United Nations
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SCHOOLING AND DECENTRALIZATION

Patterns and policy implications in Francophone West Africa

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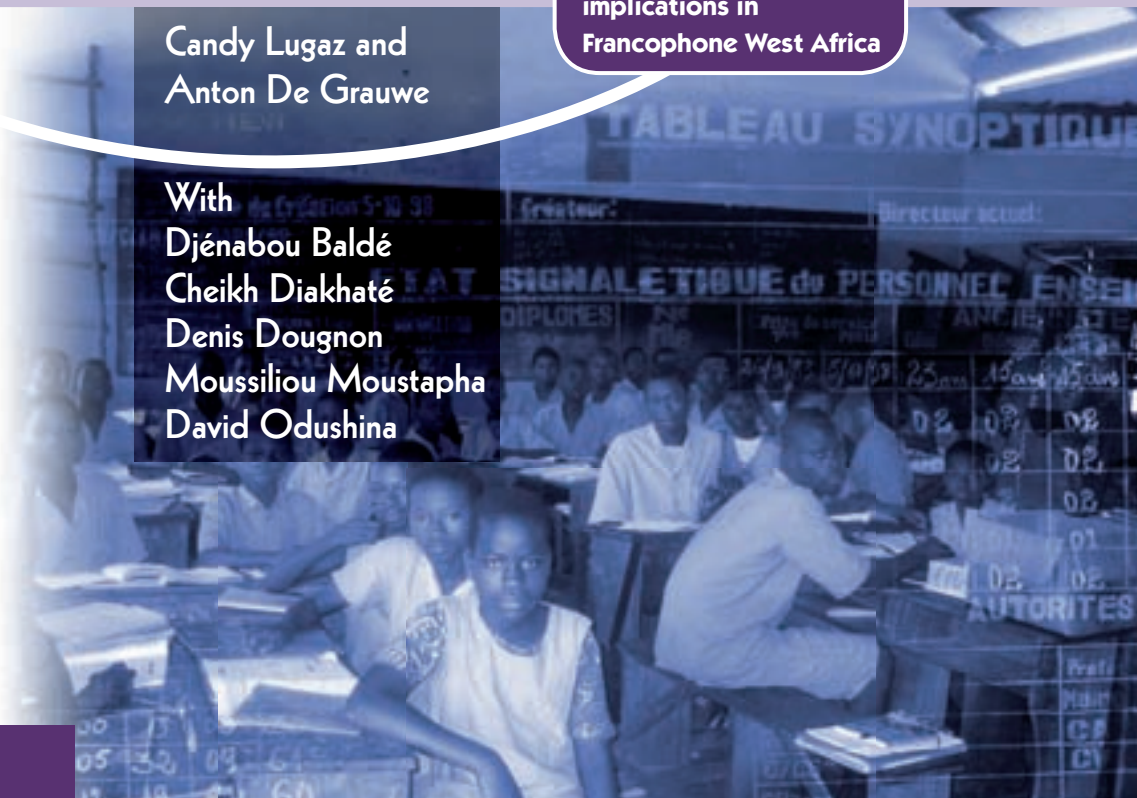

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Ministries of Education
Benin – Guinea – Mali – Senegal
Plan Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa

The publication costs of this study have been covered through a grant-in-aid offered by UNESCO and by voluntary contributions made by several Member States of UNESCO, the list of which will be found at the end of the volume.

For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the offices, schools, and actors covered by the field surveys are not cited in this book. In some cases, they are replaced by letters.

