogue, stakeholder representation, clear and open lines of communication, functional leadership, mutual trust and respect, accountability, collegiality, etc.*

### **Improving national contexts**

National contexts entail factors like the *economic conditions and growth, political stability or lack of it, the socio-cultural, moral, religious, ethical contexts*. All these factors can directly or indirectly affect institutions, organizations and individuals who work within them. A very critical factor is the *nature and quality of national leadership, and its explicit commitment to uphold democratic practices to eradicate corruption and to develop national capacities*. The nature of leadership can thwart or bolster opportunities for maintaining and enhancing national capacities.

### **Improving international contexts**

With the process of globalization, no country can safely claim to have sole control over any significant aspect of its affairs. International relations of diverse forms can, therefore, facilitate or inhibit the pursuit of capacity development at the other four levels.

## **Results**

The proposed framework categorizes results of capacity development into *processes, products, outputs, and outcomes*.<sup>29</sup>

Processes are the “*how*” of results. They constitute practices and procedures that are put in place. The culture or manner of “doing things” so to speak. Processes mostly add to the institutional environment.

Products are the “*what*” of results. They are the tangible results which are mostly consumed within the organization. Within the ADEA context, examples of products are publications, computer software, training programs, equipment, statistical modules, legal frameworks, research reports, and manuals. Products are mainly generated at the organizational level.

Outputs are another type of results that answer the “*what*” question, but which have an active and therefore regenerative nature. Outputs may be con-

sumed internally by the organization but are also deliverable to other external consumers. Examples could be graduates of numerous ADEA training programs, and organizations created or improved by ADEA efforts.

Outcomes are the effects or impact of other results. They are the “*so what*” of the results. Some of the examples include higher female enrolments, heightened instructional quality, equity in resource allocation, equitable education policy, sustained literacy, etc.

## **The ADEA Working Groups**

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) seeks to reinforce the “*capacity of African ministries to take the leadership role in their dealing with funding agencies and for making funding agencies aware that their own practices may have to be adapted to support the concept and practice of nationally-driven education policies, programs and projects*”.<sup>30</sup> A major aspect of this involves (i) strengthening the capacities of education/training systems to deliver equitably, effectively and efficiently quality education, and (ii) the capacity of development agencies to best facilitate ministries in attaining this aim.

The ADEA operates largely through the programs, projects and activities of its Working Groups. Although each group is autonomous, they share similar features. Key points of commonality are mainly structural. Each Working Group has a lead agency which solicits the financial and intellectual inputs from other agents with common interests. For some Working Groups the operational leadership is delegated to a coordinating agency (**See Table B-1**). The work of the groups is steered by a committee composed of a representative set of Working Group membership. In principle, the work programs are collaboratively implemented by the larger membership. All groups have Africa-based collaborators. Their role is to steer the implementation of the work programs at the country level. What is unique to each Working Group are its the underlying assumptions, missions, objectives and the principles that guide its programs, activities and practices.

The following Working Groups covered in this review: Teaching Profession, Female Participation, Education Statistics, Books and Learning Materials, Research and Policy Analysis, Education Sector Analysis, Education Finance, and Nonformal Education.

## **Working Groups’ approaches to capacity development**

The analytical framework presented above is used to identify the levels within which Working Groups operate, and the approaches they use. Two caveats are

worth noting concerning entry levels of Working Groups: First is that over time, entry levels may change as old challenges are met and new ones emerge. The analysis presented in this report does not trace the historical shifts in the Working Groups' entry levels, but rather describes the pertaining situation. Second, because of the nested, interactive and iterative relationship among levels of the framework, it is virtually impossible for any group to operate within a single level. The identification of key levels of operation is therefore easier to separate analytically than operationally.

Notwithstanding this complexity, the analysis showed that most Working Groups concentrate on developing organizational and institutional capacities. The development of human capacities, and the improvement of national and international contexts are undertaken mainly as a necessary support for the organizational and institutional development efforts. The section below presents specific approaches used at each level. Illustrations, and not exhaustive lists, are drawn from the activities of Working Groups.

## Human capacity development

### ■ *Creating or fostering new awareness*

The starting point of human capacity development is the creation of *awareness of capacity gaps*. Working Groups use a variety of approaches to create such awareness. The first approach is *consultations*. During facilitation visits, Working Group leaders endeavour to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the issues at-hand. These could be problems of conditions of teacher service, inaccurate education statistics, gender inequalities, book shortages, or limitations of education sector studies. Understanding these issues begins to build the readiness of concerned stakeholders to seek solutions. For more difficult issues such as female education, diverse *advocacy* strategies are used. This includes meetings, videos, songs, magazines, enlisting the cooperation of the journalists, targeted leaflets and handouts.

A powerful approach for awareness-raising and changing social understanding is *concrete evidence*. To this effect all Working Groups use research evidence to highlight capacity gaps in the systems. Such evidence is often packaged in a manner that can best reach intended target groups. Existing packages include: books, magazines, abridged research reports, popularized media such as videos, songs and drama. Also effective has been the force of *vicarious experiences* when those who deny the presence of capacity gaps are brought into contact with those addressing them. Perhaps a natural awareness-raising mechanism is a *system breakdown*. Examples include: persistent teacher strikes, which have brought some countries into closer contact with the Working Group on the teaching profession; the failure of EMIS to guide ministries' decision making processes, which has encouraged some countries to collaborate with the Working Group on education statistics; or acute shortage of educational materials,

which stimulate country interest in the Working Group on books and learning materials.

■ *Education, training and skill transfer*

With varying degrees of effectiveness, virtually all Working Groups are involved in some form of education, training and skill transfer. Strategies range from the most formalized types of training such as *scholarship programs* to informal training through exchange of *information and experiences*. Other contributions include the improvement of educational opportunities for women and girls, research methodology courses and workshops, mainstreaming of Working Group activities into pre- and in-service training curricula, workshops and seminars, and counterpart systems.

■ *Strengthening capacity through usage*

One of the key threats to human capacities is erosion through lack of use. With varying degrees of success, the Working Groups create conducive environments for Africans to deepen their capacities through practice. Opportunities have been created mainly in the area of analytical work. With varying degrees of commitment, Working Groups give first preference to African expertise for conducting *research, consultancy work*, and for *training* others.

■ *Overuse of capacities*

Although not that pervasive, there is evidence of overuse of existing capacities. The situation pertains specifically to Working Groups whose leaders are full time employees of their own lead agencies with only partial time allocations for the work of the ADEA. Working Group leaders in this situation cited their time pressure as a key constraint to effective steering of the Working Group activities. This situation is exacerbated by the reluctance of some Working Group leaders to devolve some of the responsibilities to their African partners. In some countries, Country Working Group members, especially those who come from outside the ministry registered their concern about the increased workload induced by the activities of the Working Group.

## **Organizational capacity development**

Working Groups employ the following approaches to develop capacities of organizations they work with:

■ *Clear definition of mission*

Most of the Working Groups employ *broad-based consultations and integrate diverse forms of evidence* to clarify organizational visions and missions. Consultations are also used to bring understand capacity gaps in the education systems. The aims and activities of Working Groups, therefore, flow from real and felt needs of the education systems of Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of those real and urgent needs include: book shortages, female under-participation, unreliable education statistics, poor conditions of service for teachers, inadequate

nonformal education opportunities, inadequate education budgets, inadequate sector studies and the resulting poor education policies and programs. Because Working Groups' clarify their missions on the basis of real needs, the parameters of their work programs tend to be highly focussed. This focus in turn leads to efficient use of resources available to the groups.

■ *Social marketing and consensus building*

The focus on real needs does not preclude advocacy efforts towards concerned stakeholders of the nature and importance of the issues. With varying degrees of effectiveness, all Working Groups employ strategies of *consultation and advocacy* (i) to highlight the issues, and (ii) to build social consensus. For example, the Working Group on Female Participation used innovative advocacy strategies to convince the African community that female under-representation is a serious issue and in need of national attention.

■ *Task clarification*

Virtually all Working Groups rely on *empirical evidence* to clarify their tasks and to develop work programs. The analytical work undertaken by Working Groups is therefore not an end in itself but an effective tool for identifying capacity gaps and suggesting strategies for addressing them. For groups that work in more established areas such as teaching profession and education statistics, the definition of capacity gaps takes the form of highly focussed and defined diagnostic surveys, the findings of which form the basis for national action plans. For others in more innovative areas such as the Working Groups on Books and Learning Materials, Nonformal Education, Finance and Education, and Female Participation, broader themes are preferred as the groups search for direction. For these groups, work programs emerge from meta-analyses of a corpus of research evidence.

■ *Ensuring relevance of problems and solutions*

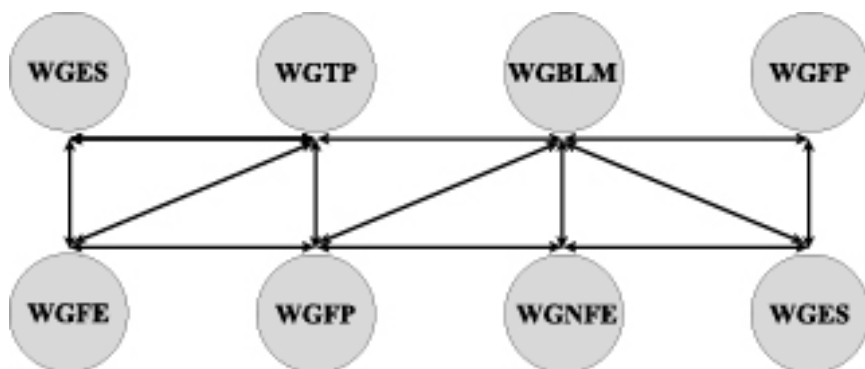
In facilitating the diagnosis of capacity gaps, Working Groups strive to balance international perspectives with contextual relevance. Technical inputs from Working Groups are presented with a degree of flexibility that allows for a choice of country-specific problems and potential solutions. Working Groups do not impose problems nor solutions on participating countries. Participating countries also take up the opportunity to assert their ownership of the process of identifying problems and solutions.

For instance, in the Working Group on Education Statistics, Ethiopia chose to focus its attention on refining data collection techniques, Zambia focused on school records management and Zimbabwe on developing computer software packages. Under the aegis of the nonformal education Working Group, Burkina Faso chose to conduct research on training newly elected local government officers; Senegal chose to investigate the role of partnerships between different providers of non-formal education; Namibia elected to focus on using radio and television to provide in-service training for teachers. In the Working Group on

Teaching Profession, Zambia preferred to concentrate on teacher assessment procedures while other SADC countries focused on improving the inspectorate. In some cases, such as the Working Groups on Education Statistics and on the Teaching Profession, areas of national concentration could provide an initial base for developing centres of excellence and for facilitating the South/South collaboration.

■ *Building organizational linkages*

A key feature of the Working Groups that are engaged in effective organizational capacity development is that they acknowledge that they cannot accomplish their tasks single-handedly. Therefore, they recognize, identify and involve other organizations that can facilitate their work. Organizational linkages are encouraged across governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, parastatals and the private sector. The groups are therefore facilitating the establishment of organizational networks and fostering a conducive envi-



ronment for developing strong organizations.

■ *Facilitating the creation of new organizations*

Where there were no appropriate organizations, some Working Groups have facilitated the creation of new organizations. The Working Group on Female Participation facilitated the creation of FAWE which is now the key partner. The creation of ERNESA and ERNWACA was facilitated by the Working Group on Research and Policy Analysis. The Working Group on Education and Finance is also in the process of creating a network of African professionals—and others—with expertise in the area of education finance.

■ *Strengthening existing organizations*

Mostly referred as institution building in the existing literature, the strengthening of existing organizations here refers to Working Group efforts that *fortify existing African institutions*. Working Groups that have a *strong African pres-*

ence use this strategy. For such groups, African institutions are given a fair share of the responsibility for program activities. Such activities cover the whole program cycle, starting with the design, development, implementation and evaluation/feedback and continued improvements. The Working Group on Female Participation is a good example here. Although the Working Group leadership is based out of the continent, it has a distinctly strong presence in Africa with the Rockefeller Foundation offices in Nairobi, the African Academy of Sciences, FAWE Secretariat and national chapters, FEMSA secretariat, FEMSA national chapters, Mazingira Institute and the University of Cape Town.

Several strategies are used effectively to *empower Africans to take on a leadership role* in the work of the group. First, there is *counterparting* of the leadership which allows for the African counterpart to acquire the knowledge, skills and institutional memory of the work of the Working Group. Second, is the *physical presence* of the Working Group in Africa through which African organizations learn to steer the work of the group. The creation and/or facilitation of *African learning organizations* takes diverse forms of support that go beyond the strict work of the Working Group: setting up offices and all their core activities, provision of equipment, fostering skill acquisition in management, administration, finance management, program execution, etc.

Although young, the Working Group on Education and Finance is yet another example. By choosing CODESRIA as an implementing agent, this group is also set to strengthen CODESRIA in a fashion similar to that of the Working Group on Female Participation. The recently formed Working Group on Nonformal Education also has an explicit intention to hand over its coordination to an appropriate African institutions.

These three Working Groups should serve as role models toward the heightened *Africanization of the ADEA*. Their strategy should, in the long run, more holistically prepare Africa for the take over of the work of ADEA.

#### ■ *Task network allocation*

Organizational linkages are sustainable only if they are characterized by complementarity in the undertaking of tasks. Hollow linkages are really not sustainable. Effective Working Groups are those that skilfully form complementary task networks and allocate those tasks to collaborating partners. In this regard, the Working Groups on Education Statistics, Teaching Profession, and Female Participation offer good models.

Interviews revealed that although many Working Groups have African partners, it is not always clear what the roles of those partners are. At best some of the “partners” saw little sense in attending Working Group meetings and activities because of their perceived lack of substantive role. At worst, they resented participation because they saw themselves as being used to endorse and perhaps

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31. If not supplemented by some other teacher review mechanism, a total elimination of efficiency bars could have negative implications for maintenance of standards.

legitimize policies and programs in which they have little say.

At the level of the ADEA Secretariat and the Working Groups themselves, there is a distinct move toward *expertise-based allocation of tasks*. This practice is *evolving an inter-group coherence mechanism*, and a systemic approach that, over time, could strengthen organizational links across the Working Groups. The Working Groups on Female Participation, Education Statistics, Teaching Profession, Books and Learning Materials, Nonformal Education and Finance and Education are constantly exploring areas of common concern and potential collaboration. For example, plans are underway for the Working Group on Education Statistics to assist the Working Group on Books and Learning Materials to develop a reliable database on books and learning materials. The Working Groups on the Teaching Profession, Nonformal Education and on Books and Learning Materials share concerns about the availability and quality of learning materials, while the group on Female Participation shares concerns on the gender dimensions of educational materials. The Finance and Education group shares concerns about educational resource mobilization and utilization with all others, especially the group on Female Participation around the Strategic Resource Planning (SRP) initiative. Through these shared concerns, and this expertise-based task allocation, a task network (**See Diagram B-2 represented below**) is beginning to emerge.

### DIAGRAM B-2. WORKING GROUPS TASK NETWORK

Working Groups that have not yet substantively joined the network—especially the more established Working Groups on Research and Policy Analysis, Education Sector Analysis, and Higher Education—could learn from others already in the net.

- *Improving organizational conditions through incentives and rewards*

One of the key areas of organizational capacity development is the provision of incentives and rewards systems that are appreciated enough to retain trained people. Poor conditions of service and the absence of incentives and rewards can lead to brain drain and the loss of developed capacities. Competent organizations, therefore, use diverse, purposeful and targeted incentive systems to retain human capacities. To this effect, the Working Group on the Teaching Profession, has played a critical role in facilitating the improvement of teacher conditions of service and in improving *teacher incentive systems* in some of its collaborating countries. Indicators of these contributions are found in the packages that were negotiated by the country Working Groups.

In Zambia for instance, the Country Working Group has come to be recognized as one of the champions of conditions of service for teachers. In 1996, the Minister assigned it the task of making a proposal for teachers' salary structure and stipulate conditions of service. Unfortunately, owing to the country's re-



source limitations, the proposed structure was not adopted because a global civil service structure was financially more manageable. Financial constraints notwithstanding, dialogue between the Country Working Group and the ministry has brought significant improvements to conditions of teacher service. Examples include: the institution of the rural hardship allowances for teachers; a housing scheme which allows teachers to purchase houses they live in, or financial support to secure a mortgage for houses in the open market; and a less anxiety-provoking and support-oriented teacher appraisal system, the development of which has benefited from teacher inputs.

Similarly, in Malawi, where teachers were under the Civil Service Commission, the Country Working Group facilitated the formation of the Teaching Service Commission. In collaboration with the Country Working Group, the Commission is expected to draft a teachers' salary structure. Other improvements to conditions of service that the group contributed to include: the institution of parallel promotions, the continuance of service for female teachers who fall pregnant out of wedlock, the right for female teachers to purchase houses just like their male counterparts, the right for female teachers to take a posting where their husbands are not based, the elimination of efficiency bars,<sup>31</sup> a 15% housing allowance, and salary increments for teachers who have attained further training.

The group also contributed to the establishment of a scholarship fund for teachers that is independent of civil service. This has improved teachers' opportunities for further studies. Between 1994 and 1997, seventeen teachers received scholarships for their Masters Degrees in Bristol and seven for their junior degrees in local institutions. In relative terms, interviews revealed that this was a substantial increase for teachers over previous years.

Under the auspices of FAWE, the Working Group on Female Participation also provides rewards in the form *demonstration grants* for innovative projects promoting girls' education: the *Agathe Uliwigiyimana prize*, and a prize for journalists who best report on issues pertaining to girls' education.

A source of motivation provided by nearly all Working Groups are *research grants* and other professionally and financially rewarding tasks like *consultancies*. Like competent organizations, Working Groups provide conducive environments that allow human resources to improve their capacities. Within the African context, where research funds are rare, the Working Groups provide African researchers a nurturing environment for the strengthening of their capacities.

#### ■ *Resource mobilization and provision*

With varying degrees of success, all Working Groups mobilize human and non-human resources for undertaking their tasks. Also provided are material support and equipment especially for the country-level collaborators. For in-

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32. Educating Our Future: National Policy on Education (May 1996, pp. 107-121).

stance, the FEMSA national teams receive not only research funds but also computers, software packages, and printers. The NESIS program of the Working Group on Education Statistics has enhanced the capacities of country groups to solicit support from bilateral agents and the capacities of ministries of education to secure appropriate human resources.

In both Zambia and Zimbabwe, the setting up of the NESIS program facilitated the secondment of relevant human resources from the government statistics offices to the ministries of education. Such redeployments have meant that statisticians are now accountable to the Ministry and are responsive to its needs. Bilateral partners of the NESIS program also provide resources by way of finance and computer equipment. In Zambia in particular, the NESIS team indicated that their products and responsiveness to information needs have earned them high donor confidence. As such, it is much easier for them to secure donor support than before they were involved in the program. The program is catalytic in reinforcing the ministries' capacities to mobilize external resources by negotiating with bilateral agencies.

Another resource that greatly facilitates the maintenance and enhancement of human capabilities is the provision of *reading materials* of diverse sorts—books, manuals, modules, magazines, newsletters etc., provided by nearly all the groups.

## **Institutional capacity development**

### **■ *Changing policy environments***

Activities of several Working Groups are aimed at facilitating the creation of conducive policy environments as an enabling step toward effecting desirable changes in the education systems. The results of the analytical work done under the aegis of the African Academy of Sciences of the Working Group on Female Participation pointed to the need to change national policy environments as a prerequisite for boosting female participation in education. To this effect, FAWE was created and much of its analytical and advocacy work is geared toward grounding the evidence on needed policy changes and changing perceptions of those in policy making decisions. In terms of analytical work, policy review studies are nearly completed in Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zanzibar. Empirically supported and other forms of advocacy efforts of FAWE are numerous. The often cited landmark is the 1994 Mauritius consultation meeting that used empirical evidence to convincingly show ministers of education the need to change their education policies. Owing partially to the efforts of the Working Groups, national education policies are becoming more and more gender sensitive.

