

Education Decentralization in Africa

*As Viewed
through
the Literature
and
USAID
Projects*

Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) Project
Health & Human Resources Analysis for Africa (HHRAA) Project
U.S. Agency for International Development, Africa Bureau, Office of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Education Decentralization in Africa: As Viewed through the Literature and USAID Projects synthesizes information from decentralization research studies and from USAID-funded education projects in Africa with a decentralization component. The document examines eleven countries: Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. It also presents an analytic framework consisting of a series of guided questions used to analyze decentralization efforts in the eleven countries. The document relies on a literature review, rather than on in-country research and interviews. It does, however, bring together heretofore scattered information about education decentralization efforts across the continent.

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Executive Summary

Decentralization is being discussed and attempted throughout Africa, often treated as a panacea to solve broader political, social, or economic problems. Within this context, the education system has been considered a promising area for decentralization efforts. Indeed, education systems, as much or more than any other public-sector service, typically consist of both a central-level administrative structure and a network that reaches throughout a nation. In countries where decentralization has been proposed, the efforts have had different priorities, contexts, and levels of resources behind them, yet they also share some common characteristics and challenges. This document, *Education Decentralization in Africa*, begins to synthesize the scattered information about the status of education decentralization on the continent, especially in relation to USAID's education activities.

Material was gathered through a desk review of documents from USAID education projects in Africa, case studies on decentralization (primarily from the World Bank and USAID), and the body of theoretical literature on decentralization. The literature review fed into the formulation of a preliminary analytic framework, consisting of a series of guided questions that can help determine the status of a decentralization strategy in a particular country. The framework was used to analyze decentralization in eleven countries in which USAID has supported education projects within the last decade: Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

The literature points out what is known about developing and implementing decentralization plans. The review also points out that a lot is *not* known, either because the information is not reflected in the literature or because many key questions or concerns have not adequately been addressed by the individual countries or by the donor community.

At the outset, three limitations must be acknowledged. First, because the scope of the study was restricted to information available in the literature, it is not exhaustive, particularly in terms of specific characteristics and events in the eleven countries. Second, because of the reliance on USAID documentation, the country profiles may miss some other significant decentralization efforts funded by host countries or by other donors. Finally, because the documents were each produced at a certain point in time, they often fail to reveal what results, if any, took place.

This material is organized as follows:

Part I begins with an overview of decentralization issues, distilling the views of some of the leading researchers in the field. A summary of the findings from the literature is then presented, organized in four categories: assumptions and views; process; support; and evaluation. Four tables provide an overview of decentralization efforts in the eleven countries; the tables are followed by profiles of each country. Part I can help readers seeking a brief status report on education decentralization in Africa, particularly in one or more of the countries included.

Part II is intended for readers interested in the analytic framework used and in a more theoretical grounding in decentralization issues. The preliminary analytic framework includes questions to consider

when looking at both the broader country context and the education sector; corresponding footnotes provide the rationale for why these questions should be asked. Suggested questions for future decentralization research follows. Finally, a bibliography—which includes USAID document numbers or Library of Congress call numbers for some of the references—guides readers to further information from USAID and non-USAID sources.



Part I

- ♦ **Overview of Decentralization Issues**
- ♦ **Summary of Findings**
- ♦ **Country Profiles**

An Overview of Decentralization Issues

In the early 1980s, broad disillusionment with centrally planned economic systems and with the all-invasive administrative state began to sweep the globe. Accompanying this was a widespread disappointment with overall progress of the education sector. While primary school enrollments in developing countries grew dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s, many of the benefits typically associated with investment in education failed to materialize. Much of the blame for these failures has been attributed to the inefficient and bureaucratic nature, the lack of commitment, or the low institutional capacity of governments. Consequently, throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, efforts undertaken to reform the education sector focused on addressing weaknesses in implementing organizations and institutions through mechanisms such as decentralization.

Evidence of these efforts has been most conspicuous throughout Africa, where education program developers and implementors have latched onto the buzzword of "decentralization" as the latest panacea for reversing a process of educational, economic, and political decline. But it remains unclear whether decentralization can solve these problems.

One researcher defines the term "decentralization" to mean "any change in the organization of government which involves the transfer of powers or functions from the national level to any subnational level(s), or from one subnational level to another, lower one (Conyers 1984)." The term is further clarified as the transfer of legal, administrative and political authority to make decisions and manage public functions from the central government to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, area-wide development authorities, functional authorities, autonomous local governments, communities, or nongovernmental organizations.

Many analysts of development administration have suggested that decentralization of the public and private sectors may either independently or simultaneously facilitate various development objectives, including:

- ♦ Increased governmental responsiveness;
- Greater popular participation in the development process, especially among disadvantaged ethnic and social groups;
- More flexible planning and implementation based upon better knowledge of regional and local conditions;
- Alleviation of managerial overload at the central level;
- ♦ Mobilization of untapped resources at the regional or local levels;
- More efficient and less expensive provision of goods and services;
- Better maintenance of investments in economic infrastructure;

- ♦ More cost-effective achievement of development goals;
- ♦ Reinforcement of non-governmental organizations and private enterprise;
- ♦ Better horizontal coordination among governmental units and between the public and private sectors;
- ♦ Enhancement of broader goals such as national unity and stability.¹

Thus, the appeal of decentralization stems from its close relation to most of the major concerns emphasized in the development community over the past decade: the design of more egalitarian development strategies employing appropriate technology; popular participation as both a means and an end in the development process; the strengthening of private voluntary organizations (PVOs), local organizations and private enterprise; debureaucratization; and utilization of the "learning process" approach to development planning and implementation (Schmidt 1989).

Enthusiasm towards decentralization as an intervention strategy has been particularly strong in recent attempts to bring reform to the education sector. Maclure (1993) describes

The growing predominance of the view that public education can only be improved by reducing the role of the centralized state in school system management. Accordingly, this is generally assumed to entail decentralization and more participatory input from local communities and the private sector in aspects of school administration. Three arguments underscore this general approach to educational reform: a) since central governments are increasingly unable to direct and administer all aspects of mass education, decentralizing of planning and programming will result in improved service delivery by enabling local authorities to perform tasks they are better equipped to manage; b) since mass education has placed an inordinate strain on state resources, decentralization will improve economies of scale and will lead to more appropriate responsiveness to the particular needs and situations of different regions and groups; and c) by engaging active involvement of community and private sector groups in local schooling, decentralization will generate more representativeness and equity in educational decisionmaking, and thus foster greater local commitment to public education.

More recently, however, a growing number of people have begun to question the benefits of decentralization. The bulk of the criticism has stemmed from the experiences in Latin America and Asia. One set of criticisms has resulted from a lack of clarity over what "decentralization" really means. The fact is that the term has been used to describe so many different situations, it has lost a specific definition. The second set of criticisms is particularly concerned with the neutrality and the smoothness of process that decentralization claims to have. The concern about neutrality questions whether the process of decentralization can be free from any political or economic agenda. The concern about smoothness of process takes issue with the implicit assumption that decentralization programs need merely to be proclaimed in order to

¹ For a more elaborate discussion, see Rondinelli 1981.

Decentralization Overview

succeed. This concern challenges the assumption that everyone in a country wants decentralization and that it is inherently a “good” process. Unfortunately, for many countries, decentralization has meant that ministries can dump unwanted responsibilities on decentralized organizations without providing them with commensurate resources.

Summary of Findings

USAID documentation and decentralization literature identify some common ways in which decentralization is perceived, designed, carried out, and evaluated in African education systems.

First, some general conclusions can be drawn about the documentation itself, particularly the materials describing specific educational projects. While almost every project identifies decentralization as a priority objective, only a few have analyzed the process of decentralization (including the capacity and politics of key actors) or examined the education sector in a systematic way. Second, the term "decentralization" is used to describe everything from community power sharing to installing a new computer system to localizing instructional materials. Finally, few results are described, either because the results occurred at some subsequent time or because the expected results did not in fact occur.

The findings are grouped in four categories:

- (1) assumptions and views about decentralization;
- (2) the process of decentralization;
- (3) support for decentralization; and
- (4) evaluation of decentralization

Assumptions and Views about Decentralization

The following assumptions and views about decentralization surfaced frequently in the literature.

- ♦ **Decentralization is viewed as an end, rather than as a means to an end.**

Decentralization is generally viewed as an "end" in itself, rather than as a "means" to achieve some other objective. It is commonly stated that decentralizing an education system will lead to improvement, without any consideration of objectives (i.e., equity, access, quality, innovation, relevance); capacity (i.e., financial, technical, administrative, infrastructure, absorptive); costs (internal and external); and incentive structures (culturally, economically, and politically derived). The rationale for why a particular sector or function should be decentralized often gets lost along the way or is never considered in the first place.

- ♦ **Decentralization is viewed as a finite product, rather than an ongoing process.**

Decentralization efforts are analyzed in static, linear terms, with a beginning and end to the reform. There is a need to recognize the dynamic, ongoing nature of decentralization. Decentralization or centralization of the functions within the education system need to constantly change to reflect shifting priorities and internal and external conditions.

♦ **Decentralization is assumed to always be good.**

Many people believe that all forms of decentralization are good and that all forms of centralization are bad. Centralized and decentralized organizations, however, are not part of a zero-sum continuum: the strengthening of the latter does not necessarily imply the weakening of the former. Winkler states that, "Central governments have an important continuing role to play in a decentralized system. Within decentralized services, there are some normative, policy setting, informational, and technical assistance functions which central government ministries should continue to perform; the decentralization requires a restructuring of central government ministries towards improved capacity in these areas and away from direct service provision."

♦ **Decentralization is assumed to have popular support.**

The assumption is often made that the people support decentralization. Integral to this assumption is the premise that popular demand for schooling will continue to be high (Maclure 1993). In many cases, parents and community do not want the additional burdens (financial and other) associated with decentralization nor do they trust their local governments with this responsibility. As Weiler (1990) has observed, "in return for a greater role in the making of educational decisions, [the community] is expected to express a stronger sense of commitment to the overall educational enterprise by generating added resources for school construction and maintenance, teacher salaries, and the like." Given these expectations, many community members do not support decentralization.

• **Decentralization has many, often conflicting definitions.**

No common understanding has been reached about what "decentralization" of education means and involves. Instead, many different understandings and interpretations associated with the word exist. Many groups associate decentralization with the losing or gaining of power and responsibility. Many see decentralization as transferring a centralized system to a regional or district level. Very little effort has been made to clarify or define formally what decentralization actually entails.

Process of Decentralization-Centralization

The literature describes the process of decentralization in Africa as follows:

♦ **Decentralization often emerges from crisis.**

Two primary "windows of opportunities" are common to decentralization-centralization movements: structural adjustment programs and changes in government regimes. The latter has led to much more aggressive strategies. For example, in Ethiopia and Ghana, political change resulted in stepped-up decentralization efforts (both in terms of level and pace), but these efforts have taken place in a more complicated environment along with many other political activities. Most central government changes have been "pushed" by the lack of financial and human resources at the center rather than "pulled" by local people's demands to participate in development efforts.