Original title: École et décentralisation
Résultats d'une recherche en Afrique francophone de l'Ouest

Published by:
International Institute for Educational Planning
7-9 rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris
e-mail: info@iiep.unesco.org
IIEP website: www.iiep.unesco.org

Cover design: IIEP
Typesetting: Linéale Production
Printed in IIEP's printshop
ISBN: 978-92-803-1348-2

Contents

List of abbreviations

AE	*Académie d'enseignement* (Regional Education Office)
APE	*Association de parents d'élèves* (Parents' association – PTA)
APEAE	*Association de parents d'élèves et des amis de l'école (*Association of parents and friends of the school), Guinea
BEPC	*Brevet d'études du premier cycle* (Junior secondary school diploma)
CAP	*Centre d'animation pédagogique* (Pedagogical advice centre), Mali
CCS	*Chef de circonscription scolaire* (School local office head), Benin
CDCS	*Comité Départemental de Coordination et de Suivi* (Departmental Coordination and Monitoring Committee), Senegal
CDD	*Comité départemental de développement* (Departmental Development Committee), Senegal
CEAP	*Certificat élémentaire d'aptitude pédagogique* (Basic teaching ability certificate)
CED	*Centre d'éducation pour le développement* (Education centre for development), Mali
CFA	*Communauté financière africaine* (African financial community – CFA francs)
CFEE	*Certificat de fin d'études élémentaires* (End of primary school certificate)
CLEF	*Conseils locaux d'éducation et de formation* (Local education and training councils), Senegal
CP	*Conseiller pédagogique* (Pedagogic adviser)
CPMF	*Conseiller pédagogique maître formateur* (Pedagogic adviser/teacher trainer), Guinea
CRD	*Communauté rurale de développement* (Rural development community), Guinea
CS	*Circonscription scolaire* (School district), Benin
DCAP	*Directeur du centre d'animation pédagogique* (Head of the pedagogical guidance centre), Mali

DCE	*Direction communale de l'éducation* (Municipal education directorate), Guinea
DDEPS	*Direction (directeur) départementale de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire* (Regional office of primary and secondary education), Benin
DPE	*Direction (directeur) préfectorale de l'éducation* (Regional office of education), Guinea
DSEE	*Délégué scolaire de l'enseignement élémentaire* (School delegate for primary education) Guinea
EFA	Education for All
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrolment rate
GF	Guinean francs
GPF	*Groupement de promotion féminine* (Women's Involvement Group)
IDEN	*Inspection (inspecteur) départementale de l'éducation nationale* (Local inspectorate/ inspector) of education, Senegal
IEF	*Inspection d'enseignement fondamental* (Basic education inspectorate), Mali
IFESH	International Foundation for Education and Self-Help
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
INEADE	*Institut national d'étude et d'action pour le développement de l'éducation* (National Institute for Research and Action for Educational Development), Senegal
INFRE	*Institut national de formation et de recherche* (National Institute for Training and Research), Benin
IRE	*Inspection régionale de l'éducation* (Regional education inspection), Guinea
ISFRA	*Institut supérieur de formation et de la recherche appliquée* (Higher Institute for Training and Applied Research), Mali
ISSEG	*Institut supérieur des sciences de l'éducation de Guinée* (Guinea Higher Institute for Education Sciences, Guinea
MEPS	*Ministère des Enseignements primaire et secondaire* (Ministry for Primary and Secondary Education), Benin

NFQE	*Niveaux fondamentaux de qualité et d'équité* (basic levels of quality and equity), Guinea
NGO	non-governmental organization
PPP	purchasing power parity
PPSE	*Projet de petites subventions aux écoles* (small subsidies to schools project), Guinea
SBM	school-based management
SMC	School Management Committee
WARO	West Africa Regional Office

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Foreword to the series

The conferences on Education for All which brought together the world community in 1990 in Jomtien and in 2000 in Dakar have given a new impetus to the search to offer all children, without discrimination, access to basic education. Especially important has been the commitment made at Dakar that all countries who present viable plans for Education for All will receive the necessary resources to implement them. It must be recognized however that, while many countries have succeeded in drafting well thought-out EFA plans, their implementation has had only mixed success.

Programmes with the scope of EFA require strong management at central and at local levels. In many countries, this is absent for various reasons. Personnel often lack the necessary skills; the distribution of responsibilities between levels and actors is in many cases unclear; the degree of autonomy at local level is very limited, which constrains initiative-taking, while support from central level is absent; accountability mechanisms are poorly developed.