The Working Group on the Teaching Profession also works towards the improvement of educational policy environments with respect to the status of teach-

ing and teachers. The country Working Groups in Zambia and Malawi reported their significant contributions to the development of comprehensive education policies with interventions specific to the teaching professions. For instance, in Zambia, most of the key points in the chapter on the teaching profession of the education policy document are drawn from the Country Working Group's action plan.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in Malawi, the Country Working Group reported their significant influence in lobbying the Ministry of Education to develop and articulate a comprehensive education policy which had hitherto appeared in memos and circulars in a fragmented fashion. As a unit, the Country Working Group was requested to make inputs on the section on teachers.

The Working Group on Books and Learning Materials also endeavors to facilitate the development of comprehensive and holistic national book policies. Although no country has drafted a policy yet, progress toward this end was reported from Zambia. Most participating countries have gained awareness of the need to develop comprehensive and holistic national book policies.

The Working Group on Education Research and Policy Analysis strives to improve the use of research findings as a base for policy development, implementation and monitoring. The Working Group on Education Sector Analysis endeavors to improve the quality of sector studies often used to guide education policies. The group also strives to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of such studies, and to disseminate widely worthy lessons discernible from the studies—especially to policy makers and planners.

#### ■ *Changing decision-making processes*

The NESIS program has substantially changed the decision making process in ministries of education. In contrast to the conventional past, where decisions were based on “thumb-suck guestimates”, this program is steadily establishing a decision making culture where statistical evidence matters. In Zambia, for instance, the allocation of school grants and the deployment of teachers is now based on accurate school records. Head teachers and regional education officers are also better able to prepare requisitions for funds and supplies based on more accurate school statistics. Consequently, their requisitions are more easily accepted at the ministry headquarters.

Similar reports of better informed requisition forms also come from Zimbabwe where the NESIS team also reported bringing statistics to bear in assessing community requests for schools. In the past, the pressure that a community could bring to bear on the ministry was a major deciding factor. As a result of the NESIS program, the ministry allocates schools on the basis of real needs as demonstrated by the size of the school-going population. The ministry is also better informed on the national status of educational resource provisions, which helps guide new provisions.

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33. Strategies for improving national economies fall beyond the scope of ministries of education but they can contribute to the national debates on these issues.

Through its strategic resource planning project, the Working Group on Female Participation anticipates to make substantial inputs to decision making processes that ministries follow in mobilizing and allocating financial and other resources. The Working Group on Education Finance should also make substantial contributions to decisions on resource mobilization and allocation processes. This Working Group strives to improve ministries of education's capacity to negotiate—especially with ministries of finance and donors—for more funds allocated for education.

The Working Group on the Teaching Profession also contributed to the rules, regulations and processes governing the teaching force. In Zambia, the country Working Group facilitated the setting up of the Teaching Service Commission, part of whose task is to spell out rules and regulations governing teachers. The Teaching Service Bill was passed in 1996. For teachers, having a separate commission has meant substantial improvements to employment and promotion procedures, efficient processing of licences and teaching authorities, and even timely hearings on teachers' disciplinary cases.

Contributions to effective book selection procedures are made by the Working Group on Books and Learning Materials. The first workshop was run in Zambia.

Virtually all Working Groups contribute to the establishment of procedures for identifying problems and seeking their solutions. As already noted, a key contribution here is the reliance of context-specific empirical evidence to identify context-relevant problems and solutions. Also noteworthy, is the systematization of processes characterized by intensive consultation. Key contributions are from the Working Groups on Education Statistics, Teaching Profession, Female Participation, and Books and Learning Materials.

#### ■ *Institutionalizing/mainstreaming processes and procedures*

Integration of Working Group activities into the mainstream of ministry of education programs is a prominently used strategy. National action plans of the Working Groups on Education Statistics and the Teaching Profession are meant to be ultimately integrated into ministry policies. In some countries, such as Zambia and Zimbabwe this is already happening. Other Working Groups that intend to influence country policies use the same strategy. Institutionalization is a potent tool for sustainability and ensuring that programs transcend specific individuals associated with the Working Groups.

Another effective strategy is the integration of Working Group activities into training curricula of diverse constituencies. For instance the NESIS school records management module is integrated the pre-service teacher training curricula and into in-service training curricula for teachers and education officers in Ethiopia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## **Improving national contexts**

*National economic contexts* can impede capacity development efforts. In

TABLE B-2. EXAMPLES OF ADEA WORKING GROUP RESULTS

Results	WG Teaching Profession	WG Female Participation	WG Education Statistics
<b>Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ open consultation and dialogue</li> <li>➤ improved participation in program design, development and implementation</li> <li>➤ improving research methodology</li> <li>➤ procedures for undertaking diagnostic surveys</li> <li>➤ procedures for undertaking needs assessment</li> <li>➤ using research to identify problems and solutions</li> <li>➤ using research findings to inform policy and practice</li> <li>➤ mainstreaming activities into national policies, and into training programs</li> <li>➤ sharing of experiences</li> <li>➤ improved teacher review and design of teacher assessment procedures</li> <li>➤ improved teacher management and support</li> <li>➤ regional information sharing and collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ open consultation and dialogue</li> <li>➤ the construction of national profiles</li> <li>➤ improving research methodology</li> <li>➤ using research to identify problems and solutions</li> <li>➤ using research findings to inform policy and practice</li> <li>➤ changing decision making procedures</li> <li>➤ sharing of experiences</li> <li>➤ improved resource mobilisation and utilisation procedures</li> <li>➤ improved advocacy strategies</li> <li>➤ improved participation of education ministries</li> <li>➤ improving gender training methodologies</li> <li>➤ regional information sharing and collaborations</li> <li>➤ gender sensitive education decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ the use of research to identify problems and solutions</li> <li>➤ using research findings to inform policy and practice</li> <li>➤ sharing of experiences</li> <li>➤ regional information sharing and collaboration</li> <li>➤ information management procedures</li> <li>➤ using statistical data to inform decision making processes</li> <li>➤ strategies for mobilisation and allocation</li> <li>➤ regional training workshops</li> </ul>
<b>Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ publications</li> <li>➤ country action plans</li> <li>➤ legal frameworks for teacher management</li> <li>➤ survey questionnaires</li> <li>➤ workshop reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research reports from FEMSA</li> <li>➤ research reports from FAWE: SRP</li> <li>➤ demonstration grants FAWE</li> <li>➤ policy research reports FAWE</li> <li>➤ research reports from the AAS</li> <li>➤ abridged research reports (directly from the Working Group)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ technical modules</li> <li>➤ diagnosis modules</li> <li>➤ computer software</li> <li>➤ questionnaires</li> <li>➤ publications</li> <li>➤ computer software packages</li> <li>➤ computers, printers,</li> </ul>

Table B-2. (continued)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ gender training manuals</li> <li>➤ computers, printers, software packages, UPS for all the FEMSA chapters</li> <li>➤ film “These girls are missing”</li> <li>➤ videos</li> <li>➤ pamphlets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ manuals</li> <li>➤ survey questionnaires</li> <li>➤ annual education statistics</li> </ul>	
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ trained inspectors</li> <li>➤ trained teachers</li> <li>➤ improved in-service courses for teachers and the inspectorate</li> <li>➤ Southern African Development Community : Teacher Management and Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ better trained staff of EMIS divisions of ministries of education</li> <li>➤ policy makers who can better use education statistics to inform their decisions</li> <li>➤ more informed diverse consumers of education statistics—politicians, researchers, educators</li> <li>➤ NESIS units in ministries</li> </ul>	
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ improved teacher incentives</li> <li>➤ improved teacher conditions of service</li> <li>➤ improved quality of teacher supervision and support</li> <li>➤ more supportive teacher supervision</li> <li>➤ improved consultations of teachers about their conditions of services</li> <li>➤ improved relations between teacher’s unions and ministries of education</li> <li>➤ improved dispositions of ministry officers to ward teacher conditions of service</li> <li>➤ more gender sensitive teacher supervisors</li> <li>➤ improving research skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ improved gender awareness among educators of all levels and among the general public</li> <li>➤ gender sensitive education policy environments</li> <li>➤ improved knowledge base of determinants of gender inequity in education systems</li> <li>➤ improved strategic resource planning</li> <li>➤ heightened interest in gender research</li> <li>➤ improving female educational opportunities</li> <li>➤ improving research skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ data-based school allocation</li> <li>➤ data-based educational resource allocations</li> <li>➤ improved research skills</li> </ul>

Table B-2. (Continued)

<b>Results</b>	<b>WG Research &amp; Policy Analysis</b>	<b>WG Education Sector Analysis</b>	<b>WG Books &amp; Learning Materials</b>
<b>Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ qualitative research methodology</li> <li>➤ policy dialogue meetings</li> <li>➤ using research to inform education policies and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ consultation with ministries and other potential partners</li> <li>➤ analysis of sector studies</li> <li>➤ development of indicators for the attainment of goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ consultation with ministries and other potential partners</li> <li>➤ book selection procedures</li> <li>➤ procedures for holding national dialogue on book policies</li> <li>➤ research methodologies</li> <li>➤ procedures for developing comprehensive and holistic national book policies</li> </ul>
<b>Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ inventories of sector studies</li> <li>➤ analytical overview of sector studies</li> <li>➤ reports on country-specific sector analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ publications</li> <li>➤ reports</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ trained researchers</li> <li>➤ new organisations: ERNESA and ERNWACA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ better skilled education sector studies analysts</li> <li>➤ policy makers, researchers, and other educationists who are more aware of education sector studies, their strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ publishers trained in publishing management</li> <li>➤ strengthening or improving APNET</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ improving quality of education research</li> <li>➤ heightened interest in education research</li> <li>➤ accumulated body of research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ heightened awareness of education sector studies, their weaknesses and strengths</li> <li>➤ improving analytical skills with respect to sector studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ improved managerial skills with respect to the publishing industry</li> </ul>

Table B-2. (Continued)

<b>Results</b>	<b>WG Nonformal Education</b>	<b>WG Education Finance</b>
<b>Processes</b>	➤ consultations across ministries and other potential partners	➤ consultation across ministries and other potential partners
<b>Products</b>	➤ research reports	
<b>Outputs</b>		➤ improving the CODESRIA resource centre ➤ strengthening CODESRIA
<b>Outcomes</b>		



countries experiencing hardships, shortage of funds was the inhibiting factor most cited by the Country Working Groups. Through their mobilization of funds from external sources, the Working Groups managed, albeit very modestly, to alleviate this constraint. However, sustainable capacity development will depend on individual countries' higher financial commitment.<sup>33</sup>

Another national constraint is the *lack of support of the leadership in ministries of education*. This lack of support has been attributed to lack of appreciation of the importance of the activities of the Working Group. Some Country Working Group activities were reported not to enjoy the pride of place they deserve in the ministries' budget allocations. Although not that common, the lack of support from the leadership is also manifest in the reluctance to allow officers the time they need to execute activities of the Country Working Group. This was especially the case in situations where officers had to travel out of the country. Professional travel was sometimes regarded as rewards that should be evenly distributed among deserving officers, many of whom may not be connected to the Working Groups. Such decisions have adverse effects on the much needed continuity and sustainability of the Country Working Group, as well as on implementation follow-up. Another source of discontinuity was the rate of staff transfers that paid little attention to the need to sustain the skill base required to propel the Country Working Groups' activities.

*Poor national policy environments* are another inhibiting factor that Working Groups grapple with. *Socio-cultural environments* are also a force to reckon with. Social practices, socialization processes and cultural beliefs about female education still remain a challenge for the Working Group on Female Participation, especially with respect to reaching communities. Diverse advocacy strategies are used to influence the support of country leadership, communities, and even learners themselves.

## **Improving international contexts**

Partially owing to Working Group efforts, the international community—bilateral and multilateral agencies—provides supportive environments for the pursuance of capacity development efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa. The structure of Working Groups—where a consortium of agencies work together—has been a key tool for *fostering agency collaboration and coordination* in supporting education in Africa. To this effect, one could say that the initial aim for the formation of ADEA is being accomplished. Working Groups are contributing to the *opening up of national boundaries to African professionals*. By providing funds and forums that bring African professionals together, the Working Groups are nurturing the much needed regional collaborations and are breaking the historic isolation of African professionals. *Seeking Pan African solutions to common problems* such as female participation in education, African languages as media for instruction, cross-boarder publications and book trade is facilitated by efforts of the Working Groups. In this regard, care in maintaining *sensitivity*

to country-specific contexts is a key feature of Working Group facilitation.

Although much remains to be done, the Working Groups also provide forums for the *cross-fertilization of knowledge systems derived from contexts of the “North and the South”*. This helps in identifying Africa-specific and country-specific issues and solutions. The Working Group operations allow for collective intellectual inputs while respecting and deferring to the superiority of Africans in understanding the contextual challenges. This is slowly creating a more conducive international intellectual climate that facilitates optimal use of diverse inputs in the search for effective strategies for capacity development.

## Results

In accordance with the Analytic Framework, **Table B-2** presents examples of the results in four categories: products, processes, outputs and outcomes. When viewing the table, it is important to bear in mind that the results vary widely on the basis of the degree to which Working Groups can mobilize and utilize human and non-human resources. Working Groups with full time coordinators tend to do better than those with part-time coordinators. Further, Working Groups that have successful fund-raising drives also do better than their counterparts.

## Applicable practices and lessons

Experiences of the Working Groups offer some important lessons on conditions and practices that facilitate capacity development. Hopefully, such lessons will assist the Working Groups and other bodies engaged in capacity development to refine their strategies and practices. (See **Table B-2. Examples of ADEA Working Group Results**, page 156).

**Condition 1: Capacity development is facilitated by the recognition and comprehension of capacity gaps and an understanding of their systemic implications. This stimulates readiness to explore interventions.**

One of the most useful roles of the ADEA Working Groups is that they catalyze the interest and readiness levels required for beneficiaries to explore interventions. Sometimes, catalyzing needed readiness levels takes some convincing. Effective capacity development agents are those who invest the time and effort necessary to create or catalyze adequate levels of readiness.

The most effective practices that Working Groups use to stimulate readiness levels are: *the face-to-face contact afforded by facilitation visits of Working Group leaders, substantive and broad-based consultations, empirical evidence accumulated through research, social marketing and consensus building, education and training, sharing of experiences, induced vicarious experiences,*

*and well targeted advocacy with clearly defined messages.* In cases where the above fail, concrete evidence of *a breakdown in the system* has also helped to raise awareness of capacity gaps and catalyzed readiness to explore interventions.

**Condition 2: Responsiveness and sensitivity to unique national contexts—such as policy environments, existing structures and resources—are essential.**

Understanding the nature of capacity gaps is not always induced by external facilitators or by systems breakdowns. Ministries of education have their own internal review mechanisms on the basis of which they rationalize change. Where ministries had already initiated interventions, Working Group leaders have maintained sensitivity and responsiveness by aligning their activities with proposed changes.

For example, where the launching of Working Group programs coincided with national policy changes or with conducive policy environments, the Working Groups focused on reinforcing the implementation of national policies. In contexts where there are no articulated policies, Working Groups contribute to development and articulation of national policies. In contexts where countries already have structures that could house Working Group activities, the Working Groups do not insist on forming new structures but rather work within existing structures. Where such structures do not exist, Working Groups have facilitated the formation of diverse structures like Country Working Groups, committees, and even new organizations. Similarly, the Working Groups sometimes select pilot countries on the basis of the basic infrastructure in the country and the availability of appropriately skilled personnel to ensure effective implementation.

**Condition 3: An adequate level of support and commitment of stakeholders, policy makers in particular, is necessary.**

Human capacity development needs to cover personnel at all levels—managerial, professional, technical, support. However, a strategic approach is needed that includes targeting of human resources with a potential to create opportunities for further capacity development—policy makers, for example. Without their understanding of the capacity gaps, and without their support, the efforts of those below them can be frustrated. Otherwise, capacity development efforts that fail to mobilize and secure their support and commitment are doomed. Indeed, lack of political will and commitment was often cited as a key factor impeding efforts made by technical staff who fully understood and appreciated the severity and implications of capacity limitations.

Practices that enlist the support and commitment of stakeholders, especially policy-makers are essentially those that foster a sense of ownership among critical stakeholders. They include: *soliciting inputs from all stakeholders at all stages of the program, not only when results are announced; explicitly integrat-*

*ing such inputs into programs; keeping stakeholders informed on the progress of the programs; instituting resource and cost sharing—stakeholders take more interest in, and demand more accountability for programs they fund, even if it is partial—and maintaining accountability to policy makers.*

**Condition 4: A systemic and holistic approach to the utilization of the inputs of the Working Groups is needed.**

Despite the reasonable flow of printed information from the ADEA secretariat, most of the interviewed policy level officers, including those who are members of Country Working Groups had no holistic understanding of the ADEA Working Groups. Invariably, officers were only aware of Working Groups in their ministries and only understood those of which they are members. Logically, it was extremely difficult to gain the rationalization behind ministries' choices to participate in the activities of any one Working Group. It seemed that the selection of Working Groups depended largely on the persuasiveness of Working Group leaders than on ministries' hierarchy of priorities. Indeed, in some countries, Country Working Group members lamented the lack of support because their areas of work were not ministries' priorities. What is lacking is a systemic approach to the utilization of Working Group inputs at the country level.

**Condition 5: Mainstreaming Working Group activities into those of the ministries is essential for sustained capacity development.**

One of the strengths of the Working Groups is that they have thus far avoided forming separate enclaves within ministries of education or within other institutions. This is a healthy departure from the project approach to agency assistance where initiatives are at a high risk of extinction when projects phase out.

Practices that effectively mainstream Working Group activities include: *the integration of the Country Working Group programs into national policies; aligning the activities of the Country Working Group to facilitate the implementation of national policies; integration of activities into training and education programs.* In particular, integration into national policies ensures eligibility of activities initiated by Working Groups for national budget allocations.

**Condition 6: A visible, substantive, strong physical presence of Working Groups in African institutions is desirable.**

The presence matters only if it is complemented by the substantive involvement of African partners in critical decision making processes and if African institutions and personnel are actively involved in the Working Groups and not just consumers of their products. Working Groups that have physically and substantively established themselves in Africa have a more comprehensive understanding of African capacities that goes beyond the strict human and institutional capacities required to undertake tasks. Such capacities cover, administration, finance management, project management, personnel management, resource mobilization, allocation and deployment, and even the confidence that comes

with a sense of self-efficacy and empowerment. Strong and substantive African presence also fosters a sense of ownership, commitment and support.

Practices that bolster African involvement and ownership are, simply, principles of good governance such as: inclusiveness in decision making, transparency, accountability to stakeholders, mutual trust and respect, collegiality, open and sustained dialogue etc.

Discussions with African partners revealed that token involvement that keeps African partners at the periphery of Working Group decisions and activities may actually erode the sense of ownership.

**Condition 7: Perceived relevance and a sense of priority and urgency are key. Efforts that are not perceived as addressing national or even institutional priorities are mostly thwarted by lack of support and commitment.**

Some of the practices that ensure contextual relevance of problems and solutions generated through Working Group initiatives are: *research-based, empirically derived diagnosis; the relevance of the research is, in turn, attained through the insistence on country-specific identification of problems and solutions. The Working Groups are in fact, a living example of how research can inform and interface with policy and practice.*

One of the principal strengths of the Working Groups has been the attention they have paid to balancing international perspectives with national autonomy as they identify problems and solutions. Exploiting their international exposure, Working Group leaders provide generic but flexible guidelines for the undertaking of different activities.