- ♦ **Decentralization is rarely designed with popular participation.**

For the most part, there has been no popular participation in the design of decentralization strategies, and the official form and function of local government continues to be dictated by national rather than local standards. There is, however, a need to distinguish between decentralization that is legal and formal and the decentralization that emerges de facto as a result of implementation. One could argue that decentralization plans are either resisted or transformed to reflect local priorities.

- ♦ **Decentralization efforts rarely build new organizational linkages.**

Decentralization efforts rarely attempt to build vertical (between the various levels) or horizontal (with private sector, NGOs, communities, etc.) linkages throughout the system or across sectors (with other ministries). Yet, processes of decentralization require development of appropriate linkages among organizations at different levels and strong communication and information flows. Through inter-organizational linkages, functions can be allocated so as to counterbalance weaknesses and utilize comparative advantages (Schmidt 1989). Honadle and Gow (n.d.) suggest that effective decentralization strategies must be based on mutually supportive relationships between national and subnational governments.

- ♦ **Indigenous social institutions rarely become part of the decentralization process.**

In many communities the state has had little success in penetrating traditional social institutions. Where village chiefs and clan elders retain control over most community-level social and economic activity, civil society in much of Africa has maintained a remarkable degree of autonomy from the state. Yet, in almost all cases, the state has not successfully tapped into these indigenous institutions in its decentralization efforts.

- ♦ **Decentralization rarely extends to the school level.**

In most countries, such educational functions as personnel management, research, and curriculum development remain at the central level. Conversely, in only a few cases have decentralization efforts even considered increasing school-level autonomy and responsibility.

Support for Decentralization

In-country and donor support of decentralization is characterized as follows:

- ♦ **Although most projects focus on government, NGOs and CBOs may be more receptive to decentralization projects.**

Most decentralization efforts in Africa focus on the formal government. However, in countries where local government authorities are not highly developed, projects with other collective organizations may be better points of entry than projects with the government itself. In some places, existing NGOs and CBOs can be strengthened. Elsewhere, the creation of new umbrella organizations will be more effective. The

strategy in either case is to introduce experience with collective choice-making in a setting where decisions can be made relatively rapidly and implemented effectively and then to encourage the NGOs to gradually develop formal links with local government.

- ♦ **Support and opposition to decentralization are highly politicized.**

Although most of the documentation takes a very neutral approach to decentralization, the reality is that decentralization is highly politicized. Major stakeholders, both individuals and groups, can help or hinder the effort, often based on motivations and priorities quite separate from the specific educational issues at hand. In addition, economic or socio-cultural incentives and disincentives affect support for decentralization.

- ♦ **The benefits of decentralization are maximized if good local management practices are established.**

Decentralization requires local level decision makers to be trained in effective revenue collection, financial control, personnel management and management information systems including databases for the comparison of performance between institutions and over time. However, very few of the decentralization projects studied focus on capacity building at the local level.

- ♦ **While donors verbalize support for decentralization, they rarely fund broad decentralization efforts.**

While many donors verbalize their support for decentralization, very few of them have actually funded long-term decentralization strategies. Most donors direct their efforts at supporting inputs (such as textbooks, teacher training, and construction) rather than strengthening the system. USAID program support of the decentralization in most African countries has focused on three categories: a) technical assistance to a national (in some cases to a regional) ministry; b) MIS; and c) training. Very little attention has been given to assisting in the "equity" (between regions, ethnic groups, etc.) component of decentralization.

Evaluation of Decentralization

Little is known about whether or not decentralization actually increases student learning. The following three points identify gaps in evaluations to date:

- ♦ **Objective evaluation of decentralization reforms is virtually non-existent.**

Perhaps because of the assumption that decentralization as an inherently good final product, decentralization is only evaluated in descriptive terms. Decentralization must be linked to objectives and trade-offs in order to have something to measure it against. Particular attention should be given to evaluating the impact on teaching and learning at the school and classroom levels. Furthermore, evaluation fails to determine whether the decentralization actually leads to better decisionmaking. In many cases, it has led to

Summary of Findings

greater politicization of the system and more decisions made on the basis of political motivations rather than technical ones.

- ♦ **Evaluation focuses on the formal decentralization plan, rather than on how the plan was implemented.**

Evaluation that does take place fails to distinguish between the prescribed legal, formal decentralization plan and the plan as it is implemented. Evaluation is needed to learn how plans have been implemented, and why the reality has diverged from the intention.

- ♦ **Evaluation fails to discuss the costs of decentralization to the system.**

Decentralization proponents say that decentralization lessens the financial burden on a system and increases its response time. This is not necessarily true. In many cases, increasing the number of government levels, increasing levels of communication, etc. pose huge financial costs and time delays to the system.

In summary the case materials and the literature serve as a reminder that decentralization of education systems is not as easy as the rhetoric makes it sound. Decentralization is an extremely complex process that must be approached more thoroughly than has been done in the past. Large information gaps remain.

Summary of Findings

Assumptions and Views about Decentralization

- ♦ Viewed as an end, rather than as a means to an end.
- ♦ Viewed as finite, rather than as an ongoing process.
- ♦ Assumed to always be good.
- ♦ Assumed to have popular support.
- ♦ Has many, often conflicting definitions.

Process

- ♦ Often emerges from crisis.
- ♦ Rarely designed with popular participation.
- ♦ Rarely builds new organizational linkages.
- ♦ Rarely taps into indigenous social institutions.
- ♦ Rarely extends to the school level.

Support

- ♦ Better point of entry often with NGOs and CBOs, rather than with government.
- ♦ Support and opposition are highly politicized.
- ♦ Maximized if good local management practices are established.
- ♦ Favored by donors, yet donors rarely fund broad decentralization efforts.

Evaluation

- ♦ Virtually non-existent, beyond just description.
- ♦ Focuses on formal plans, rather than how the plans were implemented.
- ♦ Fails to discuss the costs of decentralization to the system.

Country Profiles

As noted earlier, this publication brings together a review of decentralization theory and research with a review of specific education decentralization projects in eleven countries: Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. An analytic framework was drafted (see Part II) to examine USAID project documents to answer a series of questions about country context and about reforms and functions within the education sector. However, given that the study is based primarily on a literature review, not all the questions included in the framework could be answered for each country—either because the information was not included in the documentation or because the answers are not known even in the country itself.

First, four tables provide an overview across the eleven countries. These tables look at—

- ♦ Decentralization policy and plans
- ♦ Decentralization as applied to finance, administration, and curriculum development
- The community role in decentralization, and
- ♦ USAID education decentralization projects.

Second, individual country profiles review the following information:

- ♦ Context—political and/or economic history, other significant decentralization efforts, educational enrollment statistics;
- ♦ Education Sector Structure—formal structure, functions of the ministry or other unit, role of the community;
- ♦ Decentralization: Plans and Status—decentralization policy, implementation of the policy;
- ♦ USAID and Other Donor Support for Decentralization—specific projects or more general opinions and views;
- ♦ Other Observations—other points of interest related to education decentralization and other reform;
- References—USAID project documents used to compile the country profile.

Country Profiles

Table 1: Education Decentralization Policy and Plans in Eleven African Countries

Benin	Ministry of Education plans to decentralize decisions concerning primary school management to Regional Directorates over a three-year period. Also, plans to set up a commission to encourage non-governmental participation in reform efforts.
Botswana	In 1984, government introduced a policy on education decentralization called the Partnership, particularly for Community Junior Secondary Schools, which defines the roles of the central government, communities, and others interested in education.
Ethiopia	Under Education Sector Strategy, decentralization has involved devolving power to Regional Education Bureaus. Among other changes, REBs can develop curriculum in local languages.
Ghana	In 1988, the government launched one of the most ambitious decentralization programs in West Africa. Recent recommendations include the strengthening Ghana's 110 District Education Offices.
Guinea	National Education Policy, in 1989, called for strengthen capacity in the ministry and decentralized management and planning. <i>Programme d'Adjustement Sectoriel de l'Education</i> provided operational goals for the policy.
Lesotho	Education Sector Development Plan aimed to decentralize management to the districts and improve management and resource use at school level.
Malawi	According to draft Policy Framework Paper prepared for World Bank, 1991/92–1993/94, government is committed to implementing decentralization of the Ministry of Education.
Mali	In 1989, National Council for Education called for "Education for Life," to make education more relevant to local conditions.
Namibia	After independence in 1990, government has tried to establish central system to meet needs of newly independent nation and foster local authority. Rationalization Task Force proposed educational reforms in 1993.
Uganda	Five-Year Education Sector Investment Program has three priorities: democratization, vocationalization, and decentralization.
Zimbabwe	Main thrust of Ministry decentralization effort has been infrastructure development, particularly installation of a computerized management information system.

Country Profiles

Table 2: Status of Decentralization in terms of Three Educational Functions

	Finance	Administration	Curriculum
Benin	Regional Directorates prepare budget proposals, although Ministry of Finance has most responsibility for education budgets.	Reforms are aimed at decentralization of strategic planning, information, dissemination, and personnel management.	Reforms are aimed at setting up Curriculum Development and Textbook Publishing units, as well as capacity to do national tests. Schools receive no pedagogical materials from the Ministry.
Botswana	Historically, families, communities, religious institutions, and private sector have made sizable contributions to educational finance and management.	Local authorities are charged with managing primary schools, yet they have more activities than they can handle.	Curriculum Development & Evaluation Unit charged with working with schools and other MOE units. Changing system from 7-3-2 to 7-2-3, and eventually to 6-3-3.
Ethiopia	Budgets are now developed at Regional level and submitted to Ministry of Finance. Families pay operating costs of schools through fees.	Regional Education Bureaus formulate plans, develop priorities, make all personnel decisions.	National government defines goals, priorities and educational standards. Recently changed system from 6-2-4 to 4-4-2-2. Regional Bureaus responsible for developing curriculum and materials in local languages.
Ghana	Some revenues do come from communities and from District Assemblies. Primary school is free, but parents must pay book fees beginning in Grade 3.	Ghana Education Service (GES) is responsible for management of pre-university institutions and for data collection and analysis. Planning and budgeting functions are being merged in a division within the Secretary of Education.	GES is responsible for textbook publication and distribution. Curriculum Research and Development Division employs experienced curriculum specialists and typically assembles committees of administrators, teachers, and subject specialists to develop curricula.
Guinea	Local officials collect tax receipts which help fund education.	Management adheres to top-down approach; line officers defer to higher authorities. Personnel management and files are very outdated.	Prefectures administer national examinations.

