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THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION POLICY FORMATION IN AFRICA

The Case of Guinea



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1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the stages in the education policy development and implementation process since 1990 in the Republic of Guinea. The study begins with a general analysis and goes on to assess the specific situation of the education sector. It summarizes the results achieved by the translation of policy into a sector adjustment program in education (the PASE) covering a three-and-a-half-year period (1990–93). The stages of its development and implementation are discussed to give the reader an example of a process that has improved an education system. Finally, the section outlines the guidelines to be followed to restore the education system during the 1990–2000 period. These guidelines do not prescribe actions but rather assign priorities and indicate the direction to follow to achieve the stated objectives.

1.2 Rather than taking an historical approach to the education system, this study is based on the circumstances that drew attention to the need to develop a policy, which is the point of departure of this analysis. In 1988, the Education II project with the World Bank was coming to a close, and adjustment programs dominated the national scene. The results of the project were mixed, and new approaches seemed necessary to reform the education system, one of the world's least developed.

1.3 At that time, international organizations making significant loans to Guinea indicated their interest in a plan to salvage education that would draw support from changes underway in other sectors and impact national life as a whole. A national policy for the sector and an implementation plan for the first three-year phase was achieved through a synergistic combination of efforts and tools.

1.4 Transforming this policy into a three-year program was achieved through the Sector Adjustment Programme for Education (Programme d'Ajustement du Secteur de l'Éducation—PASE) for the 1990–94 period. The three principal donors,¹ the World Bank, USAID, and France, supported the program by both supplementing the balance of payments and directly managing funds. The implementation of the program required formal and informal structures and mechanisms, which, along with other resources, constituted the tools necessary for the program's success. These mechanisms and structures emerged during the course of the program's development and made it possible to solve problems that arose during implementation.

1.5 The mechanisms and procedures are described in this study, along with examples of problems encountered. The purpose of their description is to share lessons learned in Guinea with those who become involved in the development and implementation of policy in the education sector, even if these lessons are not wholly or partially transferrable to all contexts.

2 - BACKGROUND

The economic, social, and political situation

2.1 Guinea achieved Independence in 1958. For 26 years thereafter, a socialist government managed all sectors of national life in a centralized and politicized fashion. In 1984, a military coup changed the political scene, and a military regime ran the country until the end of 1993, when presidential elections were held.

2.2 Its natural resources make Guinea one of the richest countries in Africa, but economic and social indicators paradoxically place it among the least developed countries in the world. In 1958, Guinea was one of the principal exporters of agricultural products in the world. The majority of the population worked in agriculture and animal husbandry, while only 10 percent participated in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

2.3 The country saw its economy transformed during the 1970s, when it became an importer of foodstuffs, and bauxite became practically its only source of exports. Most of the nation's economic activities shifted from the rural to the urban sector, and management of the economy was entrusted to an inefficient and bloated public sector. The national economy became dual in nature, with a growing part of the demand for imported goods and foodstuffs satisfied by the black market. By 1988, per capita income was \$380, life expectancy was estimated at 43 years, infant mortality was 160 deaths per 1,000 births, and the rate of illiteracy was 72 percent. All of these indicators reflect a low standard of living for the majority of the population after a quarter of a century of independence from colonial powers.

Attempted macroeconomic changes

2.4 By 1979, still under the First Republic, some economic and institutional reforms had been initiated. Their aim was to increase tolerance for private enterprise, encourage foreign investment and diversification, progressively introduce efficiency criteria, and foster greater fiscal austerity. It was not possible, however, to implement deeper reforms due to the persistent contradictions between planned structural reforms and the need for a transition that did not jeopardize previous achievements. Guinea was faced with price liberalization, a currency devaluation without the means to control inflation, and a reform of the public sector to make it more productive.

2.5 In view of this situation, in 1982 Guinea signed an initial agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) based on a financial and monetary Structural Adjustment Programme. The essential elements of this recovery program were controlling employment and consumption, improving investment programs and their external financing, promoting the autonomy of parastatal enterprises and improving their efficiency, pursuing price liberalization, and reforming the exchange rate. The implementation of economic measures, particularly the distribution of improved seeds to the rural population in the agricultural sector, extension work to disseminate modern techniques with the support of the World Bank, and the elimination of regional trading companies, all contributed to introducing some changes.

2.6 Following the military coup in 1984, the new government accelerated negotiations with donors. In 1986, an economic adjustment program was launched. Its objective was to remove the state from the productive sectors of the economy, improve the system of economic incentives, and strengthen the regulatory and institutional environment with a view toward promoting private initiative. Specific measures were drawn up with the aim of (i) remedying the overvaluation of the country's currency; (ii) establishing a new banking system; (iii) eliminating price controls and liberalizing trade; (iv) reorganizing the ministries and departments;

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(v) eliminating jobs in the public sector and reducing the state's participation in industrial and commercial activities; and (vi) reorienting public investment in order to support productive activities.

