PN-ACK-325

Improving Educational Quality (IEQ2) Project
USAID Contract #HNE-I-00-97-0029-00

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN GUINEA: LIMITED SECTOR ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Team Members:

Uli Locher: Institutional Analysis, Educational Demand, Team Leader
Alfred Sicotte: Community Development, Team Co-Leader
Fadi Abillama: Financial Analysis
Francine Agueh: Equity Issues
Jacques-André Gueyaud: Educational Training and Supply

Associated National Team Members:

Fode Keita: Sociologist
Djénabou Barry: Administrative Assistant

AED Supervision:

Deanna Handel, Nicole Weepie
Howard Williams, William Darnell

A project undertaken by:

The American Institutes for Research
in collaboration with:
The Academy for Educational Development
Education Development Center, Inc.
Juarez and Associates, Inc.
The University of Pittsburgh

Executive Summary and General Recommendations

1 PURPOSE

This report presents the results of a general assessment of the primary education sector in Guinea as of September, 1999. The work was carried out by a team of five consultants of the Academy for Educational Development who stayed in Guinea between August 28 and October 13, 1999. The mandate given by USAID was to carry out "a limited sector assessment of primary education, in reference to USAID's strategic objective in education." The purpose of the exercise is to allow USAID/Guinea and the Government of Guinea to further their individual and common objectives in matters of primary education over the coming years. The common goal is to give the largest possible number of Guinean children access to an improved quality of education. The FQEL project (1995-2002) which is the central focus of this assessment, aims at attaining the FQEL goals within the PASE II (and possibly a PASE III) program—Guinea's Assistance to Education Program which encompasses all major donors as well as the Government of Guinea.

The assessment touches upon three major components: a) the Ministry of Pre-University and Civic Education's (MEPU-EC) capability for strategic planning, administration and decision-making, b) supply and demand in primary education, particularly in their relation to teacher training, and c) regional and gender equity and community participation in the expansion of educational services.

2 METHODOLOGY

The team carried out its analysis mainly on the basis of existing data and studies such as activity reports, project documents, evaluations, legal texts, monographs and other documents concerning primary education. In addition, the team conducted a large number of interviews with MEPU-EC officials, representatives of other ministries and of civil society. A short questionnaire was submitted to members of the teaching profession. Most of the work was carried out in Conakry but field visits of various duration were also made, to Kindia, Doubreka, Labé, Mamou, Tamita, Kankan and Mandiana. A comparative case study of private education was carried out in Conakry and Maferinyah. There were regular briefings with the MEPU-EC contact group as well as with the education team at USAID, to cover progress made and problems encountered along the way.

3 RESULTS

The basic finding is similar to those of previous evaluations (CAII, 1993; Fox et al., 1998; AED, 1999): the Guinean education system is costly and inefficient. Progress has been made along most indicators (Gross and Net Enrolment Rates, Inputs and Outputs, Government of Guinea (GOG) and Donor Financing), yet the internal efficiency of the system has grown worse since 1993. It now takes twenty

student-years to produce a single graduate of the primary education cycle—four more than in 1993. Three quarters of the space and capacity of the entire system are taken up by students destined to drop out and remain functionally illiterate. The reasons for this state of affairs are many, complex and inter-related. It serves no purpose to simply blame the inefficiency of the Ministry, the failures of foreign aid or the poverty of the country. The fact is that the system—i.e., the combination of policies and actions under the responsibility of the central authority—has so far not produced the desired effects. What would the desired impact be at the school level? It can be summarized as follows. A school is effective when students:

1) attend on a daily basis, progress from one level to another, and obtain their diploma;
2) leave the school able to read, write and solve problems;
3) become reasoning, independent citizens;
4) are in a position to be productive after completing their schooling.

The factors contributing to this impact can be found on both the school and system levels. The relations between the central administration and the local community, between the system and the school can be quite tense at times. The balance of forces between the two poles will in a large measure determine the success of the school and its students.

3.1 Institutional Analysis

The team accepts and subscribes to the FQEL approach as an ideal but proposes a different type of planning, one that focuses on the needs of the school rather than those of the system.