One of the IIEP's major goals is to strengthen skills and improve practices in educational management. Several research programmes examine different aspects of management, including financial and personnel issues. This series of publications however addresses a more specific question: What relationship, if any, exists between management reforms and Education for All? The focus, and that of the accompanying research programme, is on reforms which have an impact on the distribution of responsibilities and tasks between different levels and actors in the education system.

The core conviction which inspires this research, is that an effective management system needs a central ministry which strongly supports local initiatives and allows for autonomy at regional, local and school levels, within a clear accountability framework. It therefore examines responses to fundamental questions such as:

- How are different ministries organized? What impact does this organization have on their effectiveness? How do they support and supervise regional and local education offices?

- How do various countries assign responsibilities to different levels and actors? How are these decentralization policies implemented: What structures are built up and what evaluation mechanisms exist?
- How do local education offices and schools function in a context of decentralization? What initiatives can they take and is their autonomy leading to higher access and quality, or is it rather a source of greater disparities?
- What management interventions have led to schools becoming particularly successful? How can these interventions be replicated throughout the system?

The series will therefore contain different types of publications, including ministry audits, diagnoses of decentralization policies, case studies on the implementation of decentralization and on the functioning of local offices and of schools; comparative analyses at regional level and monographs on specific innovations.

Mark Bray
Director, IIEP

Foreword

Decentralization has been a fashionable management reform for quite a few years. Countries with very different characteristics have adopted, in policy if not always in practice, this ambitious and complex reform. However, there are doubts and questions about its objectives and its impact. For example: Was it inspired by a desire to improve quality and efficiency, or by the need to share the financial burden and to comply with the preferences of international agencies? Will it lead to greater disparities and a heavier workload for local officials and school principals?

Against this background, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) coordinated a research programme in French-speaking West Africa to provide insight into the challenges facing local offices and schools in a context of decentralization. The programme was conducted in four countries – Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal – in cooperation with the ministries of education of these countries, a research institute in each country, which conducted the field surveys and the NGO Plan, which provided financial, practical, and intellectual support.[1]

In each country, a national team studied the functioning of three deconcentrated offices of the ministry of education and six schools. All the countries covered by this set of case studies had opted for a decentralization policy, and each was implementing this policy in its own way. The case studies thus offer an overview of how the policy is conducted in different countries, and their findings make it possible to assess the constraints on the implementation of the decentralization policy and to examine its impact on actors in the education system at various levels. The results are to some extent disheartening, as they show that there are many hindrances to the implementation of a decentralization policy. However, in that they reveal that successful innovations have taken place, they also offer some grounds for optimism and help to identify a few principles of good practice.

This volume presents the main conclusions of the research programme in four chapters, each focusing on a key theme in a decentralization policy. The four basic questions are:

1. Coordination was assured by the NGO Plan's regional education advisors (Fadimata Alainchar, followed by Sven Coppens).

- How is the quality of education monitored and managed in a decentralized system?
- What material and financial resources are available at local and school levels, and how are they managed?
- How do local offices and schools manage their teaching forces (recruitment, training, evaluation, promotion), and how much autonomy do they have in this area?
- What support do local authorities and communities offer the education system?

The introduction explains IIEP's interest in decentralization policies and how the research programme was implemented, presents the characteristics of decentralization in the four countries, and introduces the four themes. On the basis of the research, the conclusion makes recommendations for improving implementation of decentralization policies.

This publication is the result of an efficient and fruitful collaboration between IIEP and Plan, which we hope will continue in other research programmes. The book was originally published in French in 2006. Several additions have been made to this English version. IIEP has published all the case studies separately in four country syntheses, in French.[2]

Mark Bray
Director
IIEP

John Chaloner
Regional Director
Plan West Africa Regional Office (WARO)

2. Odushina *et al*. 2008, Baldé, B. *et al*., 2008, Diakhaté, C. *et al*., 2008, Dougnon, D. *et al.*, 2008.

Executive summary

Decentralization is a fashionable reform, adopted by many countries with different characteristics. Little is known, however, about its implementation at the local level or its impact on the functioning of schools and district education offices.