2.7 The results of this first phase were encouraging: There was considerable development in agricultural production intended for domestic consumption and export as well as in activity among small- and medium-sized enterprises and in the traditional sector. Launched at the end of 1988 with the support of the World Bank and other donors, the second phase of the adjustment program included specific measures intended to (i) consolidate the choice of a free market economy; (ii) strengthen the management of the national economy; (iii) restore the growth potential of key sectors; and (iv) implement a coherent overall strategy. These different reforms and their objectives are a good indication of how committed the government is to pursuing the rewards of growth and equity.

The state of the education system

2.8 Data gathered on education in 1988 revealed that, with only 28 percent of children full-time in primary school, Guinea was among the ten least developed countries in the world in terms of its education system. The disparity between enrollments in the urban and rural areas (54 percent and 18 percent) was deep, as it was between girls and boys (only 17 percent of girls were in school full-time). The education system accommodated 382 thousand students, 77 percent of whom were at the primary level, 20 percent at the secondary level, 1.4 percent in the technical schools, and 1.6 percent in universities.

2.9 Classroom capacity was also insufficient and outmoded. Due to inadequate classroom equipment, 20 thousand students were turned away at the beginning of the 1988–89 school year in the city of Conakry alone. In the rural areas, there were often only one or two classrooms for the community. Teachers were underqualified and did not possess the teaching credentials that would allow them to provide high-quality instruction. This had an effect on the students' level of preparedness and the quality of their education; the system's performance was so poor that on average, a student took ten years to complete primary education. These characteristics also fit schools beyond the primary level. Of the education budget, 98 percent went to salaries; only 2 percent was earmarked for operating expenses.

2.10 In 1894, at the end of the first Republic, instruction was being given in eight national languages, and French was taught as a subject beginning in the third year. Teaching time was taken up by "productive work" and political activities at school. This was all abandoned at the beginning of the 1984–85 school year, when the political changes began.

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Attempted changes in education

2.11 In 1979 and 1983, with support from the World Bank, government began two projects, Education I and II. Their objective was to improve the operation of certain elements of the education system, such as technical instruction, textbooks for primary education, renovation of infrastructure, and training of professionals in the central divisions of the ministry. Although the results of these projects were positive in terms of their stated objectives, they had no substantive effect on the sector, because they were not part of any coherent sector policy framework and did not address the need for a change in the existing strategy for education.

2.12 The second project ended in 1989. By that time, preparations for the Sector Adjustment Programme in Education were already underway (these are described in a subsequent section). Experience in other countries had shown the Guineans that a coherent education policy and training framework, linked to an overall macroeconomic adjustment program, can lead to changes in the education sector that have a profound effect on the nation's schooling. On this basis, educators and politicians in Guinea decided to build a reform founded on a declaration of policy for education.

3 - DECLARATION OF EDUCATION POLICY

3.1 The Declaration of Education Policy, a 20-page document, was approved in September 1989. It puts into writing specific objectives, procedures, and strategies that provide a blueprint for subsequent interventions in the education sector, and it presents the general framework for involvement of government and external assistance necessary to improve the education system and determine priorities for the years 1990–2000:

- (a) Education's share of the government budget will increase from 14 percent in 1989 to 20 percent in 2000, and the bulk of financial resources will be devoted to primary education, which is the top priority.
- (b) The goal will be to achieve a maximum level of first-year enrollment of 70 percent for children who are seven years of age during this period, with 60 percent considered a realistic figure, due to the efforts needed to improve quality through limiting the number of children who repeat grades or dropout and improving teaching methods. These efforts will allow the raw percentage of children in full-time schooling to be raised to 53 percent by the end of the period.
- (c) These objectives have implications for teachers as well as for infrastructure and improvements in teacher training. Teachers will be recruited in keeping with the increase in the numbers of children attending school and the number of classrooms available. Disparities between rural and urban areas in the number and quality of schools will be reduced, and the gender gap will be eliminated.
- (d) The increase in the number of students attending primary school and the improved efficiency of the system will affect other levels. Thus, secondary and higher levels will be examined in terms of their relationship to the objectives established at the primary level and to the new human resource requirements of the national economic situation.

3.2 Although the general guidelines, objectives, and priorities are clearly defined in the declaration, the procedures, mechanisms, and strategies are not. For example, the textbook section includes statements such as: "The government shall make available to students and parents appropriate textbooks at an attractive price." This directive gives no indication of the approaches to be pursued in order to attain the objective. The problem arises that more than one foreign donor can choose to intervene, each with its own strategy, based on its own culture, and perhaps in conflict with each other or with how the Guineans would like to proceed. On the other hand, the Declaration's succinct style is easy to read and exhibits realism and flexibility. It can orient future interventions and thereby serve as a compass.