*Distinguishing between guidance and imposition, and the avoidance of the latter* has been an effective practice of the Working Groups. All guidelines are provided on a mutual understanding that recipients may adopt, adapt or reject them.

**Condition 8: Like all good investments, capacity development has its initial and running costs. Mobilization of adequate human and non-human resources is necessary for the success of the Working Groups.**

*Securing of adequate human resources—in terms of the time allocation, expertise and appropriate disposition—along with the financial resources necessary for the implementation of the work programs are key.* Working Group leaders who can devote minimal time toward the work of the ADEA register fewer results. Agencies that are able to provide for full time salaries of Working Group leaders, and can provide and/or raise reasonably large amounts of money naturally register more results. Working Group leaders who are perceived as having a collegial attitude—and all those other practices of good governance—toward their African partners get more accomplished.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Theoretical and research literature shows that capacity development is a complex and intricate undertaking involving interactive and iterative improvements of a host of factors that are nested in contexts of different levels of specificity. Capacity development also employs a range of approaches, strategies and tactics, a key feature of which is constant reflection and refinement. Evidence from the field suggests that the ADEA Working Groups are, by and large, successfully grappling with the complexity of their challenge. However, a few but significant areas of weakness warrant attention. This report concludes by making the following recommendations:

- Information targeted for policy level officers needs to be condensed and holistic. The information should be clear about the action points required of such officers.
- To assist officials acquire and keep a holistic picture of ADEA activities, brief updates on Working Group activities, strategies and accomplishments should be regularly prepared and disseminated by the ADEA Secretariat.
- Ministries of Education should consider assigning to a single office the responsibility to synthesize the reports of individual Working Groups into holistic but terse summaries that can be used as a basis for a continuous briefing of the ministry top echelons.
- From a holistically informed perspective, participating countries should adopt a rationalized and systemic approach to the utilization of Working Groups' inputs.
- Working Group leaders should more effectively, holistically and consistently document their processes, strategies, problems and accomplishments and should periodically forward such records to the ADEA Secretariat and/or ministries' ADEA contact points for appropriate dissemination.
- Working Groups should patiently and deliberately facilitate the development of interest and readiness levels necessary for African partners to understand capacity gaps and to initiate requisite interventions.
- Working Group leaders should intensify their solicitation of involvement and commitment of policy makers.
- Working Groups should have more visible physical and substantive presence in African countries and institutions.
- Working Groups should intensify their use of African institutions as production agents and not just as consumers of products generated somewhere else.
- In their daily practices, Working Groups and Country Working Groups should continue to observe good governance practices such as transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, substantive participation, shared ownership, mutual respect, mutual trust, collegiality, etc.
- Modalities of cooperation among Working Groups should be tested, established and continuously elaborated.

- Development agencies and African governments should consider improved provision of human and non-human resources to enable Working Groups to more effectively implement their work programs.
- African governments should improve their level of support for and commitment to the work programs of the Working Groups—especially in terms of releasing personnel.
- African governments, and development agencies should intensify their efforts to elaborate a program and spell out mechanisms and modalities for the

Africanization of the ADEA.

- African governments and their partners should clarify the very construct of Africanization as applied to the ADEA.

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## Cooperation,

# **But Limited Control and Little Ownership**

*by Joel Samoff*

## **Massive research, most of it little known, much of it little used**

As the twentieth century closes, education in Africa is in crisis. How do we know? After all, impressions can be misleading, even those of experienced observers. How then do we know, really know, what is happening in African education? Dozens of recent studies tell us, confirming the reports of many earlier analyses. Sometimes with great confidence, sometimes with careful cautiousness, sometimes highlighting successes, more often identifying problems, those periodic studies tell us a good deal more about education in Africa. Or do they?

Their mass is truly astounding. Thousands of pages, many of them tables, figures, and charts. Notwithstanding the diversity—of country, of commissioning agency, of specific subject— among the Africa education sector studies undertaken during the early 1990s, most striking are their similarities. With few exceptions, these studies have a common framework, a common approach, and a common methodology. Given their shared starting points, their common findings are not surprising. African education is in crisis. Governments cannot cope. Quality has deteriorated. Funds are misallocated. Management is poor and administration inefficient. From Mauritania to Madagascar, the recommendations too are similar: reduce the central government role in providing education; decentralize; increase school fees; encourage and assist private schools; reduce direct support to students, especially at tertiary level; introduce double shifts and multi-grade classrooms; assign high priority to instructional materials; favor in-service over pre-service teacher education.

Education sector analysis has become a central feature of international cooperation to support African education. Notwithstanding their potential utility, however, many studies remain under-used, even unread. Although they could play a key role in formulating education development projects, programmes, and policies, their circulation is generally so limited that often they remain unknown outside the agency and researchers who conducted the study. Un-

published, education sector studies do not appear in available bibliographies and source lists. It is not uncommon to find key government personnel unaware of a recently completed study and its recommendations. Staff in other governments and agencies, who might well find the analysis instructive and perhaps directly useful, have no reliable way even to know of potentially relevant studies. Thus, a wealth of sector analysis remains inaccessible to many of those who need it most, and an accumulation of experience on development policies and programmes remains unexploited. A process that could build international partnership instead fosters frustration and reinforces suspicion and distrust.

Let us explore how and why that occurs. In particular, let us examine the ways in which education sector analysis functions to support, and unfortunately far too often, to undermine international cooperation and a sense national ownership of its findings and recommendations.

## **Studying African education in the context of the aid relationship**

Post-colonial Africa has confronted what has to date proved to be an unresolvable tension. In most countries, the pressure to expand access to and improve the quality of education has been enormous. At the same time, poverty and the need to address simultaneously multiple high priority goals make it difficult, perhaps impossible, to fund the education expansion and improvement that are demanded. Convinced of their necessity but unable to fund the expansion and improvement of education, African countries have turned to external agencies for assistance. Over time, it has come to seem not only obvious but unexceptional that new initiatives and reform programmes require external support, and therefore responsiveness to the agenda and preferences of the funding agencies. Economic crisis and structural adjustment have generally intensified Africa's recourse to foreign assistance. While the volume of that assistance is a very small part of Africa's total spending on education, it currently plays a strategic and critical role in most African countries. That dependence is especially clear in education.

To inform, rationalize, and justify their assistance programmes, external agencies commission education sector analyses. Their scope and type vary. While some of those studies focus on all education activities, others limit their attention to formal schooling, or to basic education, or to curriculum and instructional materials. All seek to develop a broad overview of their subjects, gathering and analyzing relevant data, identifying pressing problems, developing explanations for those problems, and proposing remedial action.

The primary producers and consumers of education sector studies in Africa are by far the funding and technical assistance agencies. Externally initiated, commissioned, and supported studies are numerous, wide-ranging, and now constitute a major portion of all research on African education. Several factors

combine to support the expanded role of external agencies in commissioning and conducting these studies. In part, research results have become the primary warrant for aid allocations. In part, the profusion of externally-initiated sector studies reflects the efforts of agencies to provide policy advice in addition to funds, particularly in a context of financial crisis and adjustment. With a proposed shift from project-focused aid to programmatic, policy, and sectoral support, sector studies become even more important. And in part, the prominence of the external assistance agencies in conducting research reflects the consequences of the financial crisis that has threatened higher education in most of Africa and left African researchers simply unable to undertake major studies without external support.

Over time, African researchers have come to play a greater role in education sector studies. Even so, overall education sector studies remain largely an externally initiated and organized process that involves limited dialogue with researchers and interested groups within the country and little sustained communication that extends beyond the study period. There have been some innovative and important exceptions, but they remain just that, exceptions. Hence, making their findings more usefully available to those responsible for Africa's education systems and reviewing critically the education sector study process are both long overdue.

## **Reviewing education sector studies in Africa**

These concerns about access to and the use of sector studies led to the creation in 1989 of the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis (WGESA) within the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA; formerly, Donors to African Education) as a focal point for exchanging information and experience in sector analysis. To improve access to the wealth of information and experience contained in sector analyses, the WGESA, with UNESCO as lead agency, initiated the collection and review of documents and the development of an inventory and analytic overview of education sector studies in Africa completed during the late 1980s (citations for this and other relevant reports and publications are included in the Selected References). Updating and extending that earlier effort, a follow up review was published in 1996: *Analyses, Agendas, and Priorities for Education in Africa: A Review of Externally Initiated, Commissioned, and Supported Studies of Education in Africa, 1990-1994* (Paris: UNESCO, prepared by Joel Samoff with N'Dri T. Assié-Lumumba, 1996). Using agencies' and governments' definitions of education sector study, that review provides abstracts of nearly 240 studies and reports undertaken in Sub-Saharan Africa with support from a wide range of funding and technical assistance agencies and highlights points of convergence and divergence, major themes, and puzzling gaps.

Limited dissemination of these studies is only part (and a manifestation) of a broader set of problems in the process and content of sector analysis that seri-

ously affect its quality and relevance. The work accomplished to date by the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, particularly through the inventory and analytic overview and related follow-up activities, has developed a fuller picture of both the positive contributions and the shortcomings of sector analysis today.

We are concerned here with the role of education sector analysis as a vehicle for international partnership in development cooperation that generates useful information and understandings in a manner that empowers Africa's education policy makers, administrators, and education communities more broadly. To lay the foundation for understanding how that vehicle works, we must review, very briefly, what we have learned from an analysis of more than a decade of education sector studies in Africa.

### **A striking convergence**

The starting point is aid dependence. Innovation, reform, even the day-to-day operation of the education system all require external assistance. In the midst of crisis, what is to be done? Revise the curriculum? Who will fund that? Publish and distribute new text books and other instructional materials? What source of funds? In-service seminars for teachers, training for adult educators, microscopes for the laboratories, repair the roofs and replace the broken windows, which aid agency will fund those of interest?

At first glance, this research, collectively termed education sector studies, seems quite straightforward. A foreign assistance agency is considering supporting education in a particular country, an activity, a programme, or perhaps the entire sector. To determine how best to use its funds, the agency commissions a study of education. If done well, that study provides an overview of relevant background, a clear picture of the current situation, a discussion of major problems, and sometimes recommendations for the use of aid funds. Informed by that report, the agency then decides on which activities or programmes to support and the level and duration of their funding.

In practice, things are rather more complex. Previous efforts, both successes and failures, may receive limited attention that is often more descriptive than analytic. As a consequence, what are taken to be the lessons of previous experience may depend more on individuals' or agencies' preferences than on systematic research and interpretation. Similarly, what is problematic in the present may be implicitly assumed rather than explicitly stated or itself the subject of study. Where they are adopted uncritically the approach and methodology of the sector study may delimit, shape, and weight the findings in ways not readily apparent to education policy makers both within and outside the country. Available education data may be incomplete, inconsistent, inaccurate, or all three. Even more problematic, sector study authors may deal with flawed data in very different ways, making it impossible to compare the results and recommendations of two ostensibly similar studies, even within the same country. Compounding all of these problems, time pressures commonly require that education sector

studies be completed far more quickly than everyone involved deems desirable.

The dilemma, then, is that education sector studies are both very important and very uneven. While some offer solid contributions to education policy and programmatic decisions, others seem superficial, uncritical, and unpersuasive. Reviewing these studies as a group helps us understand why the process of aid-related education sector analysis, notwithstanding positive intentions and optimistic expectations, remains so frustrating to nearly everyone involved. In many respects, the education sector studies of the late 1980s and early 1990s are strikingly similar.

First, notwithstanding the diversity of the countries studied and the agencies that initiated the studies, those documents had generally similar assumptions, methodologies, observations, conclusions, and recommendations. Indeed, although there were of course exceptions, the major elements of the approach to African education that has appeared most prominently in the publications of the World Bank were apparent in these documents. Nearly all called for a shift of funding from higher to basic education, an expanded role for the private sector, increased student fees for post-primary schooling, and decentralization of education authority. The more recent studies assigned high priority to girls' education, the development and distribution textbooks and other instructional materials, and in-service teacher education.

Second, in their emphasis on education finance, their attention to what was perceived to be the mismatch between curriculum and labor market needs, and their concern with what they termed external and internal efficiency, those studies had little to say about learning.

Third, there was little evidence in these studies of the education goals articulated by African governments and educators. Few of these studies addressed fostering an inquiring and critical orientation, eliminating discrimination and reducing elitism, promoting national unity, preparing for the rights and obligations of citizenship, or developing among learners a sense of individual and collective competence, self-reliance, and self-confidence.

Fourth, although all of these studies were undertaken as part of a foreign aid relationship (and generally for that reason), none addressed the actual magnitude of education assistance, either within the context of a particular project or across the education sector more generally. Nor did those studies explore whether education assistance resulted in a net inflow or outflow of capital or offer guidance on identifying and reversing an outward flow.

Fifth, while nearly all of those studies stressed capacity building, there was little explicit attention to the eventual Africanization of the education sector analysis process itself.

Sixth, few if any of those studies seemed to have been the product of a sustained dialogue between the external agency and the education community, both governmental and non-governmental, both official and unofficial, within the country studied. The voices of teachers, students, and parents can scarcely be heard.

Seventh, essentially all of those studies were strikingly uncritical of assump-

tions, approaches, and methodologies in the study of education. For example, even though some of those studies pointed with concern to problems in official statistics and expenditure data, very few sought either to generate their own data independent of those official sources or to develop strategies for making effective and reasonable use of flawed data. From the evidence of the studies themselves, few if any were exposed to critical review by people with relevant expertise.

Finally, a medical metaphor dominates the perspective of most of these studies. They are diagnostic and then prescriptive. That is, they begin by assuming or observing a problem, identify important symptoms, and then diagnose the causative systemic illness. The remedy follows, generally in the form of an aid programme oriented toward whatever are determined to be the key intervention points. Where necessary, conditions attached to the aid insure compliance, that is, require the country to take specific action.

There are of course exceptions. A few studies reflect a much more substantial national role in conception, implementation, and analysis. A few indicate efforts to explore the understandings, perspectives, and preferences of teachers and students. A few suggest a genuine dialogue among those commissioning the study, those carrying it out, and those who manage the education system.

Overall, however, it is the similarities that are most striking. Why? Education sector studies are intended to explore national, and sometimes sub-national, education systems and to describe characteristics and highlight problems specific and perhaps unique to a particular country. By design, education sector studies are not continental comparisons. Their purpose is to support decisions about allocations in specific settings at specific times. It is of course possible that more than 50 countries are experiencing the same problems in the same way at the same time and need the same reforms. Surely there are some common elements. But it is more likely that the similar findings reflect common approach and methodology and, more deeply, the nature of the aid relationship and funding arrangements and the dominant role of the external agencies in this relationship.

All of that together, common findings, similar diagnosis and prescription, standard approach and vantage point, all driven by the aid relationship, help us understand the frustration with the education sector analysis process. Though embedded in the rhetoric of partnership and though conducted within Africa, increasingly by African consultants, for the most part education sector studies remain distinctly foreign. That is, those who are responsible for guiding and managing Africa's education systems do not regard these as their studies, developed for their benefit, and useful in their daily work. Those who operate Africa's education systems, from principals and headmasters to teachers, have even less sense of ownership. Students, parents, and communities have none at all. Where there is little effective and genuine partnership in initiating and managing education sector studies, there is even less national ownership of their results.

The reform agenda reflected in these studies is neither necessarily wrong nor universally inappropriate. But it is unlikely to be achieved as long as it remains

marginal, not infrequently an irritating intrusion, to the daily business of running the schools.

Let us return to the education sector studies to understand better how and why that occurs and what can be done about it.

## **Education sector analysis: great potential, greater problems**

Education sector studies are intended to contribute to the improvement of education and thus to the quality of life and development in Africa more generally. Notwithstanding their varying quality, their rapid proliferation reinforces the link between systematic research and informed policy decisions. Their common concern with education finance has served to insist on greater attention to public policy choices, to efficient and cost-effective management, and to accountability in education decision making. As Africa's educators have themselves developed greater expertise in these areas, their credibility and legitimacy with their own finance ministry and with international agencies has increased. In particular circumstances it seems clear that externally initiated education sector studies have informed and strengthened policy discussions and decisions.

Let us return to our concern with international partnership and national ownership. Notwithstanding their positive contributions and notwithstanding the formal cooperation agreements within which education sector studies are undertaken, it is clear that the process of education sector analysis frequently impedes rather than reinforces partnership, which in turn leads to limited national appropriation of findings and recommendations. However well intentioned and conceived individual studies may be, the education sector analysis process, from conception and assumptions through organization and orientation to conduct and presentation, may function in practice to limit their utility. How does that occur? Highlighting these issues here is of course itself intended to inform and enrich the discussion of education in contemporary Africa and thereby contribute to its improvement.

### **Constrained effective national participation**

Some years ago nearly all education sector studies were conceived and implemented by foreigners, generally by either employees or consultants of the commissioning agency. Over time, African education specialists have come to play an increasingly visible role on the study teams. In the earliest studies reviewed, few Africans were listed among the researchers and authors. During the late 1980s many study teams had African participation. By the early 1990s nearly all did. Currently, while expatriates continue to provide most sector study leadership, it is no longer uncommon to find an African team leader, especially for



smaller scale studies.

Yet, apparently expanded partnership in conducting studies seems not to have led to increased national ownership of the sector analysis process. Even with increased local participation, many, perhaps most, senior education officials continue to regard education sector analysis as a foreign initiative that must be tolerated, even supported, but that does not address their needs or contribute to solving their problems. In candid moments, many funding and technical assistance agency representatives agree. If the implementing personnel are increasingly African, why do sector studies seem so intractably foreign?

In large part education sector studies remain foreign because the national participation, which has indeed increased, comes well after the most important decisions have been made: deciding that an education sector study is needed, determining what is to be studied, specifying topics, approach, methodology, and deadlines, indicating the desired content and organization of the final report, and selecting the study team. Once constituted, the study team finds itself constrained by the formal and informal decisions already made. Team members may have been granted or may assert some autonomy, but with very few exceptions always within the confines of the framing expectations and prior decisions. Even the analytic tools and the form and format of the report may already have been specified. Indeed, it is not unusual to find that sections of that report have been outlined or drafted prior to the beginning of the field research. As well, specialized roles and responsibilities may so compartmentalize the work that other than the team leader no study team member has a complete view of the entire project or how each individual's work will be integrated into the final report.

National education managers regard most sector studies as foreign because they are. Notwithstanding national participation in the study team, the sector analysis agenda has not emerged organically from the character and demands of the national education system as understood by its major constituencies or from the needs and interests of its policy and decision makers. Where they exist, major policy or framing documents may themselves reflect the assumptions, orientation, and priorities of the funding agency. Nor, most often, are its results and recommendations organized and presented in ways that make them directly useful to education managers and administrators. Curriculum developers, teacher educators, principals, teachers, students, and parents see even less utility, if they see the outcomes at all.

### **Sector analysis as lightning strike rather than continuing process**

Nearly all education sector studies reflect what has come to be a standard approach to understanding education systems, their characteristics, and their problems in the Third World. Appropriate experts, generally selected by external agencies (though normally paid by the country being studied with funds re-

ceived as external assistance), spend a short period consulting relevant local officials, reviewing available data, visiting selected sites, and recording their impressions. Their report, which sometimes, but not always, reflects local input, takes the form of a series of observations followed by a set of recommendations. That in turn becomes a foundation document on which external assistance provision and use can be based and, occasionally, assessed. Some reports of this sort slip silently into oblivion. Other reports, however, are legitimized as wisdom. What they have to say becomes the facts on which later analyses and policy decisions rest. A few reports attract such wide attention, usually due more to the chance of circumstances than to their exceptionally solid findings or their incisive analyses or their brilliant recommendations, that they are integrated into the platform on which rest large scale commentaries about the state of education in Africa or the Third World.