The educational system is only a process or a tool. What really matters is what happens at school, inside the classroom. The only justification for having a system is to make it serve the school. Academic results are determined by many factors, several of which lie outside the influence of central authorities. The team does not intend to diminish the importance of a centralized system of services, nor does it want to question FQEL. However, it does want to insist that what is essential in educational processes happens at the local level, inside the classroom.

The Ministry has at its disposal several planning mechanisms. There is a very experienced Technical Secretariate of the Programme d'Ajustement Structurel en Éducation (PASE), services such as the Service de la Statistique et de la Planification (SSP) (and its school mapping division) that have improved their performance over the years, and there is a Strategic Planning Team composed of fifteen senior members of a variety of administrative units (see annex). The conditions are thus in place for defining concrete institutional objectives according to the FQEL goals.

From an institutional point of view foreign assistance will always be a major challenge. If an institution is to be efficient it needs a capacity to administer, monitor and control in accordance to its level of resources. However, in Guinea we see foreign donors who put enormous resources at the disposal of institutions which are weak in terms of administration and control. An attempt is made to solve this problem through technical assistance and intense auditing of the accounts, and sometimes these efforts may even succeed. But the waste of resources is an inevitable consequence of such arrangements, as evidenced by the recent book-distribution campaign. We are still far from the ideal situation where individuals and institutions control their resources in an ongoing and efficient way.

The private education sector is expanding rapidly. The numbers of private schools and their enrollments are probably underestimated by a large margin in the official statistics and may well represent 30% to 40% of the primary education sector at this time. This sector by and large functions without governmental supervision and assistance, and it takes care of a large part of the demand not presently satisfied by the MEPU-EC.

3.2 Budget Administration and Planning

According to Direction des Affaires Administratives et Financières (DAAF) estimates, the share of primary education in the national budget has grown considerably since the beginning of PASE and reached 7.6% in 1994. Since then it has fallen back to 1993 levels. Estimates for 1999 again indicate strong growth (to 8.8%) but this needs to be confirmed. In 1998 budget allocations per student, excepting salaries, were only 5,100 FG, of which pedagogical inputs amounted to only 2,800 FG. This compares to the US$ 5.00 (7,500 FG) announced in policy documents. Budget execution has improved during the past years, especially in terms of pedagogical expenses.

Two observations can be made concerning the organization of the DAAF. First, following donors' requests, specialized services were created for data processing, auditing and administration within the Technical Secretariate of PASE. This represents progress. Secondly, communication between DAAF and Section d'Affaires Administratives et Financières (SAAF), its "regional antennae" is practically non-existent. This has negative effects: the SAAF are lacking in capacity and training and are frequently acting outside of any monitoring and control system. "Delegated credits" have been allocated and spent without much concern for book-keeping and receipts.

Long-term training provided to DAAF and SAAF personnel has had much impact; it appears that on-the-job, short-term training produces better results. USAID has provided computer training for the Ministry—an investment which has turned out

to be cost-effective but technical assistance for skills transfer within the particular services is now needed.

FQEL as a planning tool has the potential of allocating scarce resources to optimal uses, but this needs to be combined with monitoring the costs of specific investments such as books, teacher training, or class size reduction.

In theory, education is fully state-funded and free to parents. In practice, however, parents carry a heavy burden of direct, indirect and opportunity costs. One of the goals of sound budget planning would be to make this parental investment worthwile.

3.3 Teacher Training

The goal of recruiting and training 6,000 new teachers over the 1998-2001 period is now seriously compromised, with shortfalls of 24% in 1998 and 42% in 1999. This means that in all probability there will not be enough teachers to fill the positions in the new schools built by the GG and international donors. Many schools will remain closed.

Teacher training suffers from the absence of a stable body of capable trainers in the Ecoles Normales d'Instituteurs (ENIs). There is a program of training Professeur d'Ecole Normale (PEN) and Conseillers Pèdagogiques Maîtres-Formateurs (CPMF) personnel at the Institut Supèrieur des Sciences de l'Education de Guinée (ISSEG) but this program is not sufficiently coordinated with existing and reformed teacher training and curricular practices. French assistance is financing the training of trainers whose double mission is to supervise trainees at the extension branches of the ENI as well as to supervise continuing on-the-job training. This program, started in 1990, has never been formally evaluated and reports suggest that its graduates do not attain adequate levels of professional training.