Sector Adjustment Programme in Education (PASE)

3.3 The objectives of the Sector Adjustment Programme in Education are derived from the declaration. The program covered the period October 1990 to June 1994 and translated the first stage of the policy into concrete actions for the initial phase. The program covers four components:

- (a) Administrative restructuring and improved management capabilities;
- (b) Training for education personnel;
- (c) School construction and equipment;

(d) Pedagogical tools, including school textbooks.

3.4 Each of these components was covered by an action plan described in documents attached to the policy statement defining how it would be implemented. The first three action plans were launched in 1990. The fourth was not launched until early 1992 because a reliable administrative system had to be in place first. Donors agreed with the components and the approach to implementing the action plans.

Contributions from donors

3.5 Initially, three donors agreed with the government to act in concert to support the education reform process in Guinea: the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and France's Cooperation and Assistance Fund (*Fonds d'Aide et Coopération*—FAC). They provided \$57 million, \$18 million of which were directly managed by donors.

3.6 As the program was part of the macroeconomic adjustment process, most of the funds were made available to the government in the form of supplements to the balance of payments. It was up to the government to allocate budgeted resources effectively to the education sector. This proved difficult, because the education sector became dependent on the performance of other sectors, particularly since the donors' credit agreements contained measures to which they all subscribed. The performance criteria consisted of 18 measures, such as improving the policy framework, national strategies, management of the sector and financial resources, improving and expanding classroom capacity, and finally improving personnel services.

4 - RESULTS

4.1 The PASE was characterized by the broad mobilization of all actors involved, streamlined management, and the transparency of its activities. An assessment of progress revealed that these successful implementation strategies and methods had helped to produce the following results:

- (a) An increase in the portion of the national operating budget allocated to education from 14 percent in 1990 to 26 percent in 1993, with 39 percent assigned to primary education;
- (b) Announcement of special status for teachers and the reassignment of 1,806 teachers from the secondary to the primary level;
- (c) Retraining of 8 thousand teachers in French and mathematics and training of 64 professors from the teachers' training college and 111 education consultants;
- (d) Construction of 3 thousand classrooms, 1.5 thousand of which resulted from the involvement and spontaneous contribution of communities, and renovation of school and administrative sites;
- (e) Improvements in school furniture and supplies, as well as production and distribution of approximately 1.4 million textbooks for primary education;
- (f) Improvement in the collection of statistical data, allowing the organization of mixed-grade classes and the annual publication of increasingly reliable data;
- (g) An increase in the raw percentage of children in full-time education from 28 percent in 1989 to 40 percent in 1993, and an increase in the first-year registration rate from 39 percent in 1989 to 51 percent in 1993.

Table 1: PASE Objectives (1989) and Achievements (1994)

Areas	Objectives (1989)	Achievements (1993)
Budgetary Allocations		
-State's contribution to education	14%	26%
-Portion of educational budget going to primary education	15%	36%
Registration rate		
-Overall	28%	40.14%
-In the first year	39.42% (1990-91)	50.72%
-Of girls	19.66% (1990-91)	26.2%
Working Conditions		
-Classrooms	7,312	10,443
-School textbooks	n.d.	1,400,000 books distributed
-Value assigned to job		Salary x 100% and publication of special status
Training		Retraining of 8,000 teachers 111 educational consultants 64 professors from the teachers' training college
Organization and Facilities		
-Mixed-grade classes	4.2% (1991-92)	6.57%
-Double session	10.7% (1991-92)	11.5%
-Reassignment of teachers		1,806 schoolmasters from the secondary level to the primary level
-Collection of Statistics		Improvement in the collection method
-Facilities	Only one ministry	Facilities audits, creation of two ministries, and modernization of the directorates

4.2 In spite of these encouraging results, problems arose that exposed weaknesses in the program. Next we examine these weaknesses, bearing in mind the various planning and implementation phases of the reform program.

5 - ESTABLISHING THE PASE

5.1 Preparation for the PASE began in late 1987 continued through August 1989, lasting about 20 months. The main features of this preparation period were the PASE Interministerial Preparatory Committee (COPASE), missions by foreign experts to help assess the situation, specific studies, drafting the policy statement, consultations with groups in Guinea on various drafts, and adoption of the policy statement by the Guinean government and donors. We discuss each of these.

The PASE Interministerial Preparatory Committee (COPASE)

5.2 Composed of five high-ranking officials representing the ministries of planning, international cooperation, economy, finance, and national education, this committee was run by the Director of the Office of the Minister of Education. His mandates were to

- (a) Manage and coordinate activities needed to develop the program;
- (b) Ensure coherence between the PASE and the macroeconomic program;
- (c) Prepare and coordinate negotiations and meetings with donors;
- (d) Supervise the drafting of an education policy statement.

5.3 COPASE operated between January 1988 and August 1989. During this time, it initiated 13 foreign missions and 11 studies on issues that needed clarification for the program to be developed.