Against this background, IIEP coordinated a research programme in French-speaking West Africa to deepen our understanding of the decentralization process. The programme was conducted in four countries – Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal – in cooperation with the ministry of education and a research institute in each country, which conducted the field surveys. The NGO Plan provided financial, practical, and intellectual support.

In each country, a national team studied the functioning of three district education offices and six schools. At the end of the research programme, the following documents had been produced:

- 4 national diagnoses of the decentralization process in Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal;
- 12 monographs on the functioning of local offices under decentralization (3 per country);
- 24 monographs on the functioning of schools under decentralization (6 per country).

This set of documents offers an overview of how the policy is conducted in different countries, its impact on the functioning of district education offices and schools, and the challenges they face in this regard, as well as the innovative strategies introduced to overcome these challenges.

This study analyses the data collected during the field research, focusing on four main themes: quality monitoring, the management of material and financial resources, teacher management, and support of education by local authorities and communities.

Results are partly disheartening, indicating the complexity of implementing decentralization and the mixed results at the local level. But they also show that successful innovation is happening. They help to identify principles of good practice: complementarity between actors;

equilibrium between their mandate and their resources; reform of school supervision; and the need to counterbalance autonomy by an effective accountability framework. One principle is central: decentralization does not imply that the state is abandoning control, but demands a change in its role, towards more support and a stronger focus on equity.

Introduction

Decentralization is at present arguably the most popular policy within public service management, as the large number and wide range of countries to have adopted some form of decentralization (or at the least to refer to the policy in their plans and programmes) testify. Behind the popularity of this concept lies a wide diversity of actual policies. The implementation of these policies has led to much controversy, and these controversies help to explain the continued interest among researchers and policymakers. Before examining the reasons for IIEP's interest in the subject, we examine the motives leading countries to introduce decentralization.

The debate around decentralization in education

Why decentralize?

The contemporary prevalence of decentralization should not lead us to forget that many countries have gone through successive waves of centralization and decentralization. Most public education systems developed in a fairly informal, decentralized way, through a series of local initiatives. The construction of national public education systems, which formed a core part of the nation-building process, called for the strengthening of central decision-making powers (McGinn and Welsh, 1999, pp. 22-23). However, in the 1980s and increasingly in the 1990s, dissatisfaction with the educational and wider social record of the state led to efforts to transform its role, including the attempted redistribution of decision-making power (Helmsing, 2001, p. 2). This evolution, from local initiative to stronger centralized control to a sharing of power between central and local levels, is visible in long-established education systems in most European and Latin American and some Asian countries. But it also occurred in younger education systems, including ones imported from elsewhere.

Especially during their initial periods, colonial authorities showed little interest in educational development. This was commonly left to the initiative of religious groups, while in some countries the traditional educational institutions (which would now be called non-formal) continued to operate. When the independence wave arrived, the new states took control of their education systems and embarked on broad

expansion, crowding out or at times nationalizing the local or traditional education initiatives. When in the 1980s and 1990s the state in developing countries seemed unable to provide universal access or to guarantee quality education, arguments for a redistribution of power towards lower levels of government or private partners became stronger.

Consequently, the reasons behind the present trend towards decentralization in education are to be found less in purely educational or pedagogical arguments than in the wider political, social, and economic environment. While educational arguments are put forward in the official declarations, a number of other factors are worth highlighting, in particular concerning developing countries (Bray, 2007).