Country Profiles

Table 2: Status of Decentralization in terms of Three Educational Functions (continued)

	Finance	Administration	Curriculum
Malawi	Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has transferred budget, regulatory authority to regions and districts. Parents pay school costs, administered by Local Authority.	MOEC planning and information units are understaffed and unable to perform the work required of them.	MOEC currently revising primary school curriculum. Malawi Book Service has exclusive authority to purchase educational materials, resulting in higher costs. Districts must arrange own transport of materials.
Mali	New education policy is beyond scope of government's financial capability. About 25% of students are in Islamic schools, which receive no public aid.	Within the Ministry of Education (MEN), divisions are responsible for general educational planning, information management, and personnel.	National Institute of Pedagogy is responsible for curriculum and materials development.
Namibia	Under apartheid, resources to schools were unequal. Current procedures still lacking, e.g. no link between Planning and Financial Directorates in the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC).	System lacks planners, researchers, evaluators, and innovators, especially in rural areas. MEC cannot control personnel selection or transfer; government must redeploy anyone from old system wishing to remain.	MEC developing new curricula and materials in Namibian local languages, with supplementary curricula developed to support specific and local interests. Materials and examinations used to come from South Africa before independence.
Uganda	Tremendous disparity of resources based on community resources. Parents have taken on increasing role in financing school operations.	Lack of planning, management, and accountability capacity. Decentralization with no central standards sharpens disparities based on community resources.	Most classroom materials are imported, as once thriving publishing industry is nearly defunct. Teachers focus on the Primary School Leaving Exam, rather than on locally relevant topics.
Zimbabwe	Schools are funded through government and, especially at secondary level, through fees.	Personnel structure to support decentralization appears to be deficient. Monitoring and evaluation needed to ensure that decentralization reforms are working.	Examinations are gradually becoming localized, to replace the Cambridge exams. It is expected that this will result in localized curricula and syllabi and save foreign exchange.

Country Profiles

Table 3: Role of Community and Family in Education Decentralization

Benin	Families pay large share of primary school costs. Under reform, parent associations were asked to develop new procedures for management of school fees. Ministry also wants to strengthen role of parents associations in other aspects of reform.
Botswana	Traditional strong school-community linkage; before independence, Tribal School Committees were responsible for primary schools. Communities and families have historically helped to finance schools.
Ethiopia	Schools collect fees from parents, as they get virtually no government money for supplies and operating costs. Great disparity within country in terms of community involvement and resources for schools.
Ghana	Chiefs and chief's councils are influential in local schools. In many places, church groups are also active. Government is also encouraging establishment of PTAs and of District and Area Implementation Committees. Primary school is free, although there are book fees in Grade 3 and above.
Guinea	Communities are not generally involved in schools. Local tax receipts finance education, and local educational officials are often associated with taxation.
Lesotho	Primary and secondary education is run as a partnership between government, church proprietors, and parents/community. Almost all schools are owned and operated by churches. Parents provide labor for school construction.
Malawi	Parents pay tuition fees, collected by District Education Officers. School committees build classrooms and teacher housing and undertake other projects, but vary in strength and support.
Mali	One-fourth of students are enrolled in Islamic schools, which families help finance and maintain. Elsewhere, because of government financial limitations, communities are being asked to become more involved in school management, but extent of community support varies.
Namibia	Ministry is making strong efforts to reach out to communities, churches, and NGOs, but relationships between communities and schools (which had operated in an apartheid system before independence) are sometimes tense.
Uganda	Historically, parents have given financial support to schools, but disparity based on community resources has resulted. School management committees have increased their role, but often are running schools without sufficient training.
Zimbabwe	Primary school has been generally free, except for more elite schools, but parents are being asked to contribute more. Along with this, local school boards will become more powerful.

Country Profiles

Table 4: USAID Education Projects

Benin	Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF), 1991–1999
Botswana	Basic Education Consolidation Project, 1991–1995 Junior Secondary Education Improvement, 1985–1992
Ethiopia	Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO), 1995–2001
Ghana	Primary Education Reform Program (PREP), 1991–1996
Guinea	Programme d'Adjustement Sectoriel de l'Education (PASE), 1990–1996
Lesotho	Primary Education Program (PEP), 1991–1996
Malawi	Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE), 1991–1998
Mali	Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP), 1989–1999
Namibia	Basic Education Reform Program (BERP), 1991–1993 Basic Education Support Project, 1991–2001
Uganda	Support for Uganda Primary Education Reform (SUPER), 1992–2002
Zimbabwe	Basic Education and Skills Training Sector Assistance Program (BEST), 1983–1990

Benin

Context

The government of Benin has had three distinct systems of government since independence from France in 1960, which educational policy has reflected: a French-influenced system from 1960 to 1972; a socialist regime in the Kerekou era from 1972 through 1989; and democratic reform begun in 1990. In 1990 the Republic of Benin adopted a new constitution and declared its support for an open society, rule of law, and a market economy.

In 1989 Benin began a structural adjustment period supported by the World Bank and IMF to curtail the role of the public sector and strengthen the sector's capacity to manage its resources. The government has made progress in divesting itself from parastatal organizations.

Few government officials have experience in including citizens or the private sector in the decision-making process in a spontaneous manner. Efforts to involve key non-government actors have had limited success to date. The non-governmental sector is nascent and is struggling to establish itself as a viable alternative provider of service, able to demand its place at the strategy-making table.

Massive expansion of the education system took place in the 1970s under the Kerekou regime. Gross enrollments rose from 39 percent in 1975 to 61 percent in 1985. However, gross enrollments declined to 59 percent by 1989. Net enrollments in 1989 were 47 percent. Children of the urban south remain the chief beneficiaries of the education system. A predominantly Muslim population in the north resisted the re-introduction of French in the schools.

Education Sector Structure

The Ministry of National Education (MEN) oversees six Regional Directorates. Its administrative structure is highly centralized, and chains of command are often poorly defined. The Regional Directorates are structured as mirror images of the central administration, thus duplicating its confusion and shortcomings. Centralization of the decisionmaking process means that school directors have little direct control over personnel issues. Inefficiencies are exacerbated by the dispersion of MEN's central administration over ten different sites in two cities.

In addition, other ministries have significant power over aspects of educational operations. For example, most of the public share of the education sector's operating budget is under the direct control of the Ministry of Finance. In addition, the Ministry of Public Service is responsible for many personnel-related decisions that would be more effectively taken by the MEN.

The National Institute for Training and Education Research (INFRE) is anticipated to take on responsibility for curriculum and textbook development, training, and the development of a national achievement examination.

Parents and communities pay for school construction and maintenance costs, pedagogical materials, and even such basic supplies as chalk.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The MEN has proposed a three-year plan to decentralize to the Regional Directorates many decisions concerning management of the primary schools.

Representatives of private education institutions, parents associations, and the MEN are planning a commission to encourage non-governmental participation in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the education reform effort. The Ministry also plans to reinforce the capacity of parents associations to participate in school management.

A proposed Textbook Publication Unit within INFRE will be responsible for the formation and implementation of textbook policy on a central level, but is also supposed to promote local capacity to develop and design pedagogical materials.

Some progress has been made. For example, although the Ministry of Finance has control over the budget, the Regional Directorates were able to submit budget proposals in 1993 for the first time. Regional Directors also worked together to develop training kits that were distributed to teachers.

USAID and Other Donor Support for Decentralization

USAID will support decentralization by improving the government's capacity to administer and plan for quality education and to involve parents and community groups in the schools. Long-term technical assistance will be given in the areas of educational planning and MIS.

Other Observations

- ♦ Poor personnel management has led to a dramatic mismatch between available human resources and personnel needs.
- Until a national examination is firmly in place, no mechanism exists to use student performance as a way to judge the effectiveness of the system. The current examination system cannot compare students nationwide, or compare progress from year to year.

Reference

Document Name: Children's Learning and Equity Foundations (CLEF)
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): September 1991
Document No: PAAD Number (680-0208/680-0206)
Project Duration: 1991-1999
Special: Amendment No. 1: September 30, 1992

Botswana

Context

Botswana is a multi-party democracy with a strong human rights record. Its democratic institutions are rooted in the Kgotla tradition of open discussion and consensus building at the village level.

The country's National Development Plan VII emphasized enterprise development as the engine of growth to diversify the economy away from mining and to open up greater employment opportunities.

Tribal School Committees were traditionally responsible for primary education in Botswana. After independence in 1966, the government began to build schools, but demand quickly outstripped supply, and communities were asked to fund, build, and run their own schools. In 1984, the government expanded the school system and absorbed these community schools under its jurisdiction. This weakened the link between the schools and their communities. Re-establishment of these linkages is seen as a high priority.

Recognizing both the need to diversify educational resources and the value of democratizing and decentralizing the education system, the government introduced a policy in 1984 called the Partnership. The policy was specifically about the financing and management of newly introduced Community Junior Secondary Schools (CJSS). It defined the role of the central government, communities, and other organizations interested in education. The policy attempted to introduce new attitudes, perceptions, roles, and structures in these new schools.

The country has net enrollment rates of more than 85 percent. At the primary level, more females than males are enrolled; in 1988, 48 percent of the students were male and 52 percent were female.

Education Sector Structure

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has set up a network of education centers throughout the country as training and resource centers. Fourteen are planned, about half of which are operational.

The MOE is changing the school structure from a 7-3-2 to 7-2-3 sequence, and eventually leading to 6-3-3.

Historically, communities and households, religious institutions, and the private sector have made sizable contributions to educational finance and school management.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The Ministry of Education sees the network of education centers as a way to decentralize teacher training and school administration and plans to establish a Department of Teacher Education to administer the education centers.

Decentralization as defined through the Partnership has become a politicized process. In areas where opposition parties are strong, the CJSS have turned out to be a battleground for political control. Member-

ship to the boards of governors of the schools is closely contested along party lines, and the defeated party often does not support the school. The political climate within the boards is further heightened by the presence of the local Member of Parliament or his representative as an ex-officio member of the board. In some villages, this is seen as promoting the incumbent and his or her party, and situations have arisen in which community members have not supported the CJSS because they did not support the members of the board.

USAID and Other Donor Support to Decentralization

The government requested assistance from USAID to provide a limited amount of specialized technical assistance and more extensive and intensive training to strengthen the Department of Curriculum Development & Evaluation (CD&E) within the Ministry of Education. USAID planned to provide long-term technical assistance in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training, and systems management.

Other Observations

- ♦ A contract with two private sector organizations, the Macmillan Botswana Publishing Company and the Longman Group resulted in the printing of textbooks, workbooks, and teachers guides for the primary schools.
- ♦ To address the problems of curriculum development and implementation, the Ministry has focused on institutional development of the CD&E, including establishing mechanisms to link the department more closely with teachers.

References

Document Name: Strengthening Local Education Capacity
Type of Document: Final Report: Improving the Efficiency of Education systems: March 1989
Document No: NA
Project Duration: NA

Document Name: Basic Education Consolidation Report
Type of Document: Project Implementation Document: June 21, 1990
Document No: (633-0254)
Project Duration: 1991-1995

Document Name: Junior Secondary Education Improvement
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document: February 28, 1992
Document No: (633-0229)
Project Duration: 1985-1992
Special: Annex O: Ministry of Education Organizational Chart



Ethiopia

Context

Ethiopia was ruled by centralized regimes both under the Haile Selassie and the Derg Marxist governments. The Derg fell in 1991, after two decades of civil war. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia implemented a regionalization policy that involved political restructuring along ethnic lines. As part of this restructuring, a new language policy allows regions to determine the language of instruction in the primary schools.

In 1994, the government released a New Education and Training Policy, which identified five priority areas to improve:

- ♦ **Equity:** low enrollment ratios, high gender and regional disparities;
- ♦ **Quality:** ineffective and irrelevant curriculum, shortage of teachers and educational materials, high drop-out and retention rates;
- ♦ **Organization:** low management capacity, inefficient structures, lack of coordination;
- ♦ **Finance:** low budgets, minimal private sector participation, inefficient cost sharing;
- ♦ **Socio-economic development:** effects on student independence of past use of education as an indoctrination tool and of didactic pedagogical approach.