Assessment missions

5.4 In February 1988, the World Bank sponsored a workshop on the meaning of the sector adjustment program in education, which brought together 15 officials from the Ministry of Education and helped to launch the preparatory activities of the program. In the next months, COPASE commissioned 13 missions involving foreign and local experts; eight of the missions were supported by World Bank experts and five by consultants chosen by the government. These experts supported teams of Guinean professionals in their assessment of the education sector and preparation of the program. With their rich experience and outsiders' perspective on problems and strategies for resolving them, the experts assisted officials. Foreigners and locals worked together; decisions were not made unilaterally but rather after numerous discussions during which it was difficult to distinguish the foreign expert from the country official.

5.5 During these discussions, differences emerged among the experts and also among the country officials, to the point where heterogeneous groups were formed. The discussions were often stormy and could have gone on for days; however, all participants expressed their points of view, listened to others, and were given wide latitude to speak openly and honestly. In plenary sessions, these groups almost always reached consensus.

5.6 When a mission could not reach consensus, it designed assessments to be carried out by country officials and used to clarify issues and facilitate decisions. It was the need to clarify an issue, not requests made by particular donors or researchers for their own interests, that led to the identification of studies.

5.7 Before beginning its actual work, each mission reviewed the level attained in terms of specific research conducted to date, the draft documentation, and the fulfillment of commitments made by one party or another. At the end of the mission, the program of activities for the next period and the commitments of the various parties were recorded in a memorandum and communicated to the authorities. Each group submitted its conclusions to the PASE preparatory committee, which considered them from the perspective of the macroeconomic development plan and financial and accounting procedures in effect. Only after this step were the measures validated and communicated to the decision-makers.

5.8 A mission took place about once every six weeks. Each was structured to ensure the training of local professionals in the work underway. As a result, local professionals who participated in the PASE's work have a clear and precise view of the current state and future of Guinea's educational system and have been able to take over the PASE's work. The frequency of missions also attested to the donors' support.

Expert groups for conducting the studies

5.9 The twenty experts on the World Bank's eight missions worked with 35 Guinean officials to conduct specific studies and assessments, draft documents, and prepare workshops. Among the 35 Guineans, four were from the Economy and Finance ministries, two from the Planning and International Cooperation ministries, one from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and 28 from the Ministry of National Education. The Ministry of Education organized the work groups. Additional officials from the Ministry of Education and other ministries participated in orientation, presentation, and concluding discussion workshops.

5.10 The various teams conducted 11 studies on issues needing clarification in order to define the objectives and procedures of the future program. One example is the study on the cost and financing of education, which became necessary when quantitative objectives in terms of the percentage of children in full-time education had to be determined.

5.11 The creation of teams composed of foreign experts hired by the government representatives of the donors, officials from ministries other than education, and education officials established a dynamic allowing for greater coordination of activities, integration and harmonization with other national constraints, the search for consensus, and better dissemination of information among all of the program's partners. The presence of officials with differing perspectives enlivened discussions. Education officials had the opportunity to inform those from other ministries while themselves learning about the constraints and realities of the environment in which a reformed education system would have to evolve.

Consultations with unions and the community

5.12 Union representatives were intimately involved in discussions and assessment activities. Their participation was necessary because cuts in public sector employment had reduced numbers from 90 thousand in 1986 to 51 thousand in 1989 (a reduction of 43 percent), while the social services sectors, including education, enjoyed a doubling of salaries during the same period. Union groups called the attention of policy-makers to the costs of reasserting the value of teaching and the need to increase the number of teachers in response to demand for increased school capacity.

5.13 Although the Ministry of Education maintained an ongoing and fruitful dialogue with national organizations during the policy preparation phase, there was not enough dialogue between the government and communities. Parents of students could not be consulted because there was no organization to facilitate this. Debate and discussion among the community did not develop. (At this time, the national political landscape was dominated by a military regime; no assembly or other body was elected by the people.)

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Although there was no dialogue at the grass roots level, working group meetings and plenary sessions were open and welcomed the participation of anyone interested.

5.14 Working groups did have access to documents in the education sector dating back to May 1984, which contained reliable data and gave an unflinching assessment of the situation. These mitigated the lack of direct consultations with communities.

Drafting the policy proposal

5.15 The proposed policy was drafted by a select group of officials from the Ministry of Education: the National Director for Primary Education, the Assistant Inspector General, the head of the Education Planning and Statistics Department, and other experts. The group was supported by a foreign consultant, who was hired by the government and reported to COPASE. Within three weeks, the drafting group presented COPASE with a document, which was used as the working draft until adoption of the policy. Before this final proposal was presented, however, the group had produced five drafts and thereby acquired experience in drafting a policy.