In the short term, this process of report and knowledge generation seems to serve the external agencies well. They can call on reliable experts whose judgments they trust. They can arrive in short order at sweeping conclusions with far-reaching ramifications. Local participation in the process lends legitimacy to the results without seriously challenging external control. The demands of the foreign aid cycle, with its unreasonably high expectations and unrealistically short time frames, can be met.

Over the longer term, neither the country nor the external agencies are very well served by the heavy reliance on this approach. Its defects are several and consequential. Among them are the disabilities of generally ahistorical, uncontextual short-order studies. Although experienced and well prepared foreigners and their national collaborators can learn a good deal in a short time, a rich understanding of the economic, political, and social contexts of education requires systematic observation over a long time.

There are (at least) two related but distinct problems here. First, broad scale studies undertaken in short times with tight deadlines risk broad scale misunderstandings, especially if they are little attentive to relevant previous and parallel research. Standard methodology and presumed global patterns become substitutes for systematic and detailed empirical observation. Single events become modal patterns, coupled events become time series and trends, and off-hand remarks become definitive characterizations. Insights can indeed be developed rapidly. Understanding usually takes more time. Depending on sifting and winnowing, cumulating and criticizing, wisdom generally takes even longer. Where they do not address seriously their own limitations, education sector studies can be positively dangerous.

Serious as that is, the second consequence of short time horizons is even more problematic. Ideally, education sector analysis ought to be a continuing process, shaped by and integrated into the overall management and administration of national education systems. Policy and decision makers, managers, and administrators all need effective and reliable information about the state of the education system, its achievements, its problems, and the like. They need that

information, not only the basic data generated by a competent data collection and monitoring service, but also the analysis of those data and its implications, on a daily and continuing basis. The spasmodic character of most education sector studies, the intense bursts of activity interspersed with less energetic attention to the broader systematic analysis, and the limited familiarity with previous and parallel studies combine to make it difficult to develop a continuing process of sector analysis well integrated into the operation of the national education system. Notwithstanding their potential utility, lightning studies and instant wisdom are in practice corrosive of sustained analysis situated at the core of the education system and accessible to those who most need it.

Aid officials must of course operate within their agencies' timing and pace. That inclines them toward short-order research based on brief visits that generate rapid results, often with very undesirable consequences. The alternative is not to ignore lines of authority and responsibility within the funding and technical assistance agencies (which in any case is not possible). The tensions between agency needs for quick and comprehensive studies on the one hand and education managers' needs for systematic and sustained collection and analysis of education data probably cannot be eliminated, but could be better managed. Programme officers and project managers need to find ways to make more effective use of (and to commission and support) research that cannot be completed within a few weeks. They must find ways to reconcile the political demands and annual budgets that constrain them with a clear understanding that significant education reform is likely to be a lengthy process. They must also find ways to nurture and support education sector analysis that is integrated into the daily fiber of the national education system rather than attached to its outer shell like an extra appendage every few years.

### **Restricted accessibility, transparency, and accountability**

It is increasingly understood that effective implementation of development programmes requires what has come to be termed ownership. People everywhere are much more likely to work to make successful those programmes that they consider their own, rather than others' initiatives or directives. Despite that understanding, these studies are often considered official secrets and remain generally inaccessible outside a very limited circle. Most often, those charged with implementation see themselves as consumers, not owners.

In addition to and perhaps incorporating the medical metaphor noted above, most of these documents reflect the perspective of observers situated outside rather than within the education system. Again, the terminology used is both instructive and formative. Reforms are termed interventions, that is insertions from outside rather than initiatives from within. How are African educators to become owners of those reforms when they are the objects of the surgery, not the

surgeons? Education is termed a delivery system, not an organic process in which learners are the doers rather than the receivers. How do recipients become owners?

Much of the writing on African development in the 1990s stresses transparency and accountability. Education sector studies, however, remain largely opaque, more accountable to parliaments and programme officers in the North Atlantic than to educators and other learners in Africa. Where there is little clarity on the process and even less local accountability, it is not surprising that national appropriation remains so limited.

### **Insufficient effective critical review**

Transparency and accountability are also prominent in the academic community. Exposure to critical review by scholars and others with relevant expertise is widely understood to be an essential strategy for improving the quality of research and rejecting unsupported findings and inferences. While academic peer review has many flaws, its fundamental principle is sound, both for academia and for public policy. Analyses are exposed to general scrutiny, including those most familiar with the topic and methodology. When it functions well, that exposure generates criticisms and comments that identify problems in the original study and foster improvements. Even with a short time horizon, education sector studies could clearly benefit from others' critiques. Yet most often the research that is part of education sector analysis, research used to justify particular courses of action, remains sheltered from peer examination and evaluation.

Why is this limited peer review problematic? One consequence is that inaccurate information, inappropriate methods, and unsupported interpretations may pass unchallenged. As well, sheltered from critical scrutiny, education sector studies are themselves commonly uncritical in several important respects. As noted above, they rarely acknowledge debates about the key constructs they employ or justify the use of those constructs. Almost never do they report research that has come to different conclusions or that supports the opposite recommendation.

Indeed, these studies seem to pay little attention to the results or consequences of three decades of recommendations of the sort that they continue to offer. If the analysis in earlier education sector studies was as clear and as correct as its presenters suggested, why do the problems identified then still seem so intractable? Where the recommendations of earlier sector studies were implemented, do the funding and technical assistance agencies not bear major responsibility for the current situation? And if the earlier analysis and recommendations were not implemented or did not achieve the intended results, why expect similar analysis and advice in the 1990s to have a different outcome?

Some of the documents reviewed offer largely unqualified praise for government and agency education programmes, often with very limited empirical analysis of what was undertaken and what was accomplished. There may, of course, be

a political imperative to highlight the most positive features of particular supported programmes or the education aid relationship more generally. Reports of that sort, however, do not provide an empirical or analytic foundation for improved education policies and programmes.

In sum, restricted circulation combines with the deterioration of universities and education research capacities to preclude effective review of most education sector studies by individuals and groups with relevant expertise and experience. As a result, their quality suffers. As well, an important opportunity to foster participatory decision making in education and shared responsibility for education outcomes is lost.

## **Two tracks of education policy research**

In most African countries education research is sharply bifurcated. Moving down one track are university and research institute staff and their students, engaged in the sorts of studies that are common throughout the world. Their research may be small scale, for example a classroom observational project undertaken by a master's student, or large scale, for example a national survey of teacher job satisfaction. Educators sometimes find in those studies immediate utility. For example, research that compares different approaches to mathematics instruction may lead directly to revised curricular materials. Or that research may explore fundamental characteristics of the learning process, with no expected immediate application. Currently, research of this sort is poorly funded, is readily available only to those with access to university libraries and archives, and if published appears in specialized journals with small distribution.

Moving down a parallel track is the research commissioned by external funding and technical assistance agencies, the education sector studies. Intended to be directly relevant to public policy, completed quickly, and immediately applied, research of this sort is generally much better funded. Its results, too, are commonly little circulated. Labeled "restricted" or "confidential," findings and recommendations remain on the desks and shelves of the project managers at the commissioning agency and a few government officials.

Recent South African experience, the focus of a WGESA education sector analysis review, highlights another sort of bifurcation in education research. In opposition, the anti-apartheid movement sought to lay the foundation for post-apartheid education policy. To do so, in addition to the widely publicized student protests and boycotts, the democratic movement launched a people's education campaign, created university-based education policy units, and set in motion a large scale review of current and future education policies and policy options. Involving nearly 300 people, that effort produced twelve volumes of reports and projections. A follow up effort generated a set of implementation plans for the new education leadership. Here, then, was a clear national education initiative, begun in opposition and subsequently reflected in the electoral manifesto and other documents of the political alliance that assumed power in

1994, for the most part managed by experienced education researchers. Although that initiative relied on substantial foreign support, the principal overseas funding source, Sweden, had essentially no role in specifying topics, determining approach and methodology, or selecting researchers.

After South African opposition organizations were unbanned in early 1990, external agencies rushed to commission education sector studies, anticipating new or expanded aid programmes. Nearly one-fourth of all education sector studies undertaken in Africa during the early 1990s were in South Africa. But almost without exception, as they organized their studies the external agencies ignored the education researchers of the democratic movement and its education policy units. Here again we find two tracks. One set of documents talks about the role of education in constructing a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic society. The other emphasizes building more classrooms and upgrading teachers' qualifications. One set of documents envisions lifelong education, including publicly supported early childhood programmes and adult education activities with recognized and transferable credentials. The other is concerned with schooling, with little apparent interest in either very young children or unschooled adults. One set of documents understands organizational capacity building in terms of democratic decision making, responsiveness to members, and accountability. The other refers primarily to developing skills in communication, record keeping, and managing accounts. In short, in fundamental respects, the education analysis and planning of the democratic movement and of the external agencies have moved down distinctly separate tracks.

Across the African continent, it seems clear, there is little systematic interaction between the education studies commissioned by funding and technical assistance agencies and the education research undertaken at universities, colleges, and research institutes. Indeed, sometimes each track seems to be little aware of, or visible to, the other track. A healthy research environment reinforces connections and collaboration, promotes wide dissemination, discussion, and critique of findings, and encourages cumulation of knowledge generated by different people in different settings. The current setting for education research in Africa fosters just the opposite: separate enclaves, limited collaboration, proprietary results, restricted circulation, disdain for others' work, and the sorts of miscommunication and misunderstandings that breed distrust. While in some circumstances multiple studies of a particular subject may be desirable, this disjunction between the two tracks of education research in contemporary Africa is likely to reduce the quality of the resulting sector analysis, limit its national appropriation, and impede capacity building.

In some countries the declining availability of research funding promotes a particular sort of convergence of the two tracks: selected, sometimes nearly all, senior education researchers become the employees of or regular consultants for funding and technical assistance agencies. Surprisingly, that does not eliminate the gap between the two sorts of education research. It does, however, make the entire research enterprise dependent on the preferences and priorities of external

funding agencies. That in turn may or may not be congruent with the national education agenda and may change regularly and rapidly as one set of programme officers replaces another. While in a small country it may be neither possible nor desirable to avoid entirely this convergence of academic and contract research, the resulting constraints on independence and autonomy risk becoming major burdens on the quality and utility of research on both tracks.

## **The allure of quantification**

Numbers both clarify and obfuscate. Education planning and management would be impossible without them, yet their careless use, which, alas, seems to occur frequently in education sector studies, threatens to make planning and programme development little more than wishful thinking. This is not simply a technical problem that can be resolved by more careful data collection. The allure of quantification puts at risk education policy, planning, and management in settings where margins of error are wide and rough approximations are more useful decision tools than incomplete data series inconsistent statistics. The fascination with numbers often lulls us into expecting a level of precision that is simply not obtainable from available data. In practice, that apparent precision is often a facade that obscures the actual course of events. Nor can quantification be assumed to assure the reproducibility of results or even the comparability of data over time (and that within a single country).

The problems are several. Available figures are often inaccurate, inconsistent, and not readily comparable. Schools, districts, and other sources provide incomplete and inaccurate information. Sources differ on periodization and on the specification of expenditure categories. Especially common are the confusion of budget and actual expenditure data and the comparison of budget figures in one year with expenditure reports in another. Recurrent and development (capital) expenditures are treated inconsistently. Often the available data do not include individual, family, local government, and direct foreign spending. Discussions of the cost of education in fact refer to government expenditures on education. Inflation, deflation, and exchange rates are treated inconsistently. Data series are frequently too short to be sure that observed variation reflects significant change.

Many education sector studies include an early caveat, calling readers' attention to gaps and other problems in the data they use. Unfortunately, often even careful researchers proceed to ignore their own reservations, developing arguments that rely on data characteristics and/or a level of precision not found in the original data.

But the implications of those caveats are clear. First, it is essential to take seriously that margin of error, that is, to treat most national statistics as rough approximations. Second, small observed changes may be more apparent than real and must be treated as such. Even changes on the order of 5-10% (or more)

may reflect nothing more significant than random fluctuations, annual variations, and flawed statistics. Consequently, apparent changes of that magnitude are a weak foundation for broad inferences and for public policy. Third, both researchers and policy makers must reject statistics whose underlying assumptions require a level of precision, or linearity, or continuity that the data do not reliably support. Finally, effective use of available data requires seeing through the facade of precision and demystifying the use of statistics. Quantification permits computerization and facilitates systematic comparison. While that may make them more defensible, it does not automatically produce better results. A profusion of numbers neither makes a particular interpretation more valid nor renders a policy proposal more attractive. Indeed, the numeric shroud may well obscure far more than it reveals.

Related to the fascination with figures, education sector analysis increasingly favors the uncritical adoption of an economics perspective. Too complex to address fully here, that tendency fosters the uncritical application of constructs like efficiency and rate of return to education. All too often that inclination toward economics ignores the origins and multiple meanings of key terms like privatization. It commonly confuses costs and expenditures. And frequently it asserts tradeoffs, for example, between quality and quantity, or between growth and equality, where some policy makers and analysts see complementarity, not alternatives. More generally, commissioning agencies often insist on the sorts of research that privileges hypothesis testing over, for example, sustained dialogues.

To the extent that sector studies collect new data, they tend to do so in an often poorly coordinated, once-only fashion, rather than linking their own data collection to previous efforts. Nor, in general, do they seek to establish on-going data collection procedures, that is, use the sector study as in part a capacity building initiative.

The point is not that these approaches have no utility, or that quantification is always inappropriate. Far from it. Often the very effort to quantify clarifies choices and decisions and makes possible recognizing the gap between stated intentions and actual practice and monitoring activities over time. For these approaches and quantification to be useful, however, analytic strategies need to reflect actual, not ideal, data. The guiding concern must be what national decision makers and educators can do with available data rather than what overseas researchers can do with ideal data.

### **The aid relationship remains largely unstudied**

As noted above, the context for education sector analysis is what has come to be called development cooperation, that is financial and other assistance to African education provided by national and international funding and technical assistance agencies. Yet, education studies rarely address the aid relationship itself. There are two related concerns here. First, what have been the nature and consequences of the increasing reliance on external assistance to support reform



and even basic services in African education? Second, what is the empirical evidence on the relationship between aid and the quality of education in Africa?

As many observers, including several of the most prominent assistance agencies, have noted, foreign aid may foster an outflow rather than an inflow of capital. That occurs in several ways, of which the two most prominent are the purchase of products and services from the aid-providing country and debt repayment. What of education aid to Africa? How much of disbursed aid actually reaches its designated recipients? Are there projects or programmes whose net flow has been outward? What are the long term consequences of becoming so heavily aid-dependent that it is impossible to conceive of new initiatives, or even of meeting the recurrent budget, without regular infusions of foreign assistance? In what ways has that increasing reliance on external aid affected education decision making, from general policies, to priorities, to specific programmes? While the answers to these questions may not please one or both partners in the aid relationship, they are likely to help to clarify why some programmes are favored over others and perhaps to explain why some programmes seem much more successful than others.

Cause and effect are very difficult to establish clearly in education, which is an intricate web of processes, some integrally related and others distantly connected. Mapping those links is a frustrating and usually contentious undertaking, especially where the concern goes beyond ostensibly standardized measures like examinations to explore learning and its consequences. It is therefore not surprising that the relationships between aid-supported curricular and instructional reforms on the one hand and specific developmental outcomes on the other are complex and difficult to discern. Confounding and compounding factors are numerous and often not readily apparent. The links between education and development more generally are still harder to establish.

However daunting the challenge, though, research on the education sector must inquire about what education assistance programmes have accomplished, at both the smaller and larger scales. Funding agencies ought to be vitally interested in the consequences of foreign aid and of their own contributions, both positive and negative. Beyond immediate programme goals, say, building new classrooms or organizing teachers' workshops, or printing textbooks, what have been the impacts of foreign assistance on education, including instructional activities, agenda setting, decision making, finance, management, community participation, and student and parental satisfaction? What have been the shorter and longer term results? Why?

Their clear importance suggests we might find these issues among the items specified in education sector studies terms of reference. At the least, we might expect the commissioning agency to direct attention toward the uses and impacts, if any, of previous education sector studies. The review of documents prepared in the late 1980s and early 1990s suggests that is rarely the case. With or without that specification, we might expect to find the history and conse-

quences of education aid described and analyzed in the background or overview sections of education sector studies. Certainly, in many countries previous aid programmes are as much a part of the contemporary context for education as enrollment rates, extent of teachers' preparation, levels of spending, and evidence of gender discrimination. We should also expect to see attention to the ways in which education sector analysis has (or has not) improved national capacity for collecting and analyzing education data. Yet, important as these and related questions are, with very few exceptions the authors of Africa's education sector studies generally do not address them. Perhaps institutionalized peer review and more open circulation of reports and recommendations would ensure more critical attention to the nature and consequences of aid and its uses.

Foreign aid is after all a relationship, in its most productive form a partnership for development cooperation. While it is difficult for any institution to be thoroughly self-reflective and self-critical, to fail to address the provider side of that relationship is to assume that whatever the granting or lending agency does is reasonable and beneficial and that if there are problems, the explanations must lie on the side of the recipient. Those assumptions themselves become obstacles to an effective partnership.

The challenge here, then, is to recognize that foreign assistance agencies have become actors in African education and to study their roles both collectively and individually, including both what has worked and what has not.

### **Inattention to context and feasibility**

The profusion of sector analysis initiatives reflects efforts to promote the use of reliable information, well-grounded techniques, and systematic analysis as bases for decision making. In principle, research of this sort can have a beneficial impact on education reform and the education policy process more generally. In practice, however, policy directions and reforms recommended in sector studies, albeit ostensibly potentially effective, are often implemented partially, inconsistently, or not at all. One reason is that externally-initiated sector studies, notwithstanding what may seem to be technically sound analyses, generally pay insufficient attention to national contexts and fail to assess the institutional, political, and socioeconomic feasibility of their policy recommendations.

Many recent studies, for example, report a lack of skilled personnel and institutions and assert the importance of training and capacity building. But similar studies have reached the same conclusions and agencies have funded training and capacity building for three decades. Why, then, do we not find a surplus rather than a shortage of skills? That question is apparently never asked. Similarly, recommendations on teachers' salaries, such as merit-based promotion or expanding the range between the highest and lowest salaries, are proposed without careful feasibility assessment or attention to experiences elsewhere. The World Bank's own reviewers of education sector studies have also highlighted this inattention to context and feasibility and the resulting slew of

recommendations that seem reasonable and appropriate within the limited purview of a particular study but that prove to be quite unworkable on the ground.

Why do competent consultants and programme officers, often including those from the country being studied, apparently so often disregard the setting for what they recommend and the practical obstacles to what they propose? In part, that orientation reflects the commissioning agencies' preference for lightning visits and the instant wisdom they generate. If the sector analysis process provides too little time for the systematic study of its principal concerns, it has even less time to assess support and opposition to particular courses of action. In part, that orientation reflects the pressure on programme managers to disburse funds, even when that makes it impossible or disadvantageous to study previous experiences or the current context in patient detail. In part, commissioning agencies are quite reasonably reluctant to become embroiled in local politics.

Still, no one is served well by recommendations that are unlikely to be implemented. Nor should we expect national appropriation of impractical proposals. While agencies must avoid the appearance of intervening in local politics, for their recommendations to be something more than unread publications on dusty shelves, their understanding of the political context must inform their education sector studies and their resulting policy and programmatic decisions.

### **Infrequent assertion of national leadership**

The discussion thus far has focused heavily on the funding and technical assistance agencies, reflecting their central role in initiating, financing, and using education sector studies and their powerful influence in African education more generally. Education sector studies, however, are always negotiated with and require the cooperation of the national government. Indeed, the informal and often formal rhetoric characterizes the government as the senior partner in undertaking an education sector study, and it is increasingly common to find the government, rather than the funding agency, identified as the sponsoring agency on the final report.