Gross enrollment rates, which have always been below average for sub-Saharan Africa increased to 35 percent in 1987/88, then declined to 22 percent in 1991/92. The female participation rate is about 41 percent. The system is dominated by strong regional inequities, with some regions having GERs of 7 percent, while others are at 81 percent.

Education Sector Structure

The new structure has three tiers: regions (11 in all), zones, and woredas. Woredas represent the link between the government and the schools. A Regional Council, Zonal Council, and Woreda Council—each with its corresponding line bureaus—all operate within each region. Rather than operate vertically, the line bureaus report to their relevant councils, and the councils then report upwards.

The Regional Education Bureaus formulate plans, develop activities, and prepare capital and operating budgets to submit to the Ministry of Finance. The REBs also have been given the authority to develop curricula and materials and to assess their students.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for setting the school calendar. It recently changed the school-level structure from a 6-2-4 sequence to 4-4-2-2.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The decentralization of administrative roles and functions from the center to the regions implies substantially greater autonomy for the REBs to interpret and execute policies. As part of the regionalization effort, the MOE and formal education structure were reorganized. The MOE was significantly pared down. In effect, the regional bureaus have become the new "central level" of the system.

The regions vary greatly in their capacity to support provision and delivery of education services. Most do not have the expertise to carry out the new responsibilities delegated to them by the central government. Implementation has proceeded haphazardly, with regions moving at different paces.

USAID and Other Donor Support to Decentralization

USAID support centers around assisting "both the central and regional governments in coping with the management of primary education in a decentralized system" including incentive grants to schools, technical assistance, particularly for planning, finance, and curriculum/textbook development at the regional level, training for regional administrative staff, and development of a school-leadership program for head teachers.

Other Observations

- ♦ No special provisions have been made for improving the low level of English of teachers and administrators, even though English has been designated as the language of instruction at the higher levels.
- ♦ Some regions have a considerably more complex mosaic of cultures than others. They may need to teach and produce materials in a number of local languages. This will require considerably more resources in terms of funds and expertise.

Reference

Document Name: Basic Education System Overhaul
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): October 1994
Document No: PAAD Number (663-0015)
Project Duration: 1995–2001

Ghana

Context

Since 1966, Ghana has been ruled by a series of military and civilian governments. The current government, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), assumed power in 1981 through a military coup. Although the structure and powers of local government have undergone extensive changes and contrasting directions during the post-Independence period, the long-term trend was a deterioration in the quality and capacity of local governments. By 1981, local government units were essentially non-functioning.

In coordination with the International Monetary Fund, the government launched one of Africa's most stringent economic recovery programs in 1983. As part of this and other reforms, 110 districts and district assemblies were established in 1988. In 1986 and in 1990, the government signed Education Sector Adjustment Credits with the World Bank.

Ghana has about one hundred different ethnic groups, most with their own languages. English is the official language used in schools, business, and the government, and most Ghanians are multilingual.

A government-wide decentralization plan was announced in 1988 after seven years of "provisional government" by the PNDC. Officially, decentralization was said to be motivated by a need for power sharing and not for economic and administrative efficiency. The functions of twenty-two departments, including education, agriculture, and public works, were to be decentralized to the districts. By decentralizing, the national government could show that it remained committed to eventual democratization of the system.

District Assemblies elections were completed in 1989, and most DAs are functional with sub-committees established.

Total enrollment is 70 percent. Female enrollment as a percentage of the total is estimated at 45 percent. However, enrollment is considerably lower in four of the country's ten regions.

Education Sector Structure

Under the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service (GES) is tasked with implementing educational programs and functions.

The education system has four tiers: central government, regional, district, and circuit. Each of Ghana's ten regions has an office responsible for implementing policy set by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The regions are divided into 110 District Education Offices and run by assistant directors who report to the regional offices. DEOs also report to the District Assemblies, although their salaries are paid by the GES.

Historically, the most influential local body has been the chief and the chief's council. In many communities, local church groups are active in the schools. In addition to these local structures, the PNDC estab-

lished Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and is actively encouraging the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations. In addition, the government formed District and Area Implementation Committees as a way to stimulate community interest and participation in school affairs.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

In 1987, the Secretary of Education formed a committee to make recommendations for restructuring the GES and strengthening regional and district offices. The recommendations included giving the DEOs responsibility for school management, supervision, budgeting, and data collection and analysis for the schools in their districts.

Planning and coordination for implementation of decentralization reforms was facilitated by setting up the National Planning Committee for School Reforms and the formation of the District Implementation Committees to serve as liaisons between the NPCSR and local communities. Several provisions were supposed to prepare for decentralization, including a vehicle for every district and training of district officers.

USAID and Other Donor Support to Decentralization

USAID supports further decentralization of the MOE. As a condition to some assistance, USAID called for a decentralization policy that would, at a minimum, devolve greater financial and managerial authority to the district level.

The World Bank has provided technical assistance and training in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation under Education Sector Adjustment Credit (EDSAC). Funds were also available from the new Program to Mitigate the Social Costs of Structural Adjustment for decentralized community initiative programs through the Das. EDSAC II supports reorganization of the school inspector program.

Other Observations

- ♦ Potential sources of revenue to schools, in addition to the central government, include communities, churches, and, increasingly, the District Assemblies.
- ♦ Cost reduction is a key theme of Ghana's educational reform.

References

Document Name: Primary Education Reform Program
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): July 1990
Document No: PAAD Number (641-0119)
Project Duration: 1990-1995
Special: Annex E: Institutional and Technical Analysis

Document Name: Decentralization: Improving Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa-Ghana Case Study
Type of Document: Case Study: March 25, 1992

Document Name: Ghanian Decentralization
Type of Document: Office of Housing and Urban Programs: July 1991

Guinea

Context

The Government of Guinea Second Republic came to power in 1984. It initiated an economic reform program two years later. In implementing a structural adjustment program, the government adopted policies aimed at freeing the economy from pervasive state control, improving efficiency in public administration and enterprises, and setting up a framework conducive to a market-oriented economy.

Ethnic differences continue to define different forms of social organization and play a role in maintaining distinct regional identities and interests. If the benefits of educational reform do not devolve to lower levels, this could exacerbate ethnic tensions. At the national level, the reforms will be seen as benefiting a particular group unless the civil service reflects the ethnic diversity of the country.

There is a general lack of administrative capacity and coordination among system personnel, and a virtual absence of channels of communication between Conakry and the interior.

Enrollment rates declined at all levels during the 1980s, despite renewed government interest in education since 1984. Net enrollment is approximately 28 percent overall and 17.8 percent for girls. Only 18 percent are enrolled in rural areas, compared to 54 percent in urban centers.

Education Sector Structure

The system has three levels—central, prefectural, and sub-prefectural. A central Ministry of National Education (MEN) is split into two agencies. The Secretariat d'Etat pour l'Education Pre-Universitaire (SEEPU) is responsible for all pre-university education under a Secretary of State, while another agency within the Ministry oversees higher education.

SEEPU controls all schools through a provincial structure of five Regional Inspectorates (the country's four regions and the capital city of Conakry), which in turn administer 36 prefectural-level Directorates of Education and 210 sub-prefectural Pedagogic Delegates.

The Inspection Regionale d'Education (IRE) is the regional coordinating body. The prefecture-level directorates of education have from two to five pedagogic counselors and serve as subordinates to the IRE offices. Sub-prefectural directorates of education are usually one-person operations run by a primary school director or secondary school principal.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

As part of broader educational reform, the government announced a National Educational Policy in 1989 that stated its desire to strengthen management capacity within the Ministry of Education and promote decentralized management and planning capacity.

The National Education Policy, operationalized in the Programme d'Adjustement Sectoriel de l'Education (PASE), calls for:

- ♦ Administrative rationalization and capacity building at all levels of the system
- ♦ Encouragement of local and private initiatives in education
- ♦ A computerized personnel system and improvements in teacher training and assignments.

Recent student unrest and a teacher strike in 1990 indicate opposition to education reform. Many university students and faculty, as well as some within the Ministry oppose the PASE because they want more resources to go to the university level.

The government's Proposed Reform 1990-92 also called for increased participation by local communities in the construction and maintenance of schools and a computerized personnel management system with preparation of job descriptions for all personnel.

Two significant problems have arisen from the new administrative structure:

- Unclear definition of the role of the components of MEN not in the SEEPU. As the MEN struggles to re-establish its *raison d'être*, it feels threatened by the SEEPU, to which it has lost most of its offices.
- ♦ Unnecessary services within the MEN.

At the decentralized level, most officials are aware of the adjustment program, but question whether the intended benefits will reach their level. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to implementing PASE will be the need for a new incentive structure at the decentralized level.

USAID and Other Donor Support for Decentralization

USAID is providing technical assistance in the areas of administrative and financial management and in training. In addition, USAID supported an evaluation of administrative capacity at decentralized levels.

The World Bank supported an IDA loan to achieve:

- implementation of a computerized educational investment project database
- ♦ definition and establishment of matching fund apparatus to promote increased parental-contributions and local tax support of the maintenance and construction of primary schools
- ♦ reduction of smaller administrative units and consolidation of the structure within the MOE
- ♦ establishment of a senior Ministry committee to monitor and control sector-wide decisions.

Other Observations

- ♦ Multiple divisions, services, and sections within the SEEPU (sixty-nine in all) are each competing to establish an independent identity, leading to a local of coordination and duplication of efforts.
- ♦ Because local tax receipts finance school construction, education officials at this level are associated with government taxation.

Reference

Document Name: Programme d'Adjustement Sectoriel de l'Education (PASE)
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): August 1990
Document No: PAAD Number (675-0222/675-0223)
Project Duration: 1990-1996
Special: Annex F: Description of the PASE; Annex I: MOE Organizational Chart

Lesotho

Context

Under the Structural Adjustment Program 1988/89–1990/91, policy measures were taken to reform agriculture, industrial development, public enterprises, monetary and credit policy, and external sector and debt management. Under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment for 1991/92–1993/94, further policy reforms will be taken in agriculture, industry, parastatals, civil service, and the financial market.

The road transport network is limited. The formal private sector is small, partly because of a lack of entrepreneurial skills.

Primary education experiences rapid growth in the 1980s. In 1989, the net enrollment was 79 percent, and the gross enrollment was 118 percent. In 1975, females outnumbered males by 50 percent, but by only 25 percent in 1986. Lesotho has the highest percentage of females in total primary school enrollment in Africa.

Education Sector Structure

The three levels in the formal educational structure are the central, circuit (consisting of three districts), and district levels. Three main partners are concerned with Lesotho's primary and secondary school systems: the Ministry of Education (MOE), church proprietors, and the parents/community. Almost all primary schools are owned and operated by churches.

The National University of Lesotho is the country's only university. Various institutions provide non-formal education, including the Lesotho Distance Teaching Center; the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, and Interior; the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies at the university; and more than 400 church and voluntary groups.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The Education Sector Development Plan 1991/92–1995/96 called for five major actions:

- ♦ revise education legislation to improve the management of education;
- restructure MOE headquarters to streamline decision making;
- decentralize educational management to the districts and strengthen the inspectorate;
- improve the management and resource use at the school level;
- improve teachers' conditions of service;
- increase financial resources for education, especially at the primary level, which containing costs at the upper levels.