- The national government's lack of resources for social development leads to an increased demand for regional, local, and family contributions. One way of justifying such a demand is through offering these levels and 'partners' more say in decisions.
- Ethnic and regional tensions can be defused by allowing regions greater autonomy, in particular in activities that do not threaten national unity. This was the case, for instance, in Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Sudan.
- Several governments have attempted to satisfy demands for political democratization through decentralization, for example in Peru and Colombia. Grassroots involvement in school construction or teacher recruitment can function as a substitute for political participation at a national level.
- Decentralization implies in all cases a redistribution of power. Taking away power from groups who are considered too strong (teachers' unions, for instance) can be a forceful justification for decentralization, and was an important element in Mexico's move to decentralization.

In several countries, the introduction of decentralization policies has been accompanied by stronger control over some fundamental aspects of the education system, through the development of a core curriculum, the introduction of regular examinations, and a more effective central inspection system. Several authors have argued that education systems in New Zealand, Australia, and the UK have actually become more

centrally controlled (for instance Fiske and Ladd, 2001; Whitty *et al.*, 1998). A similar point has been made about the USA, where the federal government has traditionally left a lot of autonomy to the individual states but has recently strengthened its control (Stecher and Kirby, 2004). Some authors have identified the same pattern in China, where "the state has utilized decentralization policy to recentralize its power and authority through indirect control" (Wong, 2006, p. 55), by keeping "the ultimate decision-making power over a variety of functions carried out in the schools", such as curriculum and textbooks design, staffing control, and student recruitment through quota systems (Wong, 2006, p. 52). It is more difficult, though, to discern such central control in the least developed countries, where the central authority has few resources and tends to be rather ineffective. The level of involvement by the central authorities and their effectiveness are among the key factors distinguishing the more from the less developed countries.

Against this background, several authors[3] have argued that in many of the least developed countries, decentralization of public services, including education, has not resulted from an internal debate, even if it was believed that such a policy would lead to higher-quality services. Generally, there has been little pressure from local authorities and communities for a more participatory decision-making process. Rather, in many countries two forces combine to push for decentralization: external pressure from international development agencies and experts, and domestic political expediency in countries where governments are unable to organize or finance basic public services. This has led some authors to argue that "it seems that decentralization has been a tool in the hands of the African state, on the one hand, to obtain civil peace and, on the other hand, to regain the trust of international funding agencies" (Mback, 2001, p. 96).

This leads to three matters of concern. First, advocates of decentralization, and the governments that have heeded their advice, do not always give sufficient consideration to the specific conditions of each country. A policy that is sensible in one context might be ill-adapted and counter-productive in another. In some countries, the state is strong and effective; in others, it is weak and ineffective, especially in remote areas. Some countries are homogeneous; others are divided

3. Among others Bamberg (2001), Charlier and Pierrard (2001), Gershberg (1999), Helmsing (2001), Mback (2001), Ornelas (2000), Sebahara (2000), Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2004), Therkildsen (2000).

along ethnic, regional, or religious lines. Principals and teachers may be well-trained and benefit from high social status, or they may be poorly paid and poorly qualified. Policies need to be adapted to the different conditions, strengths, and weaknesses of each country, a consideration that risks being forgotten in the present consensus among policymakers that decentralization is the most promising way forward.

Second, several countries have adopted this policy without paying sufficient attention to the strategies needed to implement it. In many cases, the lack of effectiveness of the central state is offered as the main reason for distributing authority to districts, municipalities, and the like. However, the ineffectiveness of central authorities may remain a serious preoccupation under decentralization, for at least two reasons. One is that decentralization has to be a carefully planned process, otherwise the risk of disintegration and inequity is too great. Another is that although the mandate of the central authorities is reduced and the list of tasks to be performed somewhat shorter, these tasks are in no way less complex or less crucial, as recent studies of state reforms have proven (see for instance Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, and World Bank, 2003). In many countries, the legislation reflects a willingness to share authority and resources, but this has not always translated into efforts to reform existing structures, to strengthen information systems, to review career profiles, or – the greatest challenge – to change institutional cultures.