One striking finding of the review of education sector studies and follow up discussions with both government and agency officials is the apparently infrequent assertion of national leadership in this area. Proposed studies are discussed with government personnel, often at length. Officials at several levels may have opportunities to comment on draft terms of reference and to suggest appropriate researchers. The government may receive copies of progress and interim reports, with an opportunity to react and suggest revisions. It receives the final report, generally with a request for comments and suggestions. Notwithstanding this formal and informal government participation in education sector analysis, however, most often government personnel disclaim responsibility for sector studies and characterize them as “a World Bank study” or “a British study.”

Why does the government seemingly choose to play a less active role than

the circumstances permit and national interests would seem to require? When pressed, government officials refer to their dependence on external assistance. That is, government officials, both outside and inside the education ministry, are apparently reluctant to assert more firmly their own concerns and interests for fear of jeopardizing continued or new foreign funding. "If the agency wants this study, let them have it." Their concern is surely well grounded. Funding and technical assistance agencies have reduced or discontinued funding where they regarded the government uncooperative or unapproachable. Especially where there are frequent changes among agency personnel, directions and priorities may be difficult to predict and unwelcome initiatives difficult to avoid. Hence, it may be more prudent to follow the agency lead than to insist on a greater role.

Still, the review of education sector studies and discussions with the staff responsible for them indicate that national leaders have greater authority in this area than they commonly assert. In a few cases, firm national positions on contentious issues have led to significant revisions in agencies' initial proposals and outcomes better aligned with expressed national interests. Indeed, at least some agencies would welcome an increased national leadership role. Those agencies that do must then acknowledge, respect, and accommodate to preferences and priorities that differ from their own.

University authorities are often in a similar situation. The principal source of the restricted circulation of education sector studies lies in agencies' secretive and proprietary orientation. At the same time, where university authorities, sometimes even individual lecturers or government officials outside the education ministry, request that education sector studies or research commissioned as part of education sector analysis be presented and debated at public seminars, in general the agencies agree. Sometimes agencies provide additional funding for seminars of that sort, enabling the foreign scholars to participate and publishing the results. Like the government, universities may be reluctant to insist on this role for fear of jeopardizing continued or new institutional or departmental funding. Individual academics are reasonably concerned that their contracts with funding and technical assistance agencies, and thus both basic income and research resources may be at risk. At the same time, at least some agencies would welcome an increased assertion of academic leadership in this regard and are accustomed to similar demands at home. Thus, here too there is greater room for the assertion of national leadership than is commonly the case.

### **The importance and striking absence of effective dialogue**

Like "development cooperation" and "partnership," "dialogue" has become a favorite term of the aid business. Everyone agrees that effective assistance programmes require sustained interchanges between those who provide and those who receive funding. Everyone agrees that aid schemes that are insensitive to the national interests of either the providing or receiving country are unviable.

Everyone agrees that only where national personnel have had opportunities to express their interests, concerns, and reservations is there a chance of achieving agreed objectives. And the introduction to nearly every education sector study lists discussions among the commissioning agency, national officials, and the study team.

Yet in practice there is substantial evidence that exchanges of views, periodic discussions, and formal cooperation agreements regularly fall short of productive and effective dialogue. There may be a good deal of talking, but there seems to be a lot less listening, and very little hearing.

Dialogue between partners suggests sustained communication among people who regard each other as peers, as fundamental equals. Perhaps where one party to the conversation has funds to allocate and the other seeks those funds, equality is not possible. If so, then “dialogue,” “partnership,” and similar terms become a facade to obscure the entrenchment of dependence. But we need not be so pessimistic. Surely it is possible to find examples of genuine interchanges about shared interests in which the expectation of mutual benefit provides the foundation for a more respectful and trusting relationship.

If effective dialogue is critical to the quality and utility of education sector studies, the sector analysis process must be reorganized to make that dialogue possible and then to nurture it. Formal opportunities to exchange views are essential but insufficient. Education sector analysis must begin with a sense of divergent interests and mutual benefit. Each participant must assume responsibility for insuring that all participants’ interests are addressed. Timing and pacing must be sensitive to the rhythm of the national education system and to the exigencies (and vagaries) of national politics. Sometimes it may be preferable not to proceed with a proposed education sector study rather than to insist on research that is likely to be regarded as foreign and little attuned to national needs.

Dialogues are often distressingly unbounded. Dialogues frequently meander and retrace their steps. Dialogues can continue for long periods with few concrete results. But the absence of dialogue is even worse.

### **Limited national appropriation**

Generating baseline and monitoring data on the education system is appropriately the responsibility of those who manage it. Education officials do in practice regularly analyze the education sector, relying on the data and tools available to them. Funding and technical assistance agencies require additional studies and expect the results of those studies to assist national education officials and improve not only the quality of education but also the quality of education management and administration. Over the past two decades most external agencies have sought to localize at least part of the sector analysis process. Still, the documents that result from that process and discussions of those documents by government personnel indicate cooperation but very lim-

ited control and national ownership. As noted above, even studies that are published under the imprint of the national education ministry are widely regarded as “their” (that is, the sponsoring agency’s) study, not “our study.”

One major consequence of the problematic features of the education sector analysis process, then, is that an ostensibly joint effort leads not to national appropriation but to estrangement. Those expected to benefit most see themselves as the least involved. Not only do they not own education studies, but often they disown them.

Offering the prospect and possibility of effective international partnership and national ownership, education sector analysis far too often achieves neither. Expected to develop competence and confidence, the process itself leads to shelves full of potentially useful but unused studies, suspicion and distrust, and undermined rather than expanded national capacities.

## **Implications**

The terrain that encompasses the positive contributions of education sector studies and the frustrations with the process of education sector analysis is the domain for the activities of the Working Group on Education Sector Analysis. The inventory and analytic review of education sector studies has proved informative and instructive. Disseminating the results of that work and reducing the obstacles to broader access to the studies themselves remain high priorities. To extend and illuminate the findings at the continental level, to encourage shifting the center of gravity in education sector analysis toward Africa, and to assist in the development of institutional and individual capacities, the WGESA is supporting a series of national reviews of the process of education sector analysis, with an initial study in Zimbabwe. Directly and indirectly the WGESA is facilitating communication and cooperation among education researchers and analysts across national borders. The WGESA is also collaborating with funding and technical assistance agencies to improve approaches and methodologies in education sector analysis, to increase sharing of information and coordination of activities, and to strengthen national and regional capacities for education analysis and policy development.

Convinced that education sector analysis can make an important contribution to the expansion and improvement of education in Africa and that the sector analysis process can reinforce international partnership and national ownership, let us consider some of the implications of the observations drawn from the review of education sector studies.

### **Secrecy precludes learning from experience**

Over the short term there may be some utility in considering education sector studies secret or confidential and sharply limiting their circulation. Senior ad-

ministrators and school personnel may discuss their problems more frankly if they are assured their reports will not be circulated widely or attributed to them. Government may be spared public confirmation of problems that are probably already well known to those most closely involved. The agenda and practices of funding and technical assistance agencies, determined by their own governments and governing bodies, are less likely to become the subject of public scrutiny and debate.

Over the longer term, however, restricted access significantly reduces the quality and utility of education sector studies, often making them irrelevant to national policy, planning, and programmatic decisions. Problems of approach, methodology, and interpretation may escape notice and persist into inappropriate recommendations and impractical programmes. Equally important, those who might make most effective use of the results of education sector analysis cannot do so if they are unaware of those studies, their topics, and their outcomes. Secrecy precludes learning from experience and undermines both international partnership and national ownership.

With very rare exceptions, the education sector analysis process should be openly discussed and publicly accessible, including final reports and other documents. Both governments and funding and technical assistance agencies should play an energetic and active role in assuring appropriate review by people with relevant expertise and experience and effective dissemination to the education community.

### **Coordination must respect national and international interests**

Even if education sector analyses were more widely circulated, the lines of authority and responsibility for national and even international funding and technical assistance agencies make it likely there will continue to be overlapping and duplicated studies. In practice, that is not always undesirable. If it makes sense to require multiple studies of the safety and efficacy of a new drug before its widespread use is permitted, then undertaking several studies of a single domain or problem or proposed reform in education need not be problematic, either for the government or for the funding agency. Indeed, national authorities may prefer some overlapping areas of interest, even competition, among funding agencies.

Accordingly, coordination should be less concerned with avoiding duplication, which probably can never be fully achieved, and more focused on sharing information about what is being done, by whom, why, and with what results. To be most effective, that sort of coordination must be led and managed by national authorities. A recent pilot initiative of Ethiopia and the European Union, with support from WGESA and UNESCO, seeks to strengthen coordination of that sort.

## **Dependent research breeds dependent development?**

In contemporary Africa, aid dependence has fostered the conjunction of funding and research. Currently, the funding and technical assistance agencies are also major initiators, consumers, and funders of education research in Africa. That arrangement does support some research in settings where research funding, and higher education resources more generally, have declined sharply, libraries and research facilities have deteriorated, and faculty salaries are insufficient to retain competent and experienced staff. It also insures that studies commissioned by the funding agencies can draw on the most senior national researchers. At the same time, even as the development of education systems is understood as a major vehicle for supporting national development and reducing dependence, that conjunction of foreign funding and research may in practice function to entrench dependence, especially as it undermines national capacities and influences the process of setting the national education agenda.

The practices of funding and technical assistance agencies, particularly their reporting responsibilities and deadlines, often require sector analyses with a very broad reach and short time horizons. Studies of that sort are likely to be less disruptive and more useful if they can be integrated into a continuing program of education research, in the usual terminology, both basic and applied, within each country.

Hence, developing and maintaining a solid, sustained, and critical education research system is thus in the interest of both countries and agencies. The form of that research system is likely to vary among countries. In some, the education ministry will play the central role, perhaps itself undertaking major research efforts. In other countries, a university or research institute may play the central role. In still others, responsibility for research may be shared among several institutions, both governmental and non-governmental.

Both the quality of research and the utility of its findings suffer when a major part of the education research community comes to be employed by or otherwise directly dependent on the funding agencies. Hence, whatever its form, to be effective that education research will require sustained political and financial support and some autonomy of action. That in turn will require governments to make serious commitments to research in their education plans and budgets. That will as well require agencies to support those commitments, both by avoiding policies that lead to reduced spending on research and by providing direct and indirect financing for the national education research system.

Over the longer term, education, and therefore national development requires a strong and independent research capacity. Dependent and docile researchers contribute little to independent development. It is thus in the interest of both government and funding and technical assistance agencies to develop that capacity and nurture its autonomy, recognizing that periodically that autonomy is likely to be politically discomfiting.



## **Effective dialogue begins at the beginning**

Effective dialogue requires national participation in education sector analysis from conception through completion. Achieving that will require important changes for most funding and technical assistance agencies. They will need to find ways, for example, to insure national involvement at the earliest stages of thinking about what needs to be done, how, and why. They must self-consciously avoid stimulating the production of documents that bear the seal and authority of the government but that in fact reflect agency preferences and priorities or what the government thinks agencies want to hear and that consequently have little impact on national policy and programmes. They may need to modify approach and priorities, perhaps sharply, to accommodate changes in the national context, for example the election of a new government, just as a change in their own government might require. Agencies will also need to adjust their timing to reflect the pace of debate and decisions within each country.

## **Capacity building is more than training**

Nearly every education sector study laments the lack of necessary skills and proposes additional training, often overseas. Few sector studies explore previous training and capacity building efforts to understand better why shortages apparently persist, even in areas where there have been decades of training programmes. Essentially none examines the ways in which foreign aid to African education, including training and capacity building efforts, may function to reduce or undermine, rather than expand, national capacities.

Most African countries have many training institutions, in some countries numbering in the hundreds. Their focus, level, quality, and certification vary widely. Yet, with very few exceptions they are all considered inferior to training institutions overseas. That is, even as thousands of Africans have secured advanced education and training, that process seems not to have developed adequately training capacity within Africa.

In recent years, higher education in Africa has been widely criticized as inefficient, overpriced, and misdirected. Many people, including some of the most influential funding and technical assistance agencies, have urged, indeed insisted, that resources be reallocated from higher to basic education. At the same time, there is general agreement that the quality of higher education in much of Africa has declined. Teacher education efforts seem to be unable to meet either quantity or quality expectations. And there is consensus that research facilities have deteriorated and research opportunities have decreased.

In sum, the rhetoric of capacity building seems to have been accompanied by stagnating or declining capacity in many domains and especially in education, on which all the other domains rest. That trend must be reversed.

Capacity-building must be understood to be a good deal more than training for particular individuals in specific skills. For example, it is important to think of capacities in sectoral and institutional terms. Effective education sector analysis requires the institutional framework for regular interactions among researchers and policy makers, for cooperation among researchers and policy makers across national frontiers, and for the sustained dialogue that is the prerequisite for genuine international partnership. It is important as well to understand that needed expertise and experience include political education, democratic participation and decision making, and accountability.

## **Education is a community enterprise**

While funding and technical assistance agencies will continue to have their major relationships with governments, their practices must recognize that the education community includes non-governmental as well as governmental constituencies. Education is and is likely to continue to be the most contested of public policies. For education, everyone in society is a stakeholder. The forms and organization of education constituencies will of course vary among countries. In some, for example, the teachers' unions may be particularly articulate and influential, while in others they may play a more modest role. Students' associations may be more or less militant and may or may not be formally affiliated with national political organizations. Private education institutions, whether or not for profit, may be organized into an effective pressure group in one setting and quite disconnected in another.

Over time, the process of education sector analysis must reflect the broad composition of the national education community, which itself will evolve. Effective development cooperation is thus likely to involve international partnerships of several sorts. Government-to-government relationships must be supplemented by, indeed must rest on, direct cooperative links between academic institutions, trade unions, students' associations, and other organizations in funding and recipient countries. Diversifying and decentralizing international partnership is likely to reinforce national leadership and programmatic direction.

## **If education matters, learning must be a primary concern**

Education is a marvelous complex process. Everyone proclaims its value. Few doubt its utility. No one discounts its political prominence. All who have been to school, and probably some of those who have not, think they know how it works. Or ought to work. Still, none of us, novice or professional, is quite sure.

Although sector analysis focuses on education, for the most part the education that is visible is all mechanics and no soul, more a complex industrial

machine than an organic human enterprise. It is of course reasonable for funding agencies to be concerned with expected returns, project feasibility, and efficiency. Especially given the broad influence of economics across the social sciences, it is not surprising to find a preference for its approaches and tools. But the focus on costs and benefits, investments and returns, efficiency and utility often comes at the expense of attention to learning. Ultimately, whether or not education contributes to development depends less on how many children complete school than on what they do or do not learn.

In general, education sector studies reflect a functional and instrumental understanding of education as a system. There is little or no attention to many of the objectives for education regularly articulated by African governments and educators, for example, fostering an inquiring and critical orientation among learners, eliminating discrimination and reducing elitism, promoting national unity, preparing young people for the rights and obligations of citizenship, equipping them to work cooperatively and resolve conflicts non-violently, and developing among learners a strong sense of individual and collective competence, self-reliance, and self-confidence. These sorts of objectives are of course more difficult to quantify and measure than, say, building classrooms or increasing the availability of instructional materials. It is certainly difficult to be confident about what role education has played in pursuing these broader societal objectives. But if we do not ask, we shall certainly never know. To ignore these objectives entirely is effectively to delete them from the education agenda.

Learning, too, that is, something more than improved examination results, is rarely visible in most education sector studies. Most often, learning is understood as information acquisition. That is, we find what the late Brazilian educator Paulo Freire termed the banking model of education. Learners are like empty bank accounts. More or less formally, teachers and others with the relevant capital, wisdom, make deposits into those accounts. Successful students save their resources and complete their education with heads full of knowledge on which they can subsequently draw. Especially for younger learners, learning is understood largely as a passive process. Teachers give or provide or offer, and students receive. Where students play a somewhat more active role, they acquire knowledge and skills. But what of the extensive thinking, experimentation, and research on education and learning that regard learning as something substantially larger than information acquisition? What of the notion that what learners do is not simply acquire, but generate, master, develop, and create knowledge? Educators who understand learning as an active process, who situate learners at the center of that process, and for whom learning involves the appropriation, manipulation, and integration of information have little voice in these studies.

The detached clinical perspective is especially visible here. Education initiatives and reforms are commonly termed “interventions” and schools become “delivery systems.” Intervention, of course, is what outsiders do. Teacher educators who work with curriculum developers to prepare instructional guides do not regard themselves as intervening. They are simply working together, pooling their expertise to improve the quality of instruction. Nor do teachers who seek

active student participation in their pedagogy characterize what they are doing as delivery. Recognizing the interactive character of learning, they involve students directly in the instructional process and insist that students share responsibility for their own learning. The issue here is not simply semantic. The medical metaphor and clinical perspective make the policy terrain inhospitable to notions of learner centered education and cooperative learning.

This narrow view of education reflects an approach that focuses on what can reasonably be measured. Measuring education quality is problematic. The difficulties stem both from divergent understandings of what education is and what it is to accomplish and from problems of measurement. For all their flaws, examinations are a standardized and widely recognized measure. But what is not examined is generally excluded from quality assessment. Learning as process, information use rather than acquisition, concept formation, development of analytic skills, and the like are only rarely included in quality measures. Reducing education to what examinations measure facilitates offering unqualified assertions about what education research shows and unambiguous recommendations for allocating education resources. But that reductionism also obscures both learning and development. On closer examination, the apparent clarity of findings and recommendations evaporates. It is as if ship captains and pilots were told to assume that the earth is flat and that the magnetic poles were located at the geographic poles. That might well simplify their navigation tasks. But would we be surprised if they did not reach their intended destinations? And would we confidently board their ships and planes?

Notwithstanding its inherent ambiguities and the difficulties in characterizing process and measuring outcomes, learning is far too important to be so consistently ignored.

### **International partnership and national ownership require changed practices**

Let us take stock. Education sector analysis is potentially a very powerful tool for supporting and improving education policy and programmes in Africa. Generally undertaken within the context of the aid relationship, it is also an important vehicle for international partnership and development cooperation. To date, however, that cooperation has been accompanied by general frustration with the sector analysis process. Far too often, that process has remained driven by the agendas and procedures of the funding and technical assistance agencies, with constrained national participation, limited national control, and very little sense of national ownership. To shift its center of gravity toward Africa, the process itself requires major restructuring and reorientation, from conception through completion. Most important, what is required is genuine dialogue among partners who not only talk but also listen and hear.

In a few settings there has been a more consultative process, with large-scale participation by national staff and sustained dialogue between the funding and

technical assistance agencies and the national education community. Those innovative efforts have facilitated broader national involvement in both the analysis and the resulting policy and programmatic decisions, with a correspondingly greater sense of national ownership of the process and its results. Those experiences merit careful and critical attention.

Overall, the limited national control of the education sector analysis process and the even more limited sense of national ownership of its results sorely undermine its credibility and authority and constrain its use and utility. More of the same, even more of the same with greater energy and good will, will result in more of the same frustrations, distrust, and disuse.

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# Part III

## Partnerships for Quality Improvement

### Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa: Partnerships for School – Community Quality Improvement

*by Sissel Volan and Katherine Namuddu*

#### Introduction

Research studies have documented the poor performance of school children in science, mathematics and technical education (SMT). Although boys perform poorly, the performance of girls is appalling. Many types of interventions to remedy the problem have been identified and implemented with various degrees of seriousness. Among the strategies tried have been provision of laboratories and science rooms, local construction and improvisation of scientific equipment and textbooks for instruction, and re-training teachers in techniques such

as the discovery approach to enable learners to have hands-on experiences. Other interventions have embarked on writing new and locally relevant curricula to make nature a laboratory for children, while still others have increased the number of hours children are taught SMT subjects.

These interventions, some begun in the 1970s, have obviously helped to improve SMT education. For example, almost all education systems in sub-Saharan Africa require boys and girls to learn mathematics and science. Primary schools have at least eight lessons of mathematics a week, three of science and, in several countries, there are courses for technical subjects and technology at the primary and secondary school levels. Similarly, curricula in SMT increasingly reflect local examples and experiences. In some countries curriculum development centers and textbook writers are putting into schools instructional materials that are sensitive and responsive to gender roles in society and national development.