The legislation has been drafted that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the government, churches, and communities. In addition, the MOE plans to increase parental and community representation on school committees and strengthen its district levels to monitor compliance with the legislation.

The MOE last issued guidelines for primary school curriculum in 1967. Since then, major changes have taken place, and the Ministry wants to capture these changes through revised guidelines.

USAID and Other Donor Support of Decentralization

The USAID Primary Education Program provided support that would have an impact on decentralization in the areas of teacher training, curriculum end-of-level guidelines for teachers, and improved educational management.

The World Bank provided direct assistance for primary classrooms and school sanitary facility construction, devolution of professional support to district levels, MOE reorganization and teacher training, and monitoring and evaluation.

Other Observations

- ♦ The lack of clear definition of the roles of the three partners in Lesotho's education system has led to significant inefficiencies and weak management.
- ♦ Until the MOE assumed responsibility for teacher payments, church proprietors had responsibility for all matters of teacher employment and management. Eventually, District Education Offices are scheduled to take over teacher assignment and payment.

Reference

Document Name: Primary Education Program
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): August 1991
Document No: PAAD Number (632-0230/0225)
Project Duration: 1991-1996
Special: Annex H: MOE Organizational Chart

Malawi

Context

In the late 1980s, the government changed its approach to structural adjustment and liberalized foreign trade, the incentive system, and credit mechanisms. Two serious problems persist. First, despite widely approved reforms, the productive structure of the economy has not changed since the start of the 1980s. Second, fiscal targets have made it difficult for the government to increase expenditures in the social sectors. In comparison with other countries in the region, government spending on education is low.

A draft Policy Framework Paper, 1991/92–1993/94, prepared by the government in collaboration with the World Bank and the IMF, is the most recent document that outlines the government's medium-term macroeconomic development strategy

About 53 percent of school-aged children attend school, according to MOE estimates. The net enrollment for girls is lower, 44.6 percent.

Education Sector Structure

Three levels comprise the system—the central ministry, three Regional Education Offices (REOs) and 28 District Education Offices (DEOs). However, the system remains highly centralized within the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) in Lilongwe. MOEC manages the whole education and training system, from primary schools to technical and correspondence education.

The Malawi Institute of Education is an independent parastatal organization with responsibility for research, curriculum reform, and information dissemination.

The Malawi Book Service has exclusive control over the purchase of educational materials, which results in inefficiencies and higher costs.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The Policy Framework Paper mentioned above states that, "Following the recent improvements of the quality of teaching methods, curricula, and physical facilities, the government will implement the first phase of the decentralization of the Ministry of Education."

The Ministry has demonstrated a commitment and technical capacity to decentralize certain functions, including budgeting, accounting, and some regulatory authority.

The Ministry is also currently sponsoring a revision of the primary school curriculum that reduces the number of subjects and changes teaching approaches and content. The curriculum revisers are developing curricula for the majority of students who do not go beyond the primary level and who need to develop skills valued in the village context.

USAID and Other Donor Support to Decentralization

USAID does not have any project assistance allocated for supporting decentralization in Malawi. The United Nations Development Programme has the Project for Strengthening Educational Planning, which has a decentralization component. UNDP and CIDA are also supporting the expansion of a school management training course.

Other Observations

- As a major link between local communities and the national education system, District Education Officers are responsible for collecting school fees from primary schools.
- ♦ The MOEC has displayed a strong ability to keep on schedule, even with complex tasks like the curriculum reform effort.

Reference

Document Name: Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): September 1991
Document No: PAAD Number (612-0240/612-0237)
Project Duration: 1991-1998

Mali

Context

Throughout the 1990s, Mali has had a succession of government administrations, which has resulted in a lack of institutional continuity. Economic growth in the country has been stunted by a combination of drought and inadequate economic policies. Until 1983, the government hired all graduates coming out of school. When this practice stopped, massive unemployment resulted.

The Malian private sector is weak, and the government has limited capacity to mobilize public and private resources to fund education.

The education system expanded in the 1960s, with gross enrollment rates growing from 9 percent in 1960 to 22 percent in 1970. However, the primary school enrollment is now 23 percent, with the average in rural areas at 14 percent. Partly because of the employment situation described above, demand for education has declined.

Education Sector Structure

Within the Ministry of National Education (MEN), the National Department of Fundamental Education (DNEF) is responsible for five divisions of administration, management, and supervision of all aspects of the basic education system. Regional Directorates report to the DNEF. The National Institute of Pedagogy (IPN) is the application and implementation arm of the MEN. Four Regional Directorates report to the Ministry.

A Center for In-Service Training was established to improve general and special competence levels of MEN personnel, regional staff, and school directors and teachers.

One-fourth of Malian students are enrolled in Islamic schools, which do not receive any public funds. These schools are financed principally by families and by unreported grants from Islamic countries.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

In 1989, the National Council for Education issued a call for a return to the principle of "Education for Life" to make education more relevant to local conditions, particularly in rural areas. The scope of the country's education policies are beyond its financial capabilities, and the Ministry has not been successful in mobilizing other resources.

Because of the financial condition of the government, some communities fund and run their own schools. The government is planning to make supplementary curricula and materials available, and communities can choose which they will use in their schools.

USAID and Other Donor Support to Decentralization

USAID support to decentralization has taken four forms:

- ♦ In-service training
- Relevance of curriculum
- ♦ Community support matching funds, available to communities that contribute funds, materials, or labor to schools
- ♦ Educational Management Information System, computers and training at the Ministry of Basic Education and the four Regional Directorates.

Other Observations

- ♦ The system inherited from the French colonial government was particularly limited in scope and focused exclusively on the development of a cadre of support administrative personnel.
- ♦ Regional inspectors are considered the linchpin between the schools and the DNEF. The inspectors represent the most experienced cadre of teachers in the basic education system.

References

Document Name: Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP)
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): August 1989
Document No: PAAD Number (688-T-603)
Project Duration: 1989–1999

Document Name: Basic Education Expansion Program (BEEP)
Type of Document: Mid-Term Evaluation: December 1993
Document No: NA
Project Duration: 1989–1999

Namibia

Context

Namibia achieved independence from South Africa in 1990 and ended the apartheid system that South Africa had imposed. Since then, a combination of a deep recession, regional drought, and depressed mineral prices has hampered growth.

Afrikaans was the official language of instruction beyond lower primary when Namibia was a colony; the new government adopted the policy that English would be the only official language. Education is highly politicized. For example, as part of national reconciliation, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) has tried to favor poor schools (primarily those serving rural blacks) without taking money away from wealthier schools (primarily those serving whites and urban blacks).

The administrative transition has been painful in the former communal areas, where second-tier ethnic administrations have been disbanded and new regional offices established. In the process, white officials who ran these administrations have either been transferred or, in most cases, resigned. The staff who remain tend to be junior staff with little or no training or administrative experience. As a consequence, there is administrative confusion in most regional offices at a time when popular demands for government action are extremely high.

Gross enrollments exceed 100 percent in many regions where overage populations are attending to school for the first time, or after a long absence. Net enrollment for boys is 81 percent and for girls, 85.1 percent. Disparities exist between regions in net enrollments ranging from 68 percent to 98 percent.

Education Sector Structure

As noted above, the education system was segregated until 1990. Eleven autonomous departments of education administered schools throughout the country.

The government established Regional Councils in the thirteen political regions of the country. The Ministry of Education established six (now seven) educational districts. The relationship between the central administration and these districts is evolving. It has not yet been determined whether a circuit level will be added to the system.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

A tension exists between the establishment of a central uniform education system that serves the needs of a newly independent Namibia and the desire to keep authority as local as possible to promote responsiveness. Although the former ethnic administrations gave the illusion of decentralization, in fact a few central institutions set and enforced policies and procedures throughout the country.

A Rationalization Task Force was established in 1991 to consider educational reform and restructuring. Its proposal, approved in 1993, tries to reduce the number of personnel within the Ministry and the re-

gional offices. The Ministry has attempted to develop linkages with non-governmental organizations skilled in providing educational services at the community level. Leaders of teachers' and learners' unions and traditional chiefs have direct access to the Minister.

The integration of the separate administrative units into one system has been criticized by some as an attempt to homogenize ethnic and cultural identities. However, there was never much ownership or accountability under the former system, and almost all educational materials were imported. The new system is not supposed to centralize all authority.

A new set of standards, curriculum, and materials are being developed. English will be used for higher levels, but materials for lower levels must be developed in local languages.

The Ministry has been slower in implementing reforms than expected, partly because of the reality of filling staff positions and merging the people and philosophies inherited from the previous system. Alternative organizational units, such as working groups and committees, have challenged and sometimes ignored the existing structure.

The MEC has been successful in promoting a clear understanding within the regions of the objectives of the curriculum reform process. In addition, the MEC democratized the curriculum policy and development processes by involving a cross-section of professionals, union members, private sectors, and parents in deliberations about issues affecting the curriculum. Teachers Colleges and schools are now involved in curriculum development.

The Ministry has also said that it wants to revitalize school boards and committees that represent parents and community members.

USAID and Other Support to Decentralization

USAID contributed to the design of a decentralization strategy by supporting the activity to integrate the eleven former separate administrations into a unified system. In addition, USAID supported the formation of a basic education reform committee, which will include public and private members, to direct and monitor the reform.

In addition to USAID, a number of donors are supporting various aspects of the reform process, including UNESCO, UNICEF, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the governments of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Other Observations

- ♦ There is concern that establishing a single system from the previous eleven established under apartheid will homogenize ethnic and cultural identities. The government has pointed out, however, that these earlier structures were not in fact responsive to local needs and enjoyed no "ownership" by local residents.

- ♦ Some education officers in the ministry feel that top management should put greater priority on internal, cross-directorate communication and linkages and on team-building and the fostering of cohesiveness within the Ministry as a whole.

References

Document Name: Basic Education Reform Program
Type of Document: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): March 21, 1991
Document No: PAAD Number (673-0003)
Project Duration: 1991-1993
Special: MOE Organizational Chart

Document Name: Basic Education Reform Program
Type of Document: Evaluation of the Basic Education Reform Program-Annual Review: February 28, 1992
Document No: NA
Project Duration: 1991-1993

Document Name: Basic Education Reform Program
Type of Document: Evaluation of the Basic Education Reform Program-Second Annual Review: March 31, 1993
Document No: NA
Project Duration: 1991-1993

Document Name: Basic Education Support Project
Type of Document: Project Paper, Amendment No. 2: June 30, 1994
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Uganda

Context

Political stability was re-established in Uganda in 1986, after many years of turmoil in which the formal education system and other structures virtually collapsed. Uganda launched an Economic Recovery Program with support from the World Bank and the IMF. Relevant reforms include the implementation of initial steps toward a more comprehensive tax reform program and improved management of the public sector.

The structure of the education system has not changed since independence from Great Britain. Uganda is distinguished by a tradition of strong community support for schools. However, one consequence is the tremendous disparity of resources among schools that reflect the disparities among the different communities that support them.