Guineans' adoption of the proposed policy declaration

5.16 Within the Ministry of Education, the participation of many people in the policy preparation phase helped to facilitate their consensus on the policy from the outset. Eventually, those who had participated in the preparation of the policy were also able to make a greater contribution to its implementation because they understood it better. Ministry employees joined together as a block to submit the policy proposal to other government agencies. Nine ministries responded in writing; all were in favor of the policy, particularly the provisions to improve the living conditions of teachers, who, they felt, were at the center of any sustainable reform in the sector. The Ministry of the Economy and Finance's commitment to provide for all the expenditures estimated to attain the objectives was nothing short of remarkable. The support given to the document by all ministries confirmed the importance of their participation in its preparation.

5.17 Some thought the document should have been more detailed. In addition to the list of objectives, they argued, it should have presented a strategy with projects and initiatives whose implementation would make it possible to achieve the policy's goals. Some believed that such an elaboration would demonstrate that the objective of 70 percent enrollment rate in the first year was too high. Others believed that although it might be possible to reach the 70 percent attendance at the primary level, it would then be difficult for the other levels of education to sustain the growth rate needed for cohesive and balanced development of the education system as a whole.

5.18 Another suggestion was that the policy provide a better platform for rural areas and local development collectives by making the curricula more practical. In addition, the remodeling of schools and staff assignments should give priority to rural areas, and parents should be brought into the process.

5.19 After comments and suggestions had been analyzed and integrated into the document, it was submitted on September 19, 1989, to the Governing Council for approval. Once adopted, the education policy was copied and distributed to all national organizations, including senior officials of the national and local education organizations down to the sub-prefect level. It became a working tool, which helped remove obstacles to its implementation.

Approval by donors

5.20 The policy had to be approved as well by external partners who would commit their assistance to pursuing the initiatives necessary to implement it. On behalf of the government, the Minister of Finance addressed a letter to the President of the World Bank, presenting the relationship of the macroeconomic reforms to the proposed reform of the education sector. The letter described the actions intended to guide the reform.

5.21 The participation of donor representatives in all phases of preparing the policy and the PASE provided those donors with the opportunity to exchange information and views regularly during the process. This, in turn, resulted in documents that held no surprises for the international partners. They knew the education policy document reflected government's commitment to implement consistent and sustained reforms, and this reassurance accelerated the process of approval of credits the government needed to implement the first phase of the program.

6 - MANAGING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM

6.1 Once the education policy declaration had been adopted by government and agreed upon by donors, new structures and mechanisms had to be put into place to implement it. Managing a reform process requires a broad range of formal and informal approaches, each of which is used in a specific context. It also requires clear criteria for measuring progress. The donors assisted in this effort, in part by offering a set of conditionalities, which served as criteria for measuring the reform's performance as well as qualified the government for additional foreign funds.

Implementation structures

The Monitoring Committee

6.2 The PASE Monitoring Committee replaced the COPASE, whose mandate expired upon the adoption of the education policy declaration and the signing of credit agreements to launch the PASE. The Monitoring Committee was created on May 3, 1990. It is comprised of high-level experts charged with the strategic management and the monitoring and evaluation components of the program. The committee represents the ministries of pre-university education, higher education, administration and financial affairs, administrative reform and civil service, and the State Secretary of Decentralization.

6.3 This committee is not responsible for implementing initiatives or carrying out action plans. Rather, it provides policy guidance and management oversight. It meets quarterly to

- (a) Ensure the detailed monitoring of companion measures and implementation of key elements from the point of view of scheduling;
- (b) See to it that the education policy declaration and the allocation of resources are respected;
- (c) Maintain consistency between the PASE and the macroeconomic program;
- (d) Prepare joint reviews and participate in them together with the donors.

6.4 The committee frequently helps to refocus the program on the policy and to manage financial and personnel problems that arise. Monetary credits destined for education were made available to the government by donors in the form of supplements to the balance of payments; it was up to the government to allocate the corresponding amounts to the education sector. This was not always easy, but the presence of high-level officials in the organizations directly involved helped see that it happened.

6.5 During the implementation of the PASE, important political events were occurring at the national level—the democratization process was underway, political parties were created, and presidential and local elections were held. These events affected the education sector, which was vulnerable in some aspects to manipulation or misinterpretation when initiatives such as the reassignment of teachers could be interpreted negatively. The committee helped to forestall incidents and prevent political problems.

6.6 The Monitoring Committee met 14 times over the course of the first phase of the PASE. It helped coordinate the donors by encouraging an ongoing dialogue among all parties. Donor representatives posted in the capital, who were invited to meetings, took an active role in the discussions, helping to prevent and resolve donor-related problems. Now that procedures for allocating funds to the education sector based on

what donors give for balance of payments have been established, the committee plays a different role. For the rest of the program, the monitoring committee in its current form appears to be less necessary. The establishment of an internal select Monitoring Committee composed of the minister and several high-level ministry officials for whom these structures are a program priority, in addition to a possible representative of the economic and financial board, may be all that is required by the new situation.