Yet, as more children enroll in large classes that lack a variety of instructional materials, they receive less and less exposure to hands-on experience. Confronted by long and sometimes complex syllabuses and driven by examination pressures, teachers have responded by concentrating their attention on those children whom they perceive as “able” to grapple with SMT subjects, which are generally regarded as difficult. A major consequence of these practices has been to more or less ignore the largest proportion of children, especially girls, who do not perform well in these subjects. The long lists of children whose failure in SMT are announced yearly by national examination councils, posted on school notice boards, and reprinted in newspapers are commonly shrugged off with the simple comment “That’s just how things are.” Thus, in the majority of schools no concrete steps are taken to promote tangible improvements in SMT education.

This paper describes how a pilot project, Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa (FEMSA), is attempting to improve SMT education. The project is supported by the Working Group of Female Participation (WGFP), the WGFP’s sub-committee on SMT, led by NORAD and the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Stakeholders and participants in the FEMSA project have attempted to establish a school-community partnership for the improvement of girls’ participation in SMT.

The next section of this paper presents a series of research, capacity enhancement, and advocacy activities through which the various strands of the partnerships have been constructed and coordinated. In the following section we provide a brief description of the proposed strategies for continued support to the emerging school-community partnerships in the four countries in the pilot phase and in other countries that might be interested in joining FEMSA. In the final section we present some of the lessons learnt about the value of establishing partnerships through the conduct of analytical work.

## **Research as a process of building**

## **partnerships**

The WGFP decided in 1994 that it wanted to support a major activity to invigorate primary and secondary schools and ministries of education to improve SMT education. At the same time, FAWE wanted to encourage girls to develop a better understanding of SMT concepts and become eligible to pursue opportunities in SMT careers. FAWE also wanted girls to have an opportunity to enjoy learning SMT and to perform well on class tests and national examinations.

The WGFP established an Agency Partnership for FEMSA comprised of FAWE, NORAD, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the WGFP. FAWE had overall administrative responsibility and, using its strong network of policy makers, mobilized its membership in order to support national-level work. The Rockefeller Foundation hosted the project's secretariat and supported the services of a project coordinator. NORAD, as chair of the sub-committee on SMT of the WGFP, represented the funding agencies and led the funding-agency consortium. NORAD mobilized resources from nine funding agencies, and in October 1995 the WGFP launched a two-year pilot project of FEMSA in Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda.

### **Analytical work as point of entry into partnership**

FEMSA's overall goal was to conduct analytical work in order to produce a country profile in each of the four pilot countries on SMT education. The profile has three main components: a data base on the status of SMT education, with special reference to access and performance of girls at primary and secondary school; information on innovative interventions in SMT education undertaken by governments and NGOs; and information on research on SMT education and gender that is related to FEMSA's own analytic goals.

The Agency Partnership identified a senior African SMT educator and who coordinated the production of a country profile on SMT participation in each of the four countries. With an extensive knowledge and experience of SMT education in Africa as well as a deep commitment to improving that situation, the project coordinator has guided the pilot phase into a unique effort, which has also developed strong components in capacity- and skills-enhancement, dissemination of results, and advocacy.

FAWE members and national chapters in each of the four countries identified a national coordinator for FEMSA. The national coordinator had to be a researcher who was already a key member of the national SMT education community, a gender activist, and a person capable of initiating and sustaining dialogue to bridge the varying perceptions among practitioners and policy makers at different levels of the education system. All four national coordinators had broad experience in SMT education and teacher education, and all were taking part in either government- or NGO-sponsored projects aimed at improving SMT

education. Selecting national coordinators already allied to the goals of FAWE ensured that FEMSA's activities would find a positive reception among the SMT community, policy makers, and national chapters of FAWE, thus setting the embryonic School-Community Partnership on fertile ground.

In order to ensure that FEMSA's analytical work would be of high quality and have the flexibility needed to accommodate emerging needs, FAWE carefully selected a FEMSA Project Committee whose composition reflected the roles of members at different levels of the project. The four national coordinators were made members of the committee in order to ensure that they had clear understanding of the project's goals, elements, stakeholders, and resources. They were also the main link between participants in the four countries and, through the project coordinator, the Agency Partnership.

Project Committee meetings are the major forum in which merits of all aspects of the project are discussed, in particular, the research methodologies and approaches to be used in analytical work. FAWE invited five resource people and facilitators to sit on the committee as technical assistants. In order to keep FEMSA abreast of international developments in SMT education and improvements, three members of the Project Committee also serve other SMT education activities such as Gender and Science and Technology (GASAT), which is an international association concerned with the promotion of women's participation in socially responsible science and technology at all levels, and UNESCO Project 2000 and Science and Scientist (SAS), an international research project coordinated at the University of Oslo. Finally, in order to ensure a strong linkage to other FAWE activities and networks, the FEMSA project committee has three FAWE members who are scientists in their own right, and who also represent regional interests, and levels of policy making and practice in the wider education systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Format and process of committee meetings**

It was important for the four countries in the pilot phase to interact periodically with the other members of the project committee and to share their experiences with research methodology and the lessons that were emerging, and, more important, for members of the SMT/FEMSA fraternity from different countries to begin to talk to one another and forge cross-border professional contacts. To this end, the twelve month research period was punctuated by five project committee meetings, each of which had the following agenda: review of the project status; discussion of research methodology; review of national initiatives in SMT; review of international initiatives in SMT; and FEMSA project timetables. This format was, of course, utilized differently at different stages of the project in order to build collaboration and consensus as the following three examples illustrate.

## **Building in flexibility**

During the first Project Committee meeting, the primary emphasis was reaching a common understanding not only of the FEMSA goals but also of the nature of the various education systems in the four countries. Since several of the research instruments that were to be used were similar for all countries, it was important to ensure that analytical work would be carried out among equivalent grades of schools, students and teachers. A reasonable understanding of the structures and composition of the education systems in different countries paved the way for building into the project flexibility with regard to the definition of national education systems, national project budgets, questionnaire formats, time schedules and deadlines, and provision of technical assistance by the project coordinator.

One of the major decisions to emerge from the first committee meeting was that discussion of research methodology in subsequent meetings would be a central and serious task. To this end, instead of expecting the national coordinators to return home and carry out the whole project as one event, the committee ensured that each major milestone in analytical work—collection of data, analysis, writing reports, holding national seminars, and regional reporting of results—would be prefaced by a committee meeting during which perceptions and experiences of all would be reviewed and best practice strategies shared for possible adoption and adaptation at national level.

## **Incorporating international perspectives**

At the end of the first committee meeting, national coordinators had returned to their countries and constituted a national research team. They were expected to pre-test the questionnaires, classroom observation procedures, and interview schedules, whose formats and contents had been exhaustively debated, revised, and approved. Not surprisingly, during the pretest at national level, many unworkable items were discovered. These, together with locally relevant substitutes evolved by national research teams, were tabled at the second committee meeting. Consequently, the committee decided to use the review of international initiatives in SMT education as a focal point for capacity and skills enhancement in this meeting.

The committee began its task by examining research reports coming out of a variety of higher education institutions and curriculum and examination centers in Africa, including those from the WGFP project: Research Priorities for the Education of Women and Girls in Africa. One of the major barriers documented by all this research and which the FEMSA studies have re-confirmed overwhelmingly, was the strong belief among girls themselves, parents, teachers, and male pupils that SMT subjects are not appropriate for girls. This belief led to the perception that girls are incapable of studying SMT subjects, with the consequent expectation that girls would perform poorly and that girls who enjoy

learning SMT and perform well are “abnormal.”

The meeting participants heard that, in the typical fashion of a self-fulfilling prophesy, when girls subsequently find that schools, male peers, the community and home environments directly and indirectly discourage them from seriously pursuing SMT subjects, they give up trying. They perform poorly and fail. Contributing factors were identified as the overcrowded syllabus, taught mostly by talk and chalk methods; lack of time to study at home as chores take precedence; anxiety created out of intimidation by boys and teachers during lessons; and the hierarchical nature of science and mathematics teaching which takes no account of girls’ frequent absence from classes as puberty sets in. All these factors conspire to make it extremely difficult for girls to make sense of the lessons they attend and the subsequent examinations that confront them.

In view of these research data, the second FEMSA committee meeting decided that while it was still important to identify locally important constraints to girls’ participation in SMT, the research process should seek concrete ways in which the wider school community could be brought into the project, not just as providers of information but as partners.

### **Putting research at the center the beneficiary’s perspectives**

During the third committee meeting, national coordinators presented the approaches they were using to bring into the project the school community partners. The national coordinators utilized the discussion of research methodology to demonstrate how other methods than those recommended by the committee might provide more valuable data and better assist in establishing the local partnerships. For example, one national coordinator took the committee through a three-hour session on the mechanisms of the Participatory Learning Action (PLA) research methodology. The committee found that the PLA’s intensive, semi-structured dialogue and discussion allowed active involvement of all participants. PLA was found to be particularly effective in enabling participants to clarify issues and to view individual concerns in relation to other people’s perceptions on the same issue and thus rank these in order of importance. PLA also allows discussion and prioritization of possible solutions.

After the PLA session, during which everyone gained new research skills, the committee agreed that PLA and methods similar to it should be used in the project as a strategy not only to solicit communities’ perceptions of the key problems but also as a way to begin dialogue between school and community partners on SMT curriculum issues. The committee appreciated the technique’s efficacy as a channel for dialogue for students and parents who, once they become involved, display an immense appreciation of having their views taken seriously. They are eager to volunteer both their time and services in pursuing such dialogue further. The committee emphasized however, that since the effectiveness of the methodology relies heavily on the expertise and sharpness of the

facilitators, who should have intimate knowledge of the problems of boys and girls in relation to SMT learning, the national coordinators had to train national research team members in these skills in order to make optimum use of the method.

## **Capacity and skills enhancement**

When FEMSA was conceived and a proposal presented to the WGFP, capacity-building and skills enhancement of the national research teams was not at the forefront. Though FEMSA recognized that such activities would be interwoven in various activities of analytical work, in retrospect, substantial efforts went toward capacity and skills enhancement. At the level of the project committee, as already indicated, the committee meetings provided a wide range of opportunities for learning about and comparing national education systems and research methods by committee members. The exhaustive discussion of the questionnaires, classroom observation formats, and interview schedules during project committee meetings helped the national coordinators identify specific research skills or capabilities that they lacked, particularly in aspects of data analysis. Consequently, the project provided resources for working visits to countries by the project coordinator and two external technical assistance facilitators.

In addition, the national coordinators were supported to deploy internal technical assistance to the national research team members. The four teams included a core of nineteen researchers from ministries of education, universities, and research institutes. The size of the teams varied, ranging from three to seven members. Apart from the core members, the national coordinator could enlist the services of other professionals so that another thirteen scholars participated in the country studies.

Early in the project, national coordinators had identified training members of their national team as a priority. They therefore secured resources from the project to plan and implement workshops in methods such as classroom observation, focus group discussion, data coding, and computer use. The project provided each project office with computer facilities and software. However, while the training of national teams attempted to mirror the milestone approach used by the project committee in order to enable teams to consolidate a specific range of skills at particular points in the research process, other decisions on capacity and skills enhancement were left to the discretion of the national coordinator and the team.

## **School and community capacity in self analysis and dialogue**

The project committee had recommended from the start that FEMSA researchers should work with a relatively small group of schools, pupils, teachers, and parents to identify the problems that prevent girls from full participation in



science, to search out the underlying causes of these problems at the household, school, and community levels, and to explore and prioritize possible ways of alleviating them. The premise for small scale involvement was that FEMSA had to avoid the all too frequent trap posed by the study fatigue syndrome. Countries and education systems have become tired of endless large-scale studies and evaluations and generation of baseline data that never lead to action. FEMSA had to be seen to be putting something back into those schools and communities that generated the data. Consequently, even during the research process itself, the repetitive visits to the same school or community to engage in the generation of data assumed a capacity and skills enhancement role and ultimately secured levels of collaboration and openness not usually encountered.

The results and impact of capacity and skills enhancement at the school-community level were much more easily observable in those countries where research teams had decided to carry out focus group discussions and PLA than in those that mainly used questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In the former group, the process of gaining skills, particularly those of system analysis and self-examination through dialogue can be traced from a first visit paid by researchers to the participation of some of the teachers and parents in the national seminar.

The first attempt by researchers to engage pupils, for example, in focus group discussion or the Participatory Learning Action methodology was usually confronted by skepticism regarding the objectives of the exercise. Whether pupils, parents, or teachers, each group usually felt that it had nothing to contribute and that only those faced with the problem would be in a position to discuss the issue. “Ask the girls, they know why they do not like to learn,” was the recurring comment. When participants began to offer explanations for the problem, they tended to identify the culprit, that is to point to the girls who were unsuccessful. Similarly, responses elicited from teachers on the same occasion tended to assume a generally chauvinistic posture such as “Girls are shy to ask questions when they do not understand.”

A second session with the same group of teachers which might begin tackling questions such as: What kind of class atmosphere or treatment by a teacher leads to girls’ shyness? What kind of topic or teaching approach spurs the lack of interest? These questions elicited responses that tended to shift the blame from the girls to the system or the ministry of education but rarely to the teachers themselves.

The third engagement would see students, teachers, and parents enter wholeheartedly into the exercise. Some of the preconceived ideas would be dropped as participants began to view the problems from a new perspective. Parents and teachers were then prepared to give up time on Saturdays and Sundays to continue discussion. Probing and deep engagement led to an immense appreciation of the magnitude of the problem and a feeling that something should be done about it. It also led to the realization that there was no one scapegoat—ministries of education, teachers, parents, girls, boys—upon whose shoulders all blame

could be heaped. Perhaps more important, the participants, whether researchers or teachers or communities, were “shocked by what is actually observed in the schools and what is heard, especially from the students.” The reality of the problem finally struck home quite forcefully.

Overall, it was repetitive engagement of the school and community that led to skills enhancement as communities and schools opened their doors to outsiders and put on the table their worries, concerns, ideas, and resources to be exploited in searching for and implementing appropriate solutions. Even though FEMSA has just begun to help schools and communities put in place a school-community partnership, it has already collected rich data for a country profile. From the perspective of the schools and communities, FEMSA has not yet escaped the trap of the study fatigue syndrome. The second part of this paper will describe efforts underway to move into a second phase of FEMSA, which should strengthen the fragile school-community partnership now in place.

## **Advocacy and dissemination of FEMSA goals and results**

FEMSA has from the start adopted capacity and skills enhancing strategies in advocating its goals and objectives and in disseminating the outcomes. At the FAWE level, presentations of the progress of FEMSA have always been important agenda items in all FAWE’s Executive Committee meetings and during FAWE’s 1996 general assembly. FEMSA has contributed consistently to the WGFP’s *ADEA FEMED Newsletter*, which is published twice a year and reaches over three thousand readers in ministries of education, tertiary education institutions, NGOs, funding agencies and more recently, selected schools. FEMSA contributed to the 1996 International GASAT meeting in India, contributed substantially to GASAT Africa in 1997, and is in close contact with the UNESCO Project 2000 and related efforts.

The most important stakeholders in FEMSA are the ministries of education, schools and communities of the four countries in which results have been generated. The project coordinator and FEMSA’s project office have kept up a stream of communication and visits to the four ministries of education to inform them of what is going on in the project. The national coordinators have played a similar role. Everyone recognized however, that while data were still being assembled and analyzed, ministries of education, schools, and communities would find it difficult to discuss and zero in on the priority areas for future interventions. The project therefore supported in each country two types of forum after the research results were ready in July 1997.

First, each national research team organized a Contact and Brainstorming Meeting at which a small group of key constituencies were represented. The purpose of the meeting was to share the results of the study and map out a strategy for sharing these results through a larger meeting. The Contact and Brainstorming Meeting provided both an opportunity for a more intensive build-

up to a larger national meeting and a preparatory group for it. The Contact and Brainstorming Meetings were attended by between 12 and 32 people selected from ministries of education, universities, the SMT education community, and NGOs working in girls' education.

Second, each National Contact and Brainstorming Committee organized a national seminar on FEMSA, which was attended by between 50 and 100 participants in each country. The participants came from a cross section of practitioners, policy makers, and other interested groups, such as primary and secondary schools from around the country, teachers, head teachers, and parents from schools that had participated in the generation of data, district education officers and inspectors of schools, members of national examination boards and curriculum development centers, gender activists from ministries or departments of gender and women, NGOs involved in education, university teachers from departments of education, science education, science, mathematics, and technology, female members of parliament, FAWE National Chapters, publishers of instructional materials, and locally based funding agencies. Thus an effort was made to lay the basis for expanding the school-community partnership to a national group made up of everyone interested in promoting the participation and performance of girls in SMT.

The national seminar had three major purposes. First, it was essential to disseminate the findings of the country study. These findings included the status of girls' access to schooling and participation in SMT education, key reasons for differences between boys' and girls' participation, and solutions suggested during the research. Second, the national seminar participants had a taste of research methodologies that had been used to generate the data by discussing, ranking, and reaching consensus on the most appropriate solutions for implementation among the many suggested in the country profile. Third, the national seminar or a committee selected during that seminar drew up a feasible plan of action for implementation during the next two years.

The project will support the four pilot countries in organizing a regional meeting to explain to ministries of education, FAWE members, and other interested parties what has come out of the project, whether or not the exercise has been useful, and how the individual countries intend to put to use the results.

Finally, NORAD, as leader of both the funding agency consortium and the WGFP sub-committee on SMT, has organized several consultative meetings with the funding agencies to keep them informed of developments and alert them to specific new ideas that require support as the project moves from the pilot stage to a second phase.

## **Moving from research to implementation**

The impetus to move from research to implementation emanates from two concerns. First, FEMSA has to put something back into those schools and com-

munities that helped generate the data. Second, all those who participated in the study expressed unequivocal support for attention to girls' participation in education generally and in SMT in particular. However, the majority of participants at the school and community levels lacked adequate information on what needs to be done, what they should do individually and collectively, and how to do it. In addition, participants, particularly the SMT education community, felt that the implementation of small-scale education pilot projects sponsored by a variety of funding agencies in different parts of a country do not always make effective use of local expertise and solutions. Therefore, in order for FEMSA to make a difference, local expertise and solutions have to be the core of efforts to improve.

Project participants recommended that FEMSA give priority to tasks in which primary and secondary school children, students, teachers, and communities allied to these schools participate. While it was recognized that ministries of education can make substantial contribution through such activities as policy development, curriculum refinements, teacher training, and funding, participants identified many positive reforms that need to start at the school, the classroom, and parent-community levels. Consequently, all parties wanted to see the implementation of action-oriented projects within school and community contexts similar to those from which data were generated. They wanted to encourage schools and communities to develop a self-monitoring culture to track improvement and undertake corrective measures on a long-term basis. They suggested the organization of localized informal structures and programs with allied satellites of schools to encourage exchange of experiences and use methods such as PLA in order to tap and use locally generated ideas and solutions.

Discussions have started between FAWE and stakeholders on the best organizational arrangements, including the nature of the local informal structures at the national level, the relationship between structures in different countries, channeling of funds for local control and disbursement, and monitoring mechanisms for assessing progress. There is already consensus that ministries of education have to play a key role and to be centrally involved in all future efforts. A basic framework, which is widely shared in the four pilot countries, emphasizes that future activities should serve three principal goals:

- Utilize the lessons arising out of the pilot phase and undertake appropriate follow-up without losing the momentum for change among policy makers, researchers, and school-based actors and communities whom the pilot phase has mobilized.
- Provide a mechanism for localized capacity building among diverse national actors and professionals involved in school SMT education and support the improvement of SMT, relying on local mandates, needs and capabilities.
- Ensure that there is local ownership of FEMSA activities at institutional and country levels linked with the emergence of adequate capability, resourcefulness, and a vision that is capable of evolving and sustaining national and regional activities.