During the 1980s, growth of the system occurred in an unplanned fashion, again, largely through the efforts of local communities. Gross enrollment ratios increased from about 50 percent in 1980 to about 70 percent in 1989.

Education Sector Structure

The Ministry of Education has attempted to centralize management and administration of the education system, but has not kept up with the large and geographically dispersed system that has mushroomed over the past decade. Within communities, Resistance Committees, school management committees, and parent-teacher associations, exist, although their roles vary considerably from school to school and district to district.

Makerere University and the Institute for Teacher Education in Kyambobo train teachers for upper-level secondary school and produce tutors for the two layers of teacher training institutions below them. Ten National Teachers Training Colleges from the middle layer, train teachers for secondary schools. The sixty-nine Primary Teacher Training Colleges provide pre-service training for primary school teachers.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

The Ministry of Education has presented a Five-Year Education Sector Investment Program that highlights three priority areas:

- ♦ **Democratization:** Universal primary education by the year 2003; schools within four kilometers of every school-age child, greater access for girls, adults, the handicapped, and disadvantaged groups.
- ♦ **Vocationalization:** More relevant curriculum, vocationally oriented courses and community service programs.

- ♦ **Decentralization:** Greater devolution from the central ministry to the districts. However, the lack of efficient management and accountability will impede the reform effort. The central ministry must begin to supervise the whole system and rectify the regional, economic, and gender disparities that exist. Decentralization in the absence of some regulatory and supervisory role on the part of the central ministry leaves individual schools dependent on the local support they can muster and vulnerable to the inequity of different local circumstances. In addition, school management committees have emerged as new local power structures, but are often running the schools with no training in management or pedagogy.

USAID and Other Donor Support for Decentralization

USAID plans to provide project assistance to develop the Teacher Development and Management System and non-project assistance tied to the government allocating resources to allow increased local-level decisionmaking on school management for improving quality and increasing equity of primary education.

The World Bank, through the Structural Adjustment Credit, calls for policies that will shift resources from defense to education, and, within education sector, from the tertiary to the primary level. In addition the Fifth Education Project calls for five improvements:

- ♦ Rehabilitation and construction of school buildings
- ♦ Improved school management and instruction through a network of teacher training colleges
- ♦ Strengthened planning capacity within the Ministry of Education
- Upgraded middle and senior management
- ♦ Expansion of the project implementation unit of the ministry.

UNESCO is implementing a project that attempts to expand the role of the teacher training colleges to develop curriculum, provide in-service training, and initiate community-centered vocational training.

In addition, the European Community provided funding for self-help school construction and the African Development Bank has assisted the ministry's planning and statistics unit.

Other Observations

- Most classroom materials are imported as the once thriving publishing and printing industry is nearly defunct.
- Systems for record-keeping and accounting are particularly weak, leading to misallocation of funds, salary payments to "ghost" teachers, and a general lack of fiscal accountability.

Reference

Document Name: Education Program
Type: Program Assistance Approval Document (PAAD): August 1992
Document No: NA
Project Duration: 1992-2002

Zimbabwe

Context

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe operated two racially separated education systems. During the first years of independence, the government sought to develop policies to reallocate resources to rural schools, without destroying the quality of education in the former white and urban black schools. The economic embargo under the Smith regime produced a self-sufficiency that helped the new government carry out its reforms.

Net enrollments rose from 10 percent in 1981 to 90 percent in 1985, then dropped to about 80 percent in 1988. The participation of girls stands at about 49 percent.

Education Sector Structure

The Ministry of Education pays all teacher salaries and contributes a per-pupil grant to each school. Parents pay tuition fees at secondary schools; at the more elite primary schools, parents also pay fees.

Decentralization: Plans and Status

When the results of initial reform efforts in the education system were not forthcoming, the government made the decision to decentralize. The basic thrust was infrastructure-oriented: for example, on computerization rather than on capacity building through human resource and organizational development approaches. The system is not fully operational. Implementation has been hampered by numerous factors, including underestimation of the time required to install a complicated computer system in a weak regional structure; competition for trained personnel from the private sector; and limited willingness of central administrators to turn over the authority, responsibility, and resources required for effective decentralization.

More change is likely to come as parents are asked to contribute more to the financing of education. More powerful school boards may result. At the Ministry level, if decentralization is going to be innovative, authority and responsibility will have to be delegated to the regional and school levels. However, if this begins to happen, a system of accountability will need to be put in place.

USAID and Other Donor Support

The Basic Education and Skills Training Sector Assistance Program (BEST) sought to strengthen the planning and administrative capacities of the Ministry. Components included localization of examinations, decentralization of the Ministry, efforts to develop a National Education Service Center. USAID supported decentralization of the computer system through financial assistance to purchase hardware and software and through training. However, the decision to finance the system was based on the assumption that the management capability existed that would make use of the increased information, flexibility, and communications achieved through computerization.

Other Observations

- ♦ The Examination Branch Project will gradually localize examination capability, reducing dependency on the Cambridge Examination. In so doing, the country will save considerable amounts of foreign exchange and will have the option to make exams, and the curricula and syllabi on which they are based, more relevant to Zimbabwe.
- ♦ A National Education Service Center is expected to consolidate a number of functions carried out by various units of the Ministry of Education, including teacher education, curriculum development, instructional materials development, testing, and psychological services.

Reference

Document Name: Basic Education and Skills Training Sector Assistance Program
Type of Document: Final Evaluation: November 1990
Document Number: PD-HBC-223
Project Duration: 1983-1990

Part II

- ♦ **Decentralization Framework**
- ♦ **Questions for Future Research**
- ♦ **Bibliography**

Decentralization Framework

This preliminary framework was created to assess the status of education decentralization in Africa better. Its usefulness was tested in reviewing efforts in the eleven countries, but it remains preliminary in the sense that it represents an initial attempt at organizing analysis of this complex topic. The framework takes into account broader country context as well as specificity within the education sector through a series of guided questions. It is presented here as a potential tool to review other decentralization efforts.

First, the overall framework outline is summarized. Then, each section of the outline is expanded to include questions that can uncover more in-depth information for analysis. In addition, many of the outline sections are footnoted with references or further elaboration that explain the relevance of the questions to broader decentralization issues.

Outline of Decentralization Framework

For each country under study:

- I. General background
 - A. Environment and context
 1. Past relevant reforms
 2. Experience with decentralization
 3. Colonial experience
 4. Universal enrollment status and history of enrollment growth
 5. Political considerations
 - a. Political process and participation
 - b. Stakeholders
 - c. Politicization of education
 6. Institutional capacity
 - B. Rationale for decentralization
 - C. Sectors involved
- II. Specific to the Education Sector
 - A. Description of decentralization plan across levels
 - B. Rationales and motives
 - C. Major reform-related activities to date
 - D. Organizational structure
 - E. Design
 1. Participation in strategy design
 2. Flexibility of design
 3. Support mechanisms

Outline of Decentralization Framework (continued)

- F. Educational functions in decentralization
 - 1. Finance
 - a. Budgeting, allocating, and spending of resources
 - b. Collection of resources
 - 2. Administration
 - a. Planning
 - b. Information and MIS
 - c. Administrative personnel deployment
 - d. Management and accountability
 - 3. Teaching and school direction
 - a. Teacher training
 - b. Teacher deployment
 - c. Conditions of service
 - 4. Facilities
 - a. Construction
 - b. Equipment and furniture
 - c. Maintenance
 - 5. Curriculum
 - a. Standards and parameters
 - b. Curriculum development
 - c. Textbook production and distribution
 - d. Instructional materials
 - e. Examinations
 - f. Structure
 - 6. Inspection and supervision
 - 7. Research
- G. Implementation of decentralization plan in the education sector
 - 1. Process
 - 2. Commitment
 - 3. Support
 - 4. Role of donors
 - 5. Mid-course corrections
- H. Effects of decentralization on the education sector
 - 1. Anticipated vs. actual implementation
 - 2. Evaluation and feedback
 - 3. Impact on education



I. General Background

This section attempts to identify the country's macro-level economic, social, political, institutional, historical and cultural context. The purpose is to try to link and contextualize the decisions and actions taken in the education system with broader factors and events occurring in the country and throughout the rest of the world.

A. *Environment and Context*

1. Past Relevant Reforms

What major political, economic, social events have occurred in the country? What has been the nature, background, and results of these reforms?²

2. Experience with Decentralization

Has the country previously attempted decentralization? What was the rationale for these reforms? Who initiated them, supported them, and resisted them? In what sectors did they take place? What happened during these experiences? Why did they succeed and why did they fail? Who gained and who lost?

3. Colonial Experience

If the country was a former colony, what pre-colonial indigenous systems of organization existed and how were these dealt with by the colonialist power? What were the dominant characteristics of the system put in place and left by the colonial system? How has the government responded to this colonial legacy?

4. Universal Enrollment Status and History of Enrollment Growth

When did expansion of the formal education system occur? What factors encouraged this expansion? What are the levels of participation? How does participation differ along gender, class, regional, ethnic, and other lines? In other words, what are the key issues related to access and equity?

5. Political Considerations

a. Political processes and participation

What is the level of political stability in the country? What are the patterns of participation? How are democratic processes viewed and interpreted? Which groups have significant political and economic influence in the country?

² These questions are particularly relevant given that "decentralization initiatives are most apt to be undertaken when extraordinary events or factors alter the normal calculations of political actors, prompting them to view the creation or strengthening of decentralized organizations in a more favorable light... . This line of argument differs from much of the recent comparative literature on decentralization, which concludes that governmental longevity and the absence of crisis enhance the effectiveness of decentralization (Schmidt 1989)."

b. Stakeholders

Who are the major stakeholders in the education system? Which groups have a vested interest in decisions that are made concerning the system? Which stakeholders have a voice in the decisionmaking process and which do not? In other words, what are their relative levels of power and spheres of influence?

c. Politicization of education

How politicized is the education system? In what forms has this politicization manifested itself? What are issues over which polarization has occurred? How do various stakeholders align themselves along these issues—what coalitions have formed?

6. Institutional Capacity

What is the overall institutional capacity of the country? How strong are the financial, administrative, management, and technical capabilities of the various actors (central government, local governments, NGOs/CBOs, private sector, others)? In addition, what is the level of infrastructural development in the country, particularly in terms of mechanisms for communication and transportation? What factors such as various hidden incentives, nepotism, corruption, influence the development of institutional capacity?

B. Rationale for Decentralization

What are various rationales being presented in the country for centralization and decentralization? Whose points of view are they? Who is pushing the reforms and why? Who is opposing the reforms and why? Who are perceived as the “winners” and the “losers” of the decentralization efforts?³

C. Sectors Involved

Which sectors (for example, education, health, or agriculture) are involved in decentralization reforms? Are they being decentralized at the same time or in the same fashion? Are the sectors competing with each other in any way over resources, special support, or other factors?

³ McGinn (1985) presents decentralization as grounded in viewing governments as complex systems of competing groups or factions, both within and outside of the formal system. Decentralization is sought not to increase participation for individuals in general, but to increase participation of certain individuals or groups. What changes is not the distribution of power but its locus.