The Technical Secretariat

6.7 Created in October 1989 to replace COPASE during the preparation of dossiers required for negotiations with donors and to coordinate initiatives before the actual launch of the PASE, the Technical Secretariat was originally composed of three members: a national coordinator (the minister's adviser responsible for education policy, who sat on the Monitoring Committee), and two expatriate technical advisers.

6.8 Initially responsible for providing logistical support, the Technical Secretariat's function was revised to be responsible for coordination, motivation, training, and information missions. It is not a project management unit; rather, its activities are intended to foster new habits and attitudes consistent with a philosophy of reform. It helps to integrate the different intervention styles of the donors into the PASE. It also helps to coordinate activities among different levels and different groups. Early on, it became clear that formulating coherent objectives was not enough to guarantee harmony of action and integrated results. If real coordination is not achieved at all levels of the process, serious threats of conflict are likely to arise in the implementation phase or in on-site results. The Technical Secretariat became the coordinating authority at the same time as it stimulated activities in different divisions or reminded each party of its commitments.

6.9 The many activities of the PASE touched all departments in the ministry. The intent of the program was to work through these departments, not to replace them. The secretariat needed to ensure that ministry officials received the training they needed. It also prepared dossiers for the 14 meetings of the Monitoring Committee and the 42 meetings of the Steering Committee.

6.10 The secretariat suggested the development of component action plans (PACs) for planning and monitoring activities of the ministry's local authorities (regional inspection offices and prefect administrators). These plans present a list of activities, projects, deadlines, and objectives for the completion of each unit's program. They are prepared by each division and discussed to bring them into line with each other and promote an exchange of information. They strengthen the relevance of initiatives proposed by the various departments, prevent conflicts and duplication of efforts, and ensure that the proposed budget can cover the various proposed expenditures.

6.11 In view of the extent of the Technical Secretariat's tasks and the need to transfer the different roles to local officials, it would be useful to include four or five more officials, including technical experts within divisions of the ministry who would remain attached to their divisions but devote two days a week to working with the Technical Secretariat to prepare the reports. This approach would increase their own expertise and help institutionalize the reform measures once the PASE ends.

The Steering Committee

6.12 Also created on May 3, 1990, the Steering Committee is charged with

- (a) Ensuring internal direction and coordination of the initiatives planned by the ministry's various divisions;
- (b) Monitoring the coordination and cohesion between the sector's routine activities and the PASE's directives;

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- (c) Preparing the action plan modification proposals;
- (d) Examining the decisions made as far as the program's implementation is concerned;
- (e) Assessing the activities of the program component coordinators.

6.13 The committee is comprised of national directors and division heads from the Ministry of Pre-University Education and Professional Training and from the Ministry of Higher Education. It meets once a month or as convened by the chief of staff of the Ministry of Pre-University Education, who chairs meetings. It is served by the Technical Secretariat.

6.14 The Steering Committee met 42 times during the PASE's first three years to consider problems related to the program's implementation and the activities of different divisions, even if they were not financed by the donors. Technical education, for example, benefitted from support beyond the PASE's initial outlays, but its implementation was discussed by the Steering Committee in order to maintain its consistency with the other initiatives. This suggests that ministry officials had successfully adapted to the adjustment process, which was important to the system as a whole, because it indicated the reform was a change urged by the government and not imposed by the donors. Far from focusing only on the program, the Steering Committee became the main entity responsible for monitoring, strategic decision-making, and technical management of the sector.

6.15 The committee's working sessions were opportunities for the exchange of information, monitoring the coherence of initiatives from both a vertical and horizontal perspective, and coordinating different initiatives so that they could produce the best possible outcome where expected. This was also the forum for discussion and negotiation of the internal conflicts that often arise among entities committed to obtaining the best results in a context in which new functions and new mandates arise as a result of the adjustment. Training initiatives, for example, call on many organizations to participate and require coordination. On these occasions, any professional likely to make a contribution to the issue at hand might be invited, and the committee helped to decide who should attend.

6.16 The demanding schedule and commitments made for the program's implementation were analyzed at these meetings, and corrective measures were adopted to maintain deadlines. When sensitive phases were addressed, the spirit of solidarity among the professionals involved in successfully completing the initiative was impressive.

6.17 This spirit of solidarity was the result of both internal and external factors:

- (a) First, the government's willingness to meet the challenge to implement a broad education program; in fact, the reform was unprecedented both within the country and abroad. International partners as well as the government could take pride in the program's success.
- (b) Second, the commitment of the minister and her command of the various dossiers encouraged division chiefs to make an effort to master their respective areas and make a personal commitment to the reform process. The minister frequently stepped in to address technical issues, forging closer links with participants at the grassroots level.
- (c) Finally, the participation of so many professionals in the design phase and implementation of the reform. The division chiefs who were in place at the time of the program's preparation remained during its implementation. Professionals who participated in the design phase continued to hold key positions and were able to exert pressure on others to meet objectives.