In the four FEMSA pilot countries, a group of potential implementers made up of SMT education professionals, policy makers, researchers and participants in schools and communities is already in place. This group should be supported through mechanisms that enjoy a meaningful measure of self reliance, ensure genuine involvement in substantive decision making, and integrate and focus country-level efforts to capture faster than usual both impact and potential problems.

The current Agency Partnership, which is expanding in membership, is expected to continue in its present form. A project document for phase two of FEMSA, prepared by the project coordinator, is being considered by the WGFP. On that basis, WGFP can consider inviting new countries to join FEMSA.

As noted, results from the pilot phase provide a solid background on which the selection of future FEMSA activities can be firmly based. Clearly, the national seminars, the plans of action, and the solutions put forward by schools and communities provide a most strategic and useful way in which to move forward. Participants have recommended that in order for FEMSA to continue to build on its uniqueness and gain a comparative edge over other efforts, FEMSA activities must continue to pay special attention to girls' participation. Undertaking activities whose functioning could become incorporated, adopted, and replicated within established structures and organization of the normal school system will serve the needs of both girls and boys.

FEMSA should also collaborate with national and regional activities that are promoting SMT education. Among the important projects with which FEMSA will work closely are UNESCO's project, Scientific, Technical and Vocational Education of Girls in Africa, and the African Forum for Children's Literacy in Science and Technology (AFCLIST), which is based at the University of Durban-Westville. FEMSA should also establish either close working relationships with existing country working groups or share expertise working on local projects with other ADEA Working Groups: the Teaching Profession, Non-Formal Education, Distance Education, Books and Learning Materials, and Education Statistics.

## Lessons learned

FEMSA has endeavored to enhance the capacities and skills of a wide range of participants to diagnose the barriers to quality SMT education by all pupils but particularly girls and to find locally suitable solutions for improvement. The three main groups of actors whose partnership was considered crucial in improving girls' participation and achievement in SMT education are researchers and scholars in the SMT community, policy makers and school-based actors, particularly students and teachers, and community participants, particularly parents and NGOs. From the perspective of all participants, particularly those in schools and communities, FEMSA has just begun working toward its main goal of invigorating and helping schools and communities put in place a school-community partnership to work towards improvement of girls' participation in SMT education. Even at this early stage it is possible, indeed essential, to review the lessons that have been learned about the value and challenges of establishing partnerships through analytical work in the FEMSA project.

- (1) The initial decision to allow national project coordinators to lead and make decisions on research process and allocation of resources was critical in the recognition of local expertise in these matters. Local control of decisions and resources enabled researchers to take advantage of opportunities for sharpening research skills while permitting the exploration of local versions of training that fit into the resources available.
- (2) The use of a variety of methods in analytical work not only resulted in a good research outcomes but also widened the constituency of those contributing solutions and permitted new entrants into the research process, particularly parents and pupils. These people challenged unworkable reforms desired by experts, and thus improved the research. Again this was an important level of skills enhancement among a group whose contribution is likely to become central at the stage of implementing solutions.
- (3) Action research methodologies, such as focus group discussion and Participatory Learning Action, were by far the most effective approaches in unearthing problems and delving into their underlying causes. These methods also allowed for substantial gains in building awareness of the ramifications of the problems and in exposing the different perceptions of the situation as seen by



varied groups of participants.

- (4) FEMSA re-affirmed the complexities inherent in attempts to improve SMT education in the total education system through the processes of consensus-building among all stakeholders on curriculum issues. The perceptions of each group are based on its educationally inspired values as well as being imbedded in its social, cultural, and economic conditions. A question in point is at what age girls should learn about reproduction. On one hand, parents prefer girls to start school early so that they may complete their primary schooling before reaching puberty and risking pregnancy. On the other hand, parents object to an SMT curriculum that provides girls at this early age the scientific concepts needed to understand puberty and its relationship to pregnancy. It therefore becomes important to look for locally relevant approaches instead of trying to universalize to a whole system of education.
- (5) FEMSA methodologies also revealed that while on a system level boys may be seen to perform better than girls on SMT tests, at the individual school the differences may be minimal. Therefore, even though FEMSA is focusing on girls' education, future FEMSA work will benefit boys and girls equally, since the approach to and content of SMT teaching will be more pupil friendly, and the school environment as a whole should benefit from the improved school-community partnership.
- (6) Evidence of failures in the implementation of earlier innovative projects in SMT to make an impact pointed to the need for critical reflection on ways in which researchers and school-community partnerships should incorporate interventions into a school's normal routine. Within countries which have a single national examination, the bottom line has to be those elements of the curriculum and resources that are widely available to all schools, regardless of what special intervention is taking place in a few schools or districts. Because participating schools tend to view their engagement in pilot projects as no more than a temporary process, they rarely participate with the kind of seriousness required to make a good decision on whether to replicate, incorporate, or abandon an experimental intervention.

## **Concluding remarks**

This paper has highlighted the processes that contributed to capacity and skills enhancement among participants in FEMSA. Although the initial goal of FEMSA was to conduct analytical work, the process of that work evolved in such a way as to provide opportunities for researchers, policy makers, and school and community people to expand their skills and horizons in diagnosing barriers to girls' participation in SMT education and in seeking appropriate solutions to problems.

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1. See The Rand Change Agent Study, as updated by McLaughlin, 1991.



FEMSA's work was a response to needs identified by policy makers in FAWE. This ensured that FEMSA had support from ministries of education. All too frequently, African countries begin the implementation of reforms in curriculum without information from school and community stakeholders. FEMSA has assembled such an information base for use in research and action. Ignoring the political and social pressures and practical forces that impinge on any innovation or desire for change at the level of the local institution and community usually results in incomplete implementation and assessment of impact.

FEMSA has made major efforts to build capacity and skills at the national level. Local researchers led serious diagnostic research studies because they knew the cultural, social, political, and economic terrain in which the emerging solutions would have to be negotiated by a variety of contending parties before implementation by practitioners. The local researchers shared their experiences with different approaches and methodologies among themselves and with international scholars, thus enhancing their capacity and skills for good research.

FEMSA hopes that in the second phase of its work these positive approaches will be the basis for strengthening the somewhat fragile school-community partnerships that have been created and that FEMSA will support experimentation by the SMT education community in order to improve the quality of SMT for both boys and girls. Clearly, the efforts to build linkages between policy makers and researchers through continuous correspondence, visits, consultative meetings, and brainstorming workshops and national seminars point to strategies for forging linkages early to ensure that policy makers demand relevant research in order to plan for reforms.

Policy makers and the ministries of education will, we hope, begin to call upon the FEMSA fraternity and SMT education community to participate in planning and developing reforms in SMT education. When policy makers in the ministries of education and practitioners envisage research as a vital contribution to policy and practice, they are likely to support such research both morally and materially by allocating funds for the activity in their budgets. In its efforts to invigorate SMT education, particularly in the education of girls, the Agency Partnership has been able to mobilize modest resources for the pilot phase. It is hoped that ministries of education will complement these efforts in the second phase.

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# **Making Teachers Full Partners in Their Own Professional Development**

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3. Colleta & Perkins, 1995.

*by Martial Dembélé*

## **Introduction**

Suppose a minister of education has millions of dollars to spend on teachers' professional development. Is the minister better off finding the most knowledgeable people, asking them to design a program, and then paying teachers per diems to participate in it? Or would it be better to let the teachers design their own professional development activities and give them money to carry out these activities, even if it is thought that teachers are not the most knowledgeable people about the improvements needed?

Opting for the first approach means in practice planning and organizing seminars or workshops for large groups of teachers aimed at teaching them content knowledge and generic pedagogical skills. These seminars and workshops are typically characterized by their episodic nature and involve little or no follow-up in context. Practicing teachers do learn something from such activities, but we know that the effects on classroom practice and student learning rarely match the expenditures, time and efforts. Indeed, a lot of money has been spent over the past several decades in various parts of the world on getting experts to design staff development programs for teachers, with disappointing results in terms of improved classroom practice and student learning. One of the main explanations is that the program contents and organization did not match beneficiaries' felt needs, were not responsive to their local realities, and, as a result, were unable to mobilize sustainable engagement among them.<sup>1</sup>

The second approach, letting teachers design their own professional development activities and providing funds for carrying them out, is an important improvement over the first to the extent that it motivates teachers by giving them a say in their own development. It is a departure from the much criticized yet persisting centralized, top-down, one-size-fits-all model of staff development. However, this approach is not without problems, especially if it is conceptualized as totally bottom-up and does not involve design and implementation support as well as financial resources. One of its problematic aspects is that it does not necessarily ensure that professional development activities are linked with student learning, for teachers may be too close to practice to see what needs improvement and thus propose activities whose intended impact on student learning is not clear. Another problem is that a bottom-up approach may favor teachers who are already the most effective, because they are more likely than less effective teachers to have the dispositions and skills necessary for responding to an invitation to design their own professional development activities. Yet

another problematic aspect is that this orientation may jeopardize education leaders' commitment and support, because they may feel bypassed or marginalized, just as teachers do in a totally top-down process. This is an important concern, as evidence has accumulated to show that institutional commitment and support are critical factors for program survival and success.

The bottom-up approach is the manifestation of a broad movement to enable teachers to participate more actively in their own professional development, as opposed to being passive recipients of other experts' knowledge. It is an approach that has become popular in many high-income countries with varying success,<sup>2</sup> but applying it in resource-scarce countries is a formidable challenge. The challenge is further complicated by teachers' relatively low level of formal education in these countries.

In this paper, I argue for a balanced approach, that is, an approach whereby external expertise and teacher initiatives are combined to make teachers full partners in their own professional development. This balanced approach entails neither imposing the content and organization of teachers' professional development nor simply providing teachers with funds and letting them on their own to manage as they can. *Making teachers full partners in their own professional development*, as I use the phrase, means helping them determine the content and organization of their in-service education. From an organizational point of view it entails:

- designing an organizational support system that consists of a set of extrinsic and intrinsic incentives, as well as assistance from a specially qualified support personnel;
- balancing such a support system with teacher autonomy and self-direction; and
- institutionalizing transparency and accountability in terms of student and teacher learning, and use of financial resources.

## **Conceptualizing teacher partnership**

### **Teacher engagement: a precondition for pursuing authentic professional development**

The case for making teachers full partners in their own professional development is based on the understanding that for teachers to pursue authentic professional development they need to be engaged in it. In other words, *teacher engagement*, which presupposes genuine commitment, is a precondition for teachers to pursue authentic professional development. Extrinsic incentives, such as money, by themselves have in practice been insufficient to secure genuine teacher commitment. Teachers may respond by simply going through the motions, that is, doing whatever is required of them by the authorities in order to get the

related extrinsic incentives but without committing themselves to the objectives of the efforts meant to bring about meaningful change in their practice and student learning.

Teacher partnership, as described above, helps engage teachers in a way that extrinsic incentives alone cannot. A starting point for engaging teachers in authentic professional development is to involve them in a genuine way in determining the content and organization of that professional development. That requires going beyond eliciting teacher participation through surveys, questionnaires, or interviews intended to allow them to express needs and preferences, and which then become the basis for decisions and actions that others take. Instead, a teacher partnership allows teachers to make decisions and initiate actions that will naturally respond to their felt needs.<sup>3</sup> This constitutes an important intrinsic incentive to the extent that it acknowledges teachers' importance as key actors in the improvement of the teaching/learning process. In practical terms, it means creating opportunities for teachers to:

- analyze their own problems of practice and related learning difficulties among their students and select the one they not only feel needs to be addressed as a high priority but also believe they can address effectively with additional resources;
- define their project objectives in terms of teacher and student learning;
- plan activities to meet those objectives as well as to evaluate the results internally; and
- ask, receive and manage the resources needed to carry out these activities.

### **Balancing organizational support and teacher autonomy and self-direction**

Such a starting point calls for adopting a bottom-up approach but does not rule out organizational support in the form of guidance and advice for both design and implementation or extrinsic incentives (financial and material resources). Teachers need assistance to determine the content and organization of their own professional development. They also need at least a minimum level of material and financial resources to pursue it. But if it is to cultivate a *sense of ownership*, the assistance must be close-to-school, rooted in the realities of teachers' work, and non-directive. In other words, assistance needs to be balanced

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4. The proposals include six main sections: presentation of the school and analysis of the material and pedagogical problems it faces; choice and justification of the pedagogical problem to be addressed in the project; formulation of project objectives; listing and justification of existing and additional resources needed to address the chosen problem; identification, description, justification and programming of activities to be undertaken to achieve project objectives; identification, description, justification and programming of project documentation and evaluation means; budget; plus a biographical questionnaire and a short essay by each team member. In addition, the finalist proposals include statistical data on the school.

with *teacher autonomy* and *self-direction*. In fact, the ultimate objective of those who provide assistance should be to make themselves unnecessary in the long run.

We also believe that cultivating a sense of ownership among teachers leads them to accept being held *accountable*, first, for the objectives of their professional development activities (enhancing teacher learning and student learning), and, second, for use of the material and financial resources put at their disposal. If teachers have a sense of ownership in relation to their own professional development activities, they will strive to deliver what they promised, thereby meriting the trust placed in them by the system. As several Guinean colleagues often put it, it is a case of having one's self-respect at stake and working hard to preserve it. We sometimes find people who think that giving teachers more autonomy means that they are not held accountable, but if teachers see their self-respect is at stake, they seem more willing to accept being held accountable for accomplishing project objectives.

But it is not just teachers who should be held accountable. Those who provide assistance and leadership also should be held accountable for their actions, because their actions and leadership have consequences for what teachers' are able to accomplish. In addition, holding these people accountable has a positive influence on teachers' acceptance of being held accountable.

## **Illustrating teacher partnership**

### **Setting the stage**

To illustrate what it means to make teachers full partners in their own professional development, I shall draw heavily on the work in which I have been involved in Guinea and in Burkina Faso. I begin with a story from the work in Guinea which, in my opinion, not only captures in an interesting and economical way the constituent elements of teacher partnership but also sets them well in context.

The story involves a team of teachers and the resource person assigned to facilitate the training activities they themselves had designed. As early as the first training session, the teachers and in particular the team leader were not satisfied with the performance of their resource person. They reported their dissatisfaction to another person assigned as their facilitator and took the issue to the program's regional coordinator. The coordinator responded by visiting the school in the company of the resource person for a meeting with the teachers. The meeting revealed that the teachers were right. Nevertheless, they agreed to let the resource person come back for another session, with the understanding that he would make revisions. He still did not live up to the teachers' expectations. Since the regional coordinator could not find promptly an appropriate replacement, the teachers took upon themselves the responsibility of facilitat-

ing the rest of their training activities, asking for their facilitator's assistance and guidance only when necessary. The team worked hard in the program's first dissemination workshop and was selected as one of the exemplary teams for its contribution.

This is an unusual story in the context of Guinea and most probably elsewhere in Africa. Its unusual character stems from the difference in rank among the parties involved. The teacher team was composed exclusively of primary school teachers; the resource person was a local staff developer; the facilitator was the head of the elementary school section of a Prefectoral Directorate of Education; and the regional coordinator was the head of the elementary school section of a Regional Inspectorate of Education. In this very hierarchical system, what gave the teachers the courage to insist so openly that their resource person live up to their expectations?

The answer, I argue, is that these teachers were *engaged* in what they were doing, implementing a project they had designed, with limited help from outside, to improve the teaching and learning of reading in fifth and sixth grades in their own schools. The process of designing a project to address a problem they themselves identified cultivated a *sense of ownership* among them and a strong commitment to implementing it as planned. Most importantly, they felt accountable in a double sense: not only in terms of meeting the objectives of their project but also financially, in terms of the program that funded their work, consistent with the contract they had officially signed with the program's regional steering committee. The teachers also knew that they had the right to voice their concerns and believed in the program's capacity to deal responsibly with such grievances. As the team leader put it, "*I did not want my team to lose out.*"

The program in question is an ongoing grass-roots professional development and school improvement small grants program, known by its French acronym PPSE, aimed at making teachers full partners in their own professional development. It is a participatory program development involving an impressive number of Guinean educational leaders and ordinary primary school teachers and a team of international consultants (including one American and three Africans). Our journey began about three and half years ago, and we are in a position today to assert that we have made good progress in designing and piloting a program that balances organizational support and teacher autonomy and self-direction.

## **The Guinea small grants program: basic assumptions, characteristics and initial results**

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5. See Schwille and Dembélé, 1997.

The basic concept of PPSE (Programme de Petites Subventions d'École en Guinée) is to support teachers' systematic and self-reflective improvement initiatives at the local level. In practice, regional educational authorities contract selectively with teams of teachers, both within and across schools, and supply additional resources, provided that the teachers commit themselves to improving teaching and learning in their classrooms in a systematic, documented, and self-educative way. The program rests on the interrelated assumptions that we cannot bypass teachers to improve teaching and learning in classrooms, and that making teachers full partners in their own professional development is a serious incentive for engaging them in professional development. The program therefore asks teacher teams to take responsibility in designing projects that will improve the quality of teaching and learning in *their* schools. To help them do that, the program provides to them an organizational support system that is characterized by a two-step, highly structured small grant competition process, and close-to-school, non-directive assistance with project design, implementation and evaluation.

The small grant competition process begins with a series of workshops for groups of teacher teams, facilitated by a support personnel called *encadreurs facilitateurs*. During these workshops, the facilitators explain the program's basic philosophy, procedures and documents (including an operational manual and a proposal writing guide with accompanying set of explanatory notes). Their primary task, however, is to guide teachers' first steps in grant proposal writing.<sup>4</sup> They provide guidance while making sure the content of the proposals is left to the teachers, for the projects have to be *theirs*, not the facilitators'. In other words, their task consists in facilitating a process, *not* teaching or imposing a particular content. To ensure this, facilitators have been repeatedly encouraged not to be too directive or *dirigiste*. This recommendation has been taken to heart and has even become a slogan for the program.

To help teachers continue to write their preliminary proposals, the program provides close-to-school follow up. Thus, each team is visited twice in their school by a facilitator after the workshops. The preliminary proposals are submitted to prefectorial juries for review and pre-selection. An important part of the jury's session is the discussion with each team's representative about their proposal. This discussion is meant to allow teachers to say more about their proposals and to help the prefectorial jury make better informed decisions. The proposals that are pre-selected are sent back to the teacher teams for revision in light of written feedback from juries consisting of questions, comments and advice for improvement, and with facilitators' continued close-to-school assistance. The revised proposals (termed finalist proposals) are submitted to a regional jury for review and final selection. Successful teams are then funded based on their proposed budgets, and unsuccessful teams receive consolation prizes in kind on the basis of what they themselves had requested in case they did not receive full funding.



Successful teacher teams receive project implementation support in the form of a project launch/management/evaluation workshop held before the beginning of the school year; close-to-school assistance throughout project duration by the same facilitators; and three visits by another type of support personnel, called *encadreurs-évaluateurs*, for external evaluation of funded projects. The workshop is intended to prepare teachers to implement their projects, including carrying out planned training and evaluation activities, documenting project implementation, and submitting required financial and activity reports. It ends with a formal ceremony of contract signing between the teacher team representatives, the program's regional coordinators, and the regional inspector of education. This signing of the contract symbolizes each party's commitment to carrying out its duties. For teachers, this means a commitment to carrying out the funded project to improve teaching and learning in their schools, accounting for the use of the resources made available to them, and documenting and evaluating the project. For education authorities, this means making available to the teachers the resources they requested to carry out their project, and doing whatever is necessary (and feasible) to facilitate the effective implementation of the project.