II. Specific to the Education Sector

This section of the framework deals specifically with a country's decentralization efforts within the education sector.

A. Description of Decentralization Plan Across Levels

Along what levels are responsibilities for the various education sub-sectors—primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, non-formal—being divided? Why were they divided this way? What is the mix between public, private, and non-governmental institutions?

B. Rationales and Motives

What are various goals and rationales being presented for decentralization-centralization of education? Whose points of view are they? Where is the impetus for reform coming from? Who is pushing the reforms and why? Who is opposing the reforms and why? Who are the perceived “winners” and “losers” of the decentralization efforts?

C. Major Reform-related Activities to Date

What announcements and actions have occurred that might affect reform? What steps have been taken, if any, to smoothen the process of reform? Are other educational reforms occurring which might compete with or impede decentralization?

D. Organizational Structure

What is the structure of the system? How does the education system correspond to the general administrative structure? What are the lines and direction of reporting and accountability?

E. Design

1. Participation in Strategy Design

Who participated in the design of the decentralization-centralization strategy for the education sector? What mechanisms were put into place to facilitate the “process” of design?⁴

⁴The way in which a policy is developed affects not only its contents but also its image in the political arena, the backing of key administrators and other factors crucial to its implementation. Warwick (1982) offers seven dimensions as a lens for viewing policy formulation and its effects in a given time period, including the demand for a policy and the extent of foreign influence.

2. Flexibility of Design

Was any flexibility designed into the decentralization plan to facilitate rationalization of the system? Was any sort of sequencing planned that corresponded to the pace, priorities, capacities, resources, and/or incentives?⁵

3. Support Mechanisms

What mechanisms were designed to support the decentralization process, particularly in areas related to increasing equity (or reducing inequities) between regions? General decentralization plans often fall into this trap and end up supporting selected inequities while ignoring others altogether.⁶

F. Educational Functions in Decentralization

For each of seven main educational functions outlined below, four groups of questions can be asked:

(1) Where was responsibility for the function located originally; where was it intended to be moved to; where did it end up? What level of decentralization occurred i.e., devolution, deconcentration, delegation, privatization, deregulation?⁷ What capacities and resources were required to carry out the function effectively?

⁵ Rondinelli and Nellis (1986) identify some key hypotheses that underlie this idea of sequencing:

- *Scope.* "Small-scale decentralized programs designed for limited impact are likely to generate more positive and durable results than large-scale, sweeping organizational reforms. Programs, therefore, should be planned on a small-scale and expanded incrementally."
- *Simplicity.* "Abstract and complex planning and administrative procedures are unlikely to be implemented effectively in most developing countries and therefore decentralized programs should be kept simple, flexible and appropriate to the capacities of the organizations to which the responsibilities are being transferred."
- *Time Horizons.* "Decentralization requires a lengthy period of gestation before its benefits will be realized, and programs must therefore be planned for the long term."
- *Tutorial Planning.* "Decentralization programs, in which the first stages consist of closely supervised efforts to teach local staff and citizens how to handle new responsibilities, will be more successful than those that transfer large number of tasks or great responsibilities all at once. Programs should therefore be planned tutorially."

⁶ "Central governments often overestimate the revenue potential of rural local governments and underestimate the effect of inflation on central allocations to local governments. . . . Central governments also underestimate the competence of local government personnel. While the latter clearly lack the incentives to make decisions based on local circumstances, they do not necessarily lack the skills. However, local officials have little experience making decisions on the basis of rigorous analysis of information from the village level (DFM 1994)."

Sustainability requires establishment and institutionalization of national capabilities by providing organizations with training, technical assistance, and other services (Schmidt 1989).

⁷ The degree of decentralization can be examined along two lines: territorial space and degree. Territorial space refers to a transfer of authority to new or existing field offices, or to regional or local units (Hansen 1989). Degree of decentralization can be defined as follows (Rondinelli 1981):

- *Deconcentration:* handing some authority or responsibility to lower levels within the central government.
- *Delegation:* transferring responsibility for specific functions to organizations outside the regular bureaucracy, but still public (such as regional development agencies or parastatals).
- *Devolution:* creating or strengthening sub-national units of the government whose activities are outside the direct control of the central government.
- *Privatization:* transferring responsibility for certain functions to voluntary organizations or private enterprises.
- *Deregulation:* withdrawing industries or classes of commercial transactions from direct control or from policing.

(2) What were the rationale and objectives, if any, as to why a particular function was being either decentralized or centralized? Was there any attempt to link the move to a desired end objective such as equity, access, innovation, relevance, or sustainability?⁸

(3) What were the responsibility and capacity of key actors as they related to each of the functions? Did they have an increased decision-making role or greater implementation role with the transfer of responsibilities? What resources were accessible to the actors? Did they want to take on the additional responsibilities? What incentive structures guided the implementation of certain functions—were certain responsibilities the only things that actors stood to gain or lose or was greater money, power or prestige involved?

(4) How much change was targeted within organizations? Were the internal structures of various organizations decentralized as well? Were efforts made to democratize the decentralized organizations in terms of participation and decision-making?

1. Educational Function: Finance

a. Budgeting, allocation, and spending of resources

How are resources allocated and spent? What is the budgeting process? How does this process influence the way local government's use their resources and act?⁹

⁸ What each government's role should be for any service depends on a number of factors: the public good characteristic of the service; the spatial distribution of service benefits and costs; possible economies of scale in producing an activity; society's desire for homogeneity and consistency in that activity; and fiscal, administrative and technical capacity (Winkler 1982).

Dror adds that in order for reforms to be successful, a number of measures ought to be taken and, at times, these should be taken in a certain order of preference. They should involve careful consideration of the objectives and goals of the reforms, which may include questions of scope or boundaries; careful consideration of the character of the reform environment, the extent to which it potentially supportive of the proposed reforms and whether anything can be done about it, and finally questions of resources, funds expertise, time, instrumentalities, etc.

The mix of policies that are implemented or not implemented under decentralization are linked to factions within governments—which form of decentralization is imposed on a particular division or section of the education system depends on the projects and beliefs about what can be accomplished of the faction or coalition of factions that is dominant in that division (McGinn 1985).

⁹ If the center decides to encourage activity in a sector, directives are issued to that effect. Central government funds, made available in grants tied to the sector, may follow, but these are central government programs which may or may not reflect local interests and priorities. This dominance of central priorities, which includes allocation of financial resources throughout the country without regard to variable costs, discourages local politicians from structuring public services in light of local needs and resources....Furthermore, the process of collecting resources closely affects the priorities that are afforded to certain goals or processed. Local government dependency on central government funding and authorization gives local governments strong incentives to avoid confrontations with central government, and to do nothing that does not comply fully with central governments policies....Also, local demand for other people's money is practically, and understandably, unlimited because from the local perspective it is essentially free or largely so. This generates powerful incentives for local communities to build what will ultimately become understaffed, underserved, and underutilized facilities. In other words, perverse fiscal incentives, in the form of very weak, one-time matches that ignore recurrent cost issues, encourage people to waste scarce investment funds, or at the very least invest them in seriously suboptimal schemes (DFM 1994).

b. Collection of resources

What mechanisms have been created for the collection of resources? How much level of autonomy do lower levels have in collecting and keeping resources? How much capacity do lower levels have for contributing to the resource base?¹⁰

2. Educational Function: Administration

a. Planning

How are planning processes carried out? What type of planning approach is encouraged—highly centralized or strategic planning or some hybrid approach? What types of planning activities occur at each level? In particular, how much communication occurs about finance and how closely are the capital and recurrent plans linked?

b. Information and MIS

What types of information systems exist and what are the channels for disseminating the information? What are the primary sources of information? How is information used? What role does information play in policy formulation, analysis and assessment?¹¹

c. Administrative personnel deployment

How are administrative personnel hired, promoted, fired and transferred? What influence does the central government have over local personnel i.e., promotions, salaries, etc.? Can the central government transfer people to the regional level? Are the reporting lines to higher line ministries or to political counterparts? How powerful are non-professional forces, like nepotism, in influencing staffing decisions?

¹⁰ Diversifying sources of funding can also be strategically important for obtaining additional government resources for basic education. This may involve broadening the tax base, granting taxing powers and delegating financing responsibility to lower-level governments, and earmarking taxes for basic education.

There are various financing alternatives available for implementation: intergovernmental grants; immovable property transfer tax; land development tax; holdings tax; business taxes and fees; and voluntarism (Schroeder 1989). Without additional fiscal autonomy and an alteration in the incentives inherent in the system, local governments may simply be extensions to the already long arms of the central government with little real decentralization achieved.

¹¹ The lag between financial and other dimensions of decentralization hinders progress in two ways. First, because information tends to move vertically between communities and national or regional centers rather than horizontally (i.e., if it moves at all), a considerable amount of learning from experience remains inaccessible to villages. This slows the rate at which services spread to places that do not yet have them, narrows the range of available ideas that places with services can use to improve their quality, and undermines the ability of the state and donors to interact with communities as competent partners. Second, as an extension of this last point, the inability of villages to influence the central apparatus in forceful ways slows the process of institutional reform that we described above and, therefore, delays arrival of the day when all partners engaged in the production of public services establish realistic, productive, and mutually-beneficial modes of thought and action. The point of these questions is that it is important to recognize that there are few structures in place through which scattered communities can exchange ideas with each other and with agents of the center, or through which they can raise old and discover new questions and then search for individual and collective answers (DFM: Chad 1994).



d. Management and accountability

What are the various levels of management of the system? What provisions for accountability exist? What incentives are in place to encourage or discourage good management? How does the internal hierarchy and other cultural systems of management influence the ability to hold organizations accountable?¹²

3. Educational Function: Teaching and School Direction

a. Teacher training

How is pre-service and in-service teacher training conducted? Who is responsible for training, curriculum, etc.? Who sets the process for recruitment and enrollment of teachers?

b. Teacher deployment

How are teachers hired, promoted, fired and transferred? How are teachers assigned to new schools? How is deployment across regions handled?

c. Conditions of service (salary structure/qualifications)

How are career structures, certification requirements, salary levels, terms of service, and other factors determined?

4. Educational Function: Facilities

a. Construction

What is the process for constructing new schools? Who is responsible for initiating construction? Who is responsible for providing the materials and space? Who is responsible for building?

¹² In a decentralized system, local governments are accountable to both the donor and the local community for the use of intergovernmental transfers. At a minimum this requires reports to both central government ministries and the community on the use of funds and the performance of programs funded by transfers. Accountability is further enhanced if local citizens have adequate incentives, authority, management capacity and information. The following steps can be taken to improve local level systems of accountability:

- The central government should establish the legal framework required for citizen boards to function, including real decisionmaking.
- Citizen groups and their elected leadership should be given training on how to carry out their roles and how to assess financial and program management.
- The central government should provide reliable and timely information to grant recipients and local citizen groups on finance, expenditure, and performance of grant-funded programs.
- The central government should provide technical assistance to grant recipients to develop the capacity to manage the finances and delivery of services funded by grants in aid; financing for such technical assistance might be assured by earmarking a small percentage of total program funding for technical assistance activities.
- In general, grants in aid should require cost sharing on the part of the local community to instill a sense of community ownership and to provide stronger incentives for communities to monitor costs and the use of funds and for service agencies to perceive a linkage between performance and local revenue contributions (Winkler).

b. Equipment and furniture

Where does equipment and furniture for schools come from? Who is responsible for ordering, paying, producing and delivering them?

c. Maintenance

Who is responsible for the maintenance of schools? Who checks whether schools are being properly maintained? Who initiates the process of requesting maintenance? Who conducts the maintenance?