Technical working groups

6.18 Technical groups were formed whenever the need arose, such as around the issue of school attendance among girls, environmental education, or technical education to reintegrate students who had dropped out of school. In each case, a group was formed when a permanent organization did not seem necessary to conduct the activity or where flexibility was required. The working group was dissolved as soon as its activities were completed.

6.19 In some cases, working groups were consolidated and became entities whose activities cut across departmental lines and harnessed support from several divisions to achieve a complex objective. This is the case of the working group on school attendance among girls in school, which currently constitutes a unit attached to the minister's office. This unit manages a set of activities with donors and has its own operating budget.

Other implementation measures

Back-to-school workshops

6.20 The desire to involve all officials at the central, regional, and prefect levels led the Minister to hold annual workshops before the start of the school year. The goals of these workshops, which were presided over by the Minister, were to

- (a) Inform officials of the objectives and strategies of the program;
- (b) Develop coherent annual action plans for each region and sub-prefect area, bearing in mind their specific needs and available resources;
- (c) Ensure an adequate level of information and commitment for the program to succeed.

6.21 When the program was launched, the workshop was held in the capital. In the second and third years, workshops were held in each province, and they brought together authorities from the area's regional and prefect level, supported by a team of national officials led by the minister. Along with broadcasts about the program on national and local radio and newspaper reports, the workshops provided information about the program.

6.22 These workshops provided an occasion for the minister to demonstrate her commitment to the program and to inform and encourage all of the officials involved to reach the objectives. An intense and fruitful exchange occurred between national officials and the local organizations, which resulted in flexible and consistent implementation of the initiatives. This in turn allowed the planning process to focus on each division and to take the goals of all of the various parties into account.

Donor reviews

6.23 Regular meetings with donors were initiated at Guinea's request, with the aim of putting a high-level monitoring and discussion mechanism into place. The national coordinator of the PASE and representatives of the donors stationed in Conakry participated in the meetings. During the PASE's implementation, meetings were weekly; subsequently, they were held monthly, as the problems needing discussion became less frequent. The meetings eventually became routine, however, and did not always serve their purpose.

6.24 Annual reviews are also held to help donors, as well as Guinean officials, evaluate the programs. The main objective of the reviews is to verify how the program is being executed and whether measures agreed

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upon are being adhered to. The deadlines determined for the reviews serve as benchmarks for national officials in planning activities and strategic management of the program.

6.25 The joint reviews also establish the donors' rigor, commitment, and solidarity with the national authorities in making the program successful. These reviews, far from being a cursory exercise to correct mistakes, present an opportunity to examine objectively and jointly the program's principal elements and to make recommendations as to how to pursue the activities.

6.26 The coordination and solidarity of the donors remained in effect during the development and implementation phases of the program. However, as the discussions began to address practical implementation issues, difficulties arose as a result of differences in approach in the field. It would appear that cultural differences are at the root of such conflicts. They were most apparent during the joint review conducted by the donors and the government to evaluate the PASE and identify initiatives for the remainder of the program.

6.27 Because the corporate cultures of the donors differed, the ministry sometimes had to mediate conflicts among them. An example is the issue of textbook procurement. Some donors suggested textbooks be marketed to parents through the private sector. Others argued that parents could not afford to buy textbooks. As for the ministry, it did not want to embrace an approach without looking for lessons from past experience and examining all the implications of various options. Thus, it began testing one means of distribution and collecting information on the results. It maintained dialogue with the donors on the test, and eventually, all were able to reach agreement on a solution.

6.28 Other issues, such as evaluation, constituted points of disagreement among the donors. Approaches to solving these problems were diverse: In some cases, the national authorities, conscious of the extent of underlying conflict, tried to resolve problems without direct confrontation, that is, by giving the donors time and negotiating. In other cases, the local authorities invited the donors to the table for open and constructive discussions.

Training national officials

6.29 Throughout the reform process, from development through implementation, officials acquired experience that contributed to professionalizing the education sector. This was largely possible because those who helped carry out the studies and develop the program were present during implementation. The numerous training sessions, contacts, and exchanges during the course of the process provided an enormous quantity of information, which officials used to improve their performance.

6.30 When the process was launched in 1988, officials began to learn from experts. Subsequently, as the process evolved, they took over the initiatives and the management of the implementation process. In the early days, they received training from donor experts during in-country sessions such as the February 1988 mission organized by the World Bank. Once they had a grasp of reform issues, they began to take the lead and use donor experts as consultants.

6.31 Thus emerged a strong group of education officials with a solid understanding of the problems in the sector. They were able to serve as a counterweight to initiatives that were not appropriate for the circumstances. The group was large enough to provide leadership in implementing the program, making it a national program both in design and implementation.

Leadership

6.32 The strength of the leadership at two levels has been an invaluable factor in implementing the reform. First, the principal leader, the minister, was decisive in ensuring the success of the initiatives. Second, officials leading each level of the organization made decisions and exercised initiative in the implementation of activities. The two leadership functions are related, because if the minister does not delegate certain responsibilities to the officials, the latter cannot take any initiatives.