To enable teachers to share their work with colleagues beyond their immediate circle, the Small Grants Program provides for two kinds of dissemination gatherings: regional and national seminars. If these seminars are conceived as organizational support for disseminating teachers' work, they must also be seen as pressure on teachers insofar as they require that each teacher team make a persuasive case for the value of their implemented project. This has important implications for project documentation and evaluation.

Finally, to sustain teachers' commitment over a long period, the program offers the possibility of second year and third year grant renewal. Thus a successful team can be funded for three consecutive years. Such long-term involvement in the program is expected to facilitate and reinforce internalization by teachers the habits of innovative problem solving at the school level that the program is trying to introduce generally into the Guinean education system.

As shown in **Table C-1 (See page 239)**, the provision of the organizational support described above required the creation of several special structures and roles, in addition to teacher teams and team presidents and treasurers. I have already mentioned the prefectorial and regional juries, which are composed of local educational leaders and social partners of education. I have also mentioned the two types of *encadreurs* (facilitators and evaluators), and the regional coordinators. As well, the program is steered at the central level by a committee (known by its French acronym CTR) chaired by the National Director of Elementary Education and composed of representatives of various ministry of

education directorates and specialized units. At the regional level, the Regional Inspector of Education (the head of the educational system in the region) chairs the committee (known by its French acronym CTRR) that steers the program in the region. This committee is composed of local educational leaders. Finally, the program relies heavily on a National Training Support Team (known by its French acronym GNAF) responsible, in collaboration with the international consultants, for preparing and facilitating the various workshops for the support personnel, and for supervising certain program activities at the regional level.

Thus, the program has been able to engage teachers and educational leaders at all levels, from the center to the level of sub-prefectures. In fact, one important factor of its success in mobilizing the whole system is that it has drawn on people who are already in place in the various ministry offices at central, regional, prefectorial and sub-prefectorial levels to play the roles or to be members of one or another of the groups or committees required by this approach. This has facilitated the program's integration into the normal activities of the education system and thereby contributed directly to institutional capacity-building.

To allow the structures to function effectively and the people involved to competently play their respective roles, the program provides a set of training activities to the entire spectrum of personnel involved. These activities too contribute, albeit indirectly, to organizational support. To date, the most notable training activities have included:

- initial two-week preparation workshop for first cohort of facilitators;
- second six-day session for facilitators;
- special initial preparation workshop for first cohort of evaluators;
- combination of formal and on-the-job training for the second and subsequent cohorts of facilitators and evaluators;
- initial 5-day preparation workshop for jury members;
- two-day in-service meetings for all facilitators and evaluators every other month;
- launch/management/evaluation workshop;
- initial 5-day preparation workshop for new regional coordinators; and
- planning workshops for national and regional program leaders.

While each of these activities has its own unique content, they have one common denominator: they are all highly participatory, product-oriented, authentic and grounded in earlier experiences and products.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, within all training seminars and workshops, participants have the opportunity to do one of the following: draft actual program documentation, produce documents for themselves, or simulate various program tasks. The products of any training session,

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6. See Dembélé, 1995.

whether actual or simulated, form the basis for subsequent sessions. This enhances the authenticity of learning tasks and contributes to motivating participants to take these tasks seriously.

Besides the program's success in mobilizing the whole system and challenging it to work in ways that it in principle ought already to be working, namely, in ways that are more responsive to the local needs of teachers and students, we have seen several other encouraging signs. In fact, the program has already achieved extraordinary results. What teachers presented during the first regional dissemination workshop showed that they deserve the trust placed in them by the system through this program. A special meeting with nine of ten Prefectorial Directors of Education in the pilot region who attended the workshop revealed that they were unanimous that it was a great success. They had positive comments about the program itself, noting its ability to motivate teachers and emphasizing what teachers have gained from it: project design skills, research capabilities, and capabilities for group work.

Three of the main achievements that the first regional dissemination workshop brought to the surface deserve to be highlighted. The first is the realization and mastery by teachers and other participants of a basic concept of project evaluation, that is, demonstrating the impact of the project in relation to a well understood point of departure. The second, and most important, is the acceptance by the teachers themselves of accountability in terms of student and teacher learning, thus adopting a demanding assessment strategy that requires gathering evidence about student and teacher learning and relating changes to their own initiatives. The third, and not the least important, is the call to focus on comprehension in assessing students in the area of reading. Teachers who presented correct pronunciation of words, correct intonation, and respect of punctuation and links ("liaisons") as evidence of their students' ability to read were challenged by their colleagues to show that these students understood what they read. This is an important achievement, because typically what goes unchallenged in classrooms in Guinea and elsewhere in our countries is rote-memorization of facts. Students working on a second language in such classrooms often memorize sentences and recite them without understanding what they are saying.

Internalization of accountability was revealed in a powerful way by the participating teachers' reactions to the impressive yet problematic work done by one of the teams of an elementary teacher education laboratory school (*Ecole d'application*). The work of this team on local geography for third and fourth grades, leading to the production of four local maps, photographs of local sites, and a textbook, demonstrates that funded teams can be creative and can add to teaching materials in ways that otherwise would not be possible. The fact that the team budgeted for a cartographer as an unconventional resource person to teach them how to make maps is a particularly important indicator of teacher

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7. 1983, p. ix.

initiative. But even more important is how other team representatives held this team accountable for what they did. Producing materials was perceived as not enough! In fact, other teams expressed some indignation that their colleagues of the laboratory school were not held to the a standard of accountability comparable to their own. First, the laboratory school project did not have explicit objectives specified in terms of student learning and therefore did not include any activity involving students. Second, this team did not try out the materials they designed for teachers. They simply sent a sample to a limited number of teachers and educational leaders for their reactions. They did not work with the teachers to test the materials and to determine whether or not they had a positive impact on student learning.

These experiences are solid ground for talking about success. However, it is important to note that we are in the early stages of this endeavor to test our assumption that teacher partnership is a serious incentive for engaging teachers in professional development. We still have a lot to learn about the conditions under which the assumption is applicable and about how powerful an incentive it is and can be. In particular, we wonder how long the program can keep teachers engaged at the current level of intensity and scale. To answer this question we need to know more about what aspects of the program are most satisfying for the teachers. For example, did teachers really need to do each of the following to be engaged and experience ownership:

- analyze their own problems of practice and select the one they not only feel needs to be addressed in priority but also believe they can address effectively with a small grant;
- define their own project objectives;
- plan activities to meet those objectives as well as to evaluate the results internally;
- receive, manage and account for a small grant;
- get public recognition of their importance as key actors in the teaching/learning process?

In addition, were there other important factors that we did not expect?

We can begin to answer these questions by looking at a similar yet different project being carried out in Burkina Faso with funds provided by the Rockefeller and Spencer Foundations. The project is worth examining for three reasons. First, to some extent, it constitutes a more severe test of teacher partnership, given that it was started with very small grants and thus does not have all the material resources (extrinsic incentives) that PPSE provides. Second, it attempts to do what could not be done in Guinea yet: engage teachers in designing and carrying out action research projects (investigating daily lived teaching experience in a systematic way in order to find solutions to pedagogical problems identified by teachers themselves and for which the teachers have no immediate solutions in mind). Third, this project has a less elaborate and complex organizational support system than the one established in Guinea.

## **Teacher research as an incentive for teachers to engage in their own professional development in Burkina Faso**

The work in Burkina Faso is a small scale project designed to enable and encourage teachers to do research on their practice as a vehicle for their own professional development. It focuses on improving girls' education. The project has brought together a group of twenty primary teachers (fourteen females and six males) from twenty urban and rural schools, and a seven-member core research team composed of education leaders and researchers from both elementary and higher education sectors. The teachers were selected on the basis of a definition of exemplary teachers by district education supervisors after nomination by school cluster teacher groups.

The basic assumptions underlying this work are drawn from research on teacher learning in various countries. They include the following:

- Like other professionals, teachers need not just time to reflect, but a supportive context to do so. A study/support group where teachers can together reflect on and struggle with problems of practice offers such a context.
- Investigating one's own practice is a form of professional development and an avenue that leads toward improved practice, as well as a means for making a contribution to the shared knowledge of the teaching profession.
- If teachers carry out inquiries into their own work, it is critical that the resulting knowledge be made public. Indeed, opportunities need to be created for the teachers involved to share (orally or in writing) their insights with a larger audience. A teacher research support group constitutes the most immediate forum for this purpose.

The project is aimed at enabling the participating teachers to take responsibility for investigating their own practice and encouraging them to do so and thereby ultimately playing a key role in the national teacher researcher network that is envisioned in the long term. But in a context with little history of education research, even among university-based educators, it would be unrealistic to expect teachers to be able to undertake research without preparation. To prepare them to take this responsibility, organizational support was envisaged as *research mentoring* based in certain respects on a conceptual framework for mentoring and capacity building.<sup>6</sup> A key element in this framework is *modeling*. Modeling is conceived not simply in terms of showing and demonstration by the mentor, but in terms of guiding the novice through collaborative, joint performance of the tasks and responsibilities normally called for, all with explicit attention to the purpose and context of the work and the rationale for what is being done. As the novice assumes increased responsibility, the mentor's role shifts from modeling to coaching to fading to allow for independent responsibility on the part of the novice. Thus the approach to inducting teachers into doing research consists in first sharing responsibility with them for data gathering and analysis, and then fading progressively so that they can assume leadership in

framing, designing and carrying out their own research projects. Fading constitutes a gradual reduction in organizational support as the teachers become more autonomous in doing their own projects.

In the Burkina project, the first step taken to put this approach into practice consisted in conducting biographical interviews with the teachers as well as gathering observation data in their classrooms, including selective videotaping. This activity had a triple objective: to model for teachers two data gathering methods that are often used by practitioner researchers; to generate data about the teachers' shared and differentiated beliefs about teaching, learning, learning to teach, schooling and society, and how these beliefs shape their classroom actions; and to document their actual classroom practices. Displays of the data thus gathered were used during monthly meetings as the basis for structured, collective reflection on substantive issues related to teaching, learning and learning to teach. From the perspective of research mentoring, this second step aimed at modeling data analysis for teachers.

Modeling data gathering and data analysis in this way helped teachers see that research can be a powerful means of professional development, a development of their practice and not a distraction from it, to use Donald Schön's words.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, participating for the first time in systematic, non-evaluative study, the Burkinabè teachers, the women in particular, found this professionally and personally rewarding, describing it, as one said, as "an exercise in reflection, an occasion to develop professionally, question oneself, and learn to speak in public."

However, it now appears that these two steps did not fully succeed in achieving the sense of ownership by the teachers that had been anticipated. For example, teachers have expected extrinsic incentives such as per diems (besides refreshments and money for transportation) for participating in monthly meetings. Even more troubling were teachers' comments that suggested that they were not doing their own work, but rather helping the core research team carry out the core team's project. During a stocktaking meeting at the end of the past academic year it was clear from their comments that most of the teachers involved had actually expected a more top-down approach, an orientation to which they were accustomed. They expected to be taught "recipes about improving girls' education," as one of them put it, to raise problems of practice and get technical and material support from the project to solve them, or to be asked to help other teachers, since they were selected as exemplary practitioners. They were still somewhat at a loss when none of these expectations was fulfilled.

There are two related explanations for this situation. First, the teachers were not involved in designing the project. Therefore they had difficulty fully understanding and internalizing its objectives despite repeated explanations. Second, organizational support up to that point did not allow for teacher participation beyond sitting for interviews, being observed, and participating in monthly meetings where data they co-generated were discussed. Teacher autonomy and the mentors' fading had not yet been achieved.

With an early sense of these problems, even before the stocktaking meeting, a modified third step was taken. Preparation for a study of girls' education to be carried out during the 1997-98 academic year was modified to involve teachers early in framing and designing the research rather than simply expecting them to carry out the study as had initially been anticipated. Teachers were asked to bring to planning sessions preliminary quantitative data about girls' representation and performance in their classrooms. Structured, collective discussion of these data during recent monthly meetings aimed at stimulating and encouraging the questions that will inform a study organically rooted in the teachers' work. Teachers appeared more animated when discussing these data than they were earlier when discussing data collected with them by researchers. A plausible reason for this attitudinal change is that teachers psychologically *owned* the data they themselves brought, hence were more comfortable talking about them. Project leaders quickly appreciated the importance and benefits of this modified third step. Besides increasing teacher participation in the project, joint work to frame, design and carry out a study of girls' education is serving the dual purpose of capitalizing on the teachers' knowledge and adding to their capacity to do research. In hindsight, we would have been better off starting the project with this step.

The step to be taken next is the final stage of the research mentoring cycle, that is, fading to allow teachers to assume more autonomous responsibility. As a

matter of fact, along with carrying out the study of girls' classroom experiences, monthly meetings will prepare teachers to take primary responsibility for investigating their own practice. Participants will help one another to frame problems of practice, think hard about how to address them, and figure out what data to gather, how to gather them, and how to share the results with others. Having participated actively in a systematic study of girls' education, teachers will, we hope, pay attention to gender in their own projects, and they will be encouraged to do so. The project will provide organizational support to teacher researchers as they implement their own projects by offering modest grants, pairing each of them with a core research team member for close-to-the-classroom assistance, and making time during monthly meetings for them to report and discuss insights gained from their investigations, new issues and questions raised and difficulties encountered. This step is expected to reinforce teachers' participation, initiative and sense of ownership. It constitutes the real test of teacher research as an incentive for teachers to engage in their own professional development.

While the project is still too new to be evaluated in terms of teacher learning and related changes in the practices of the participating teachers, there are encouraging signs that a teacher research/study group *can* be a powerful support for teacher learning. What is most encouraging is that the monthly meetings have come to constitute an important and highly valued project activity and, to date, they have proved very productive, leading to insightful discussions of teaching, learning to teach, educational change, and girls' education. Self-reported examples of teacher learning from these meetings include becoming more patient with students as a result of discussions of children's knowledge as a critical element in learning to teach and a difficult area for most practicing teachers; becoming more sensitive and attentive to female students and even taking actions outside school in their favor as a result of discussions of preliminary data (brought by teachers themselves) on girls' education; and trying out practical ideas learned from other teachers in the group, such as using student essays as texts for dictation. Such attitudinal changes cannot be induced in a sit-and-get workshop, the sort that the teachers were expecting. It was in the context of discussing the difficulties entailed in teaching writing that a sixth grade teacher shared his idea of using student essays as texts for dictation to show his students that they can be authors too. Another teacher who was part of this discussion took the initiative (without informing anyone) to try out the idea. She proudly reported her success to the group several months later. It is very unlikely that this kind of learning from each other will occur in a sit-and-get workshop.

This project is a case of partnership between a group of primary school teachers and a group of educational leaders and researchers. So far, there has been only one dropout among the teachers, not because of lack of interest in the project, but because the person passed a professional exam to go back to school. However, as in the case of the Guinea small grants program, we need to ask ourselves how long teachers' interest can be maintained in this project. Specifically, *are participating in a study group and doing action research sufficient by themselves to sustain teachers' engagement in their own professional development?* This question is particularly pressing in this case given that the extrinsic incentives for participating in the project are very modest compared to what the Guinea



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**Dhurumbeer Kulpoo** (Mauritius) has been working with the Ministry of Education of Mauritius for fifteen years. He has held senior positions within the Ministry and is currently Regional Principal Education Officer. He has also been the National Interim Coordinator for SACMEQ I, and is now the National Research Coordinator for SACMEQ II. He has worked closely with the IIEP.

**Glory Makwati** (Zimbabwe) is currently Regional Director in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture in Zimbabwe. Previously Chief Education Officer for Policy Planning, he has also been a contributing consultant on the SADC Initiative of Education Policy Development Planning and Management.

**Mmantsetsa Marope** (Botswana) is currently a Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank. Prior to that, she was the Regional Coordinator and Chief Executive Officer for the Education Research Network in East and Southern Africa (ERNESA). Other responsibilities have included being a member of the Presidential Interim Council for Vision 2016 (Botswana), a Senior lecturer at the University of Botswana, and a Curriculum Development Officer. Dr. Marope has also worked on various projects with ADEA. She is a series editor of the *Handbook of Research on Education in Botswana*, an associate editor of the *Journal of Education Systems Research and Development*, member of the editorial board of *Prospects* and a novelist in her language: Setswana.

**Linda McGinnis** (USA) is Co-Manager of the World Links for Development (WorLD) Program. Upon joining the World Bank as an economist in 1989, she worked on macroeconomic and poverty issues in Latin America, then moved to manage specific social sector operations (education, health and population) in Venezuela, Haiti, and Jamaica. In 1992, she was appointed World Bank Resident Representative in Mali, where she spent four years. In 1997, she was brought to the World Bank Institute to help design and manage the WorLD Program.

**Katherine Namuddu** (Uganda) is Senior Research Scientist at the Rockefeller Foundation in Nairobi, Kenya. She's a biologist and science educator by training and is currently working on programs dealing with gender equity in education at the Foundation. Until recently, she was the coordinator of the Working Group on Female Participation.

**Jean-David Naudet** (France) is an economist at the *Développement et Insertion Internationale* (DIAL) which is a center for European research on applied development macro-economics. He is a specialist on international cooperation issues. He has been involved in the development of the Cooperation 21 program of the Club Sahel.

**Richard Sack** (USA) is a sociologist of education by training. He received a Ph.D. from Stanford University (USA) and has taught in universities in the United States, Canada and Zaire. His research and writings have focused on educational policy analysis, international development education, and organizational analysis. Since 1995, Mr. Sack has been Executive secretary of ADEA.

**Joel Samoff** (USA) has a background in history, political science, and education. He teaches about development and underdevelopment. Concerned with public policy and research, and especially with the links between them, he has been exploring analyses of education in Africa undertaken in the context of the foreign aid relationship. Among the countries included in that comparative research have been Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Lesotho, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Currently at the Center for African Studies at Stanford University, Samoff has also been a faculty member at the Universities of Michigan and Zambia and has taught in Mexico, Sweden, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. For the past decade, Samoff has worked closely with the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis and with its Lead Agency, UNESCO.

**Hon. Harry Sawyer** (Ghana) has been a prominent public figure in Ghana for the past thirty years. After serving as Minister for Transport and Communications of the Third Republic and, most recently as Minister for Education, he retired from active political life on March 31, 1997. Within ADEA, Hon. Sawyer was elected President of the Caucus of African Ministers of Education and Chair of the Bureau of African Ministers in 1995.

**Rodolfo Stavenhagen** (Mexico), is research professor at El Colegio de México. A member of UNESCO's International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, he is the author of numerous publications on agrarian problems and development, ethnic conflicts, human rights and indigenous peoples. He was Assistant-Director General for Social Sciences at UNESCO in 1979-1982.

**Nick Taylor** (South Africa) is Executive Director of the Joint Education Trust, a South African development agency composed of a partnership between 14 of the country's largest private sector corporations, and 9 civil society organisations, including the largest political parties and trade unions. Before joining JET, Dr Taylor coordinated the National Education Policy Initiative, an investigation into policy options for South Africa in 12 areas of the education system. He has a PhD in maths education and taught maths and science at the high school level for 10 years.

**Ko-Chih Tung** (Sweden) is the ADEA Coordinator of Working Group on Education Statistics and its capacity program entitled “Strengthening National Education Statistical Information Systems (NESIS) in Sub-Saharan Africa.” He is also the Chair of the EFA Regional Advisory Group for the SSA region, which is coordinating the EFA2000 Assessment and organising the end-of-decade conference on the vision for the 21st Century. His professional background is in the fields of scientific research methodology, organizational development and large-scale information systems. He has previously taught these subjects at a doctoral level and has served as senior advisor to governments and international organizations.

**Sissel Volan** (Norway) has been in the field of Education for Development since 1972. She worked with both the Norwegian UN Association and UNICEF during her four years in Africa. Since 1986 she has been with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) where she is currently a senior education advisor. Sissel Volan is also the Chairperson of the ADEA.



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