5. Educational Function: Curriculum

a. Definition, goals, parameters, standards

Who defines the mission of education and sets educational standards? What is the format for discussion, if any? Who is allowed to participate in the discussion?

b. Curriculum development

How is the curriculum developed? Who sets the priorities in terms of local relevance or nation-building? How closely are curriculum development functions linked with textbook, instructional materials, and examination functions?

c. Textbook production and distribution

How are textbooks written, produced and distributed? How closely are textbook functions linked with curriculum, instructional materials, and examination functions?

d. Instructional materials

How are instructional materials (chalk, blackboards, teaching aids) designed, produced and distributed? How closely are instructional material functions linked with curriculum, textbook, and examination functions?

e. Examinations

Who designs examinations and how are they administered? Do provisions exist for continuous assessments? How closely are examination functions linked with curriculum, instructional materials, and textbook functions?

f. Structure

Who defines the structure of the system in terms of grades, calendar schedule, levels? Who can initiate changes in the structure? How much variation is allowed to exist?

6. Educational Function: Inspection and Supervision

Who is responsible for inspecting and supervising schools and classrooms? How often does this function occur: how many schools are visited and how many times per year are they visited? What happens with the results of inspection and supervision visits?

7. Educational Function: Research

What is the role of research in the education system? How is educational research conducted? Who is involved in initiating and conducting research? Is there a link between research and curriculum development and other systemic improvements?¹³

G. Implementation of Decentralization Plan in the Education Sector

1. Process of Implementation

What was the process for implementing the decentralization plan? Was there a clear plan for implementation? Was a time frame for implementation pre-allotted? Was anyone specifically responsible for managing the implementation? What resources were allocated to support the reform? Was the implementation to occur nationally or on a pilot basis? Were all of the functions to be decentralized at once, if not how were the functions that would be decentralized first determined?¹⁴

2. Commitment to Implementation

What were the commitment levels of various stakeholders?¹⁵

3. Support for Implementation

Were any special provisions made to support implementation of the reform? Were all stakeholders clear about what was expected of them and what their roles would be during the implementation process?¹⁶

¹³ Research has traditionally been a highly centralized function that was conducted over very long periods of time and was very disconnected from the schools or the broader education system. By democratizing research, participatory action research (PAR) can help to breach some of the restrictive walls which the professional formalities of research have erected, and thus facilitate more effective reciprocal linkages between social inquiry and educational practice (Maclure 1993).

¹⁴ "In most cases, central governments initiated, introduced, and heavily publicized decentralization policies only to see them falter during implementation (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983)."

¹⁵ Commitment is an evanescent compound of belief, feeling, capacity, and the will to act. It manifests itself when officials have administrative discretion—they can act or not act, and they can act in this way rather than that. The true test commitment is not whether implementors execute a policy when their superiors force them to, but whether they carry out a policy when they have the option of not doing so (Warwick 1982).

¹⁶ The process of decentralization-centralization is often times very confusing as different organizations and groups have different interpretations of what they are supposed to do. It is particularly confusing for groups at the center such as the Ministry of Education who may think that decentralization means that they can abdicate their responsibilities. Processes of decentralization typically require the reorientation and strengthening of some organizations at the center (Schmidt 1989).

4. Role of donors

How did the donors support or influence the implementation process? What type of support did they provide? Were certain groups such as women, ethnic minorities, or the poor targeted in any way?¹⁷

5. Mid-course corrections

Were any mid-course corrections made? If so, what analysis fed into this process of corrections? Who initiated the correction process? Who had the power to initiate corrections? What was the process for doing so—how rigid or cumbersome? Were there any factors or mechanisms that prevented corrections from being made?¹⁸

H. Effects of Decentralization Efforts in the Education Sector

1. Anticipated vs. Actual Implementation

What was intended to happen and what actually happened? Why was there a gap in anticipated and actual implementation? What factors influenced the difference in results?

2. Evaluation and Feedback

What mechanisms exist for evaluation and feedback of the decentralization effort? How are these mechanisms built into the decentralization plan? Who is responsible for conducting the evaluation and feedback?¹⁹

Furthermore, there is a psychological aspect of decentralization which implies that power will be lost which leads to groups attempting to resist decentralization or that power will be gained which leads to some resistance in the form of paralysis (because the groups receiving power do not know what to do with it). Efforts should be made to educate and prepare groups for changes that come from decentralization.

¹⁷ Donors have approached decentralization from several different perspectives—UNESCO and the OAS are concerned about the incorporation of marginalized groups into the circles of decisionmaking; the World Bank appears to favor the introduction of market or quasi-market mechanisms; and USAID emphasizes vertical linkages along with the strengthening of local administrative capacity (McGinn 1985).

¹⁸ Planning must be viewed as an incremental process of testing propositions about the most effective means of coping with social problems and of reassessing and redefining both the problems and the projects as more is learned about their complexities and about the economic, social and political factors affecting the outcomes of proposed courses of action. Complex social experiments can be partially guided but never fully controlled. Thus, methods of analysis and procedures of implementation must be flexible and incremental, facilitating social interaction so that those groups most directly affected by a problem can search for and pursue mutually acceptable objectives. Rather than providing a blueprint for action, planning should facilitate continuous learning and interaction, allowing policy makers and managers to readjust and modify programs and projects as more is learned about the conditions with which they are trying to cope. Planning and implementation must be regarded as mutually dependent activities that refine and improve each other over time, rather than as separate functions (Rondinelli 1983).

¹⁹ It is extremely difficult to evaluate how well the decentralization effort is proceeding or has proceeded. Performance in the deconcentrated service and administrative units is poorly monitored by central ministries. Those units can thus be simultaneously understaffed and underworked (DFM 1994). Such situations, if not addressed fairly quickly, can lead to serious breakdowns in the education system.

3. Impact on Education

What has been the impact of decentralization on efficiency and responsiveness, on community participation, and on the quality of teaching and learning?²⁰

²⁰ Studies of centralization and decentralization have been overwhelmingly descriptive, formalistic, or episodic, often treating the spatial distribution of power as an end in itself. They fail to link the broader rationale for administrative reform to decentralization as a tool. In some cases, decentralization does not produce the impact that was intended, in fact, it produces the opposite result. Decentralization can result in widening inequality of resources given to schools in different localities because of disparities among communities. To remedy these potential increases in inequity, decentralization has to be linked to the targeting of additional resources from higher levels of government, particularly to female and marginalized populations.

Questions for Further Study

The following sets of questions are proposed for further reflection and study. These questions suggest some of the relevant issues that emerged during the course of this literature review that have not yet been fully explored in decentralization efforts.

Decentralization and the Broader Context

- ♦ Can decentralization of the education sector occur effectively within the broader context of national decentralization? How do we ensure sectoral as well as local specificity?
- What is the relationship between decentralization and democratization? Is democratization necessary in order for decentralization to succeed? If so, on what levels must principles of democracy be operational?
- ♦ What are the linkages between education decentralization and regionalization? Does it matter how the regions and sub-regions are divided i.e., across specific ethnic groups, languages, histories, etc.? What are the best mechanisms for supporting “equity” between regions and sub-regions?
- What levels of decentralization, if any, are best for meeting certain policy objectives (such as equity, access, quality, innovation, communication, or financing)? What are the trade-offs associated with each level?
- What laws, policies and systems of operation should be formalized or loosened (and at what levels) in order to support decentralization?

The Decentralization Process

- ♦ Are the “process” aspects associated with decentralization more important to producing improvements in the sector than the final outcome?
- ♦ How should decentralization reforms be sequenced (near term, medium term, long term) given competing conditions of equity and capacity, limited administrative and technical skills, or limited financial and other resource availability?
- The “process” of designing the decentralization strategy may be an important link to the success of decentralization efforts, for example who should be on the design team? What should be their mandate?
- How can non-traditional actors such as NGOs, communities and the private sector participate in decentralization of education to facilitate a broader conceptualization of education?

Questions for Further Study

- ♦ When decentralizing a system, how can the delicate balance between autonomy and accountability be established? What legal and procedural safeguards can ensure against undue intervention by the central government?
- ♦ How can governments think about the best financing strategy for decentralizing an education system? What special financing alternatives exist for the sector, particularly for meeting issues of equity?

Implementation

- ♦ What incentive structures need to be in place and which disincentive structures need to be removed in order to encourage better decision-making within the decentralized system and within organizations? How do certain culturally acceptable incentive structures (such as corruption, nepotism, or status) drive and/or undermine decisions and priorities within the decentralized system?
- ♦ How can different indigenous systems of governance and organization, such as hierarchy or consensus building, interact and affect decentralization of the formal sector?
- ♦ What effect does a culture of non-participation among the population have on the ability for innovations to take root in a country?
- ♦ What systems of communication are necessary for decentralization to occur effectively? What steps can be taken to increase levels of vertical and horizontal communication throughout the system?
- ♦ How should central governments increase their ties to local resources in order to deliver services and collect taxes?
- ♦ How can enhanced information flows to rural and urban populations strengthen accountability? How can national language newspapers, radio and television programs be used better to spread information and to create frameworks of accountability?

Monitoring and Evaluation

- ♦ Is it possible to define in normative terms what is improvement or creation of a “good” administrative system? How do we measure it i.e., are there established norms?
- ♦ How should a monitoring and evaluation system be used in the decentralization of a system? Can responsibilities of the government be shifted from control of management and financial activities to evaluation and stimulation of effectiveness?

Questions for Further Study

These questions represent some of the unknowns about education decentralization in Africa. If decentralization remains an objective for African governments and the donor community, the answers to these and the questions in the decentralization framework may help create plans that bring together an optimum, context-specific mix of decentralization and centralization reforms and, more importantly, improve learning for African children.

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Cheema, G. Shabbir and Dennis A. Rondinelli, eds. 1983. *Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*. Beverly Hills: Sage. Call Number: 350.0073 C515. This book is a collection of essays that review the variety of decentralization policies and programs that have recently been introduced in developing nations; examine the experience with implementing them; and identify the social, economic, political, and administrative factors that seem to influence the success or failure of decentralization policies. In addition, they explore alternative approaches to designing and administering decentralized development projects and prescribe ways implementation can be strengthened and improved. Relationships among decentralization, socially equitable economic growth, participation in decisionmaking, and administrative capacity are examined in each chapter. The authors draw on experiences from East and South Asia, South America, and East and North America. This book provides one of the best overviews of decentralization.

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zations in developing countries gradually rather than simply spending larger amounts of money to build various physical infrastructure for them. By designing and organizing projects to reduce uncertainties and unknowns incrementally, integrate planning and implementation, and use the acquired knowledge to alter and modify courses of action during execution, projects will become more effective instruments of learning that can make a greater contribution to development in the future.

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