3.4 Equity

Many efforts have been made to increase access to schooling for girls and rural children. In consequence, crude enrolment rates have risen, from 32% to 54% in general and from 20% to 32% for girls, between 1991-92 and 1998-99. Among the significant causes of this progress have been a social marketing campaign and a program providing free uniforms and school supplies for girls.

Although crude enrolment rates have risen, they are still far from the Education for All (EFA) goals for 2010. Furthermore, all changes have not been postitive. Repetition and dropout rates have gone up. More repeaters are blocking scarce places in school for new admissions. Repetition and dropout discourage new enrollments which again tends to aggravate the situation for girls and rural children.

Responses to this situation might be found among the following options: (1) make equity considerations a priority for all actors involved in primary education; (2) direct social marketing for education at staying in school rather than enrollment; (3) increase financial incentives for rural girls.

3.5 Community Participation

Despite its presence in political discourse and legal documents, true community participation in the administration of schools is far from accomplished today. Major changes are needed if PTAs are to become responsible participants and partners. Community participation challenges state authority. If the state stimulates educational demand, it should be prepared to respond to this demand or communities will feel betrayed. Several elements are needed for this response to happen: political will, procedural flexibility, openness toward alternative educational models and, in many instances, a change of attitude among teachers and other educational personnel.

The problem with community participation is how to reconcile the normative and planning objectives of the state with the expectations of the local community. How can one avoid imposing rules from top to bottom while at the same time enforcing minimum norms at the local level? One possible approach is for school administrators to become promotors of the laws and official policies favoring community participation. Top-down action so far has not resulted in quality education. It is time to take community participation seriously and to define it in an inclusive way. Local communities should be empowered to participate in the entire educational process—in planning, implementation, administration and monitoring of what happens in a school. A pro-active approach will free energies and goodwill present at the community level.

4 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS[1]

Recommendations Concerning Institutional Development

R-1 Decision making power and resources relevant to school success should be located at the school level, with a school principal operating under community scrutiny. The principal should be in charge of applying quality standards and should be held responsible for the effectiveness of the school.

R-2 Further expansion of private primary education should be stimulated but linked to increased enforcement of curricular and internal efficiency standards.

[1] For specific recommendations see the relevant sections of the report. A summary of specific recommendations is given in Chapter 9.

Recommendations Concerning Regional and Gender Equity

R-3 Equity concerns should be brought to the fore in the entire educational environment, including the public and private systems, the community and the school.

R-4 Organizations concerned with equity such as the Comité d'Accueil, the Alliance Nationale and the Groupe National de Travail should be given the resources needed for their mobilization campaigns.

R-5 Resources should be focused on improving the academic performance of girls and disadvantaged children.

Recommendations Concerning Community Participation

R-6 The local community should be a full partner in planning, implementing and monitoring school activities at the local level.

R-7 The powers of the state and civil society should be kept separate at the PTA level by giving the school principal no more than an advisory role.

R-8 Local elected representatives such as the Communautés Rurales de Développement (CRDs) and Communautés Urbaines de Développement (CUDs) should be made aware of local school needs and allocate regularly a part of their resources to education.

R-9 Links should be established between the two major forces of civil society in educational matters, the Association des Parents d'Élèves et Amis de l'École (APEAEs) and the Association des Ressortissants.

Recommendations concerning teacher training

R-10 Baccalaréat (BACC) candidates should continue to be recruited for teacher training. However, the duration of training should be reduced to one year, and the second year, currently designated for on-the-job training, should be replaced by some form of continuing education.

R-11 A three year training cycle should be instituted for graduates of the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC).

R-12 Salary and housing incentives should be used to stimulate recruitment of BACC graduates.

R-13 Innovative forms of continuing education, such as the Education Development Center (EDC) distance learning model, should be used for all teachers.

Recommendations Concerning Administration

R-14 Communication and coordination should be strengthened between central and decentralized parts of the education system, between MEPU-EC and the donors, and between the donors and NGOs, possibly along PASE I lines but facilitating an effective decentralization of resources.

R-15 Strategic planning should be strengthened by the infusion of a dose of realism, not only at the SSP level but also through a much improved monitoring and evaluation system focusing upon the individual school.

8