6.33 The officials were able to provide leadership thanks to the training and experience they gained on the job. Their training and knowledge of the national context led them to make realistic and appropriate proposals, which underscored their expertise. Moreover, these people were amenable to discussion, and the teamwork style that had marked the preparatory and implementation phases reassured all of the actors in the program and allowed for open discussions and genuine consensus. It was not difficult to meet with any high-level official or even the minister herself to discuss education issues without a prior appointment. This working style lessened the burden of protocol and made work more efficient.

6.34 The minister's easygoing attitude was often a determining factor in the program's success. Very frequently, she went to the field to meet with teachers, students, parents, and officials of local organizations; she discussed the program's development with them, listened to their points of view and defended the initiatives. By working in such close contact, she gave the reform a human face.

6.35 During this period, political parties had formed, and the opposition tried to exploit the decision to assign some secondary school teachers to primary schools, which threatened to cause protests and even street demonstrations. This was resolved without incident, thanks to meetings between the minister and the teachers involved. In addition, when a teacher or official made an error, the minister called him or her in and discussed the issue directly. The resulting decision was generally accepted. When union demands were announced, their representatives were invited for direct talks, and a solution was always found. This contributed to the program's proper implementation with minimal conflict.

6.36 For issues like schooling for young girls—about which many ministry officials knew little or nothing—a progressive approach was implemented. This consisted of launching the project and creating a critical mass of supporters to counter the effects of those who had not supported it at the outset. A working group sponsored by the minister and under the supervision of the chief of staff was formed. This expert group enjoyed the ongoing support of the minister who, when she traveled to the provinces, defended education for young girls and thereby raised the awareness of parents and the community.

6.37 An important factor contributing to the minister's strong leadership is the length of her term in office and her training. Appointed in June 1989 and still in office today, the minister participated in finalizing the education policy declaration and preparing the sector adjustment program. She assessed the work of country officials and put together qualified teams, to whom it was often possible to delegate tasks and duties. She is unquestionably qualified; she has a university degree in teaching and has held administrative responsibilities within the ministry and elsewhere before being appointed minister. Her time spent with committees helped to create a team spirit in education, which was evident during discussions, in which the solidarity of the group was always put first and problems were presented as the group's.

6.38 The successful implementation of this kind of program is based on ongoing collaboration. Although at the level of the ministry, the officials who participated in developing the policy have remained in their positions during implementation, representatives of the donor organizations have turned over among frequently. This has often created a feeling of disruption in the continuity of the project. It is not easy to establish a trusting relationship right away or to use the same working style with different people, and some have observed that newly arriving individuals representing donors need to adjust their own approaches and philosophies to the reforms that have been well established when they arrive.

7 - CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The design and implementation of the PASE produced tangible results that allowed the education system to develop rapidly in a relatively short period of time. This was possible because of a confluence of factors, such as changing national economic conditions, a motivated and stable group of country officials, the willingness of donors to assist in the readjustment of the system, and the existence of a coherent program-development framework resulting from the development and promotion of an education policy.

7.2 Other factors, such as the training of officials and leadership exercised by authorities, were decisive for the success of the program in its initial phase. Indeed, it is difficult to steer a reform process without competent individuals and leadership within the group charged with implementing the initiatives.

7.3 The results to date have prompted discussion of a second phase to reinforce the initiatives underway. Conditions have changed, however, and the World Bank is no longer able to pursue a Sector Adjustment Programme, which could lead to a break in the continuity of initiatives in the education sector. This could undermine the effort to preserve achievements for the program's continuation.

7.4 The change in the program's design has led to adjustments in implementation that could create tensions in the search for balance. The donors, along with country officials, must design interventions that fit into the broad reform program. It is up to the national partner to see to it that actions proposed and the measures to be implemented are consistent, while bearing in mind that consistent actions do not by themselves guarantee consistent results.

7.5 Country officials are in the process of proving themselves in the design and implementation of the second program. An open posture is advisable here, especially in a situation where partners could view major changes as a threat to their coordination and solidarity, among other achievements. Nationalism undoubtedly remains a fundamental virtue, but we must also recognise the need to accept others with all of their differences and idiosyncrasies. These are the numerous contributions that so enrich the reforms we are undertaking, especially in education.

7.6 Donors, at the same time as they help readjust the education systems, must improve their practices by making them more transparent, particularly at the time they are implemented. Very often, fruitful exchanges take place during the design phase, and they fall off during implementation for reasons often linked to political, strategic, or economic interests. Exchanges of information should also be improved so that information is shared at all levels. This type of approach leads to greater success by strengthening the trusting relationships needed to meet the challenges ahead in education.

1. The term donor includes organizations that lend funds as well as those that donate funds and/or provide technical assistance.