Third, the weakness of central authorities reflects the overall weakness of the state, which is felt at all levels and may even be more pronounced at the local than at the central level. There has been little research in developing countries on the functioning of local offices, but the evidence that exists indicates that, at present, not all local offices can assume the responsibilities assigned to them. In the specific area of school supervision, for instance, studies in several Asian and African countries (Carron *et al*., 1998; De Grauwe, 2001) have clearly demonstrated the inability of most local education offices to undertake one of their key tasks, school and teacher supervision. A case study of one district education office in Malawi (Davies *et al*., 2003) comments on the challenges faced by this office, often very practical ones but with far-reaching consequences for the effectiveness with which the office can fulfil its mandate. This lack of capacity within some local offices explains

why disparities in quality and access among districts and schools have increased in some cases. Unfortunately, decentralization policies have not given consistent attention to the need to develop the capacities and the professionalism of local education officers and school leaders.

The challenge, then, is to turn what are piecemeal and uncoordinated reform efforts into a global policy framework that distributes responsibilities and resources clearly and effectively among the different levels. Such a policy framework should focus on the needs and characteristics of the educational professionals at different levels, from the central ministry down to the school. It should at the same time contribute to lessening disparities within the education system and within society. Detailed field research on the ways in which local education offices and schools manage the decentralization process, their relationships in this situation, the difficulties they experience, and the strategies they adopt to overcome these difficulties, could be very useful in helping to develop this policy framework. While more attention has been given in recent years to the implementation of decentralization at the local level in developing countries,[4] and in particular at the school level, the need for more such research is widely recognized. Bjork (2006, p.1) in a volume on educational decentralization in Asia talks of "the dearth of studies that focus on the implementation of educational decentralization policies" and emphasizes the need for research examining the local level.

Against this background, IIEP launched a research programme examining the functioning of local education offices and of schools undergoing decentralization in four West African countries. We will begin by distinguishing the various forms of decentralization, then describe the objectives and methodology of the research.

Clarifying a complex reality

Most simply, decentralization refers to the "transfer of authority (and responsibility) for the financing or governance of schools to a subnational agency" (Kemmerer, 1994, p. 1412). However, as the existence of a wide range of terms indicates (de-concentration, devolution, delegation, school-based management, school self-governance, privatization, or charter schools), this concept embraces a complex, and at times confusing, set of policies. It is not our purpose here to explain in detail

4. Among others Bjork (2003), Davies, Harber, and Dzimadzi (2003), Gershberg (1999), Gershberg and Meade (2005), Mfum-Mensah (2004), Mukundan and Bray (2004), Naidoo (2006), Pelletier (2005).

the distinctions between these policies; several other authors have done so.[5] We only highlight some key issues that also help our understanding of the situations of the four countries on which our research focused, whose decentralization policies we will examine later.

The first distinction to be made is that between 'devolution' and 'deconcentration'. 'Devolution' implies the transfer of responsibilities away from the educational administration to elected representatives at regional or district level, such as the regional councils or district development committees. 'Deconcentration' refers to a shift within the administration from central to lower levels, for instance to district education offices. The rationale behind these two trends may be significantly different. Deconcentration is mainly a response to a rapid expansion in the numbers of schools and teachers. It is seen as more efficient if certain tasks are undertaken by officers posted closer to the schools, at regional or district level; however, these officers are still officials from the ministry of education. Education is considered too intricate a business to be assigned to non-professionals. This is called the 'professional expertise' argument. Devolution, on the other hand, finds its justification in a contrasting argument, that of 'political legitimacy'. Education is public business and should be under political rather than professional control, for at least two reasons. First, it is being financed by public funds, so it is only natural that the public, or its representatives, should have some say over how their funds are used. Second, schools have such an intimate impact on the lives of children that it seems self-evident that parents should have something to say about their functioning. And, as already mentioned, in recent years public confidence in the competence of professionals (civil servants) to manage education systems efficiently, and especially cost-effectively, has declined, a reflection of overall distrust in the effectiveness of the state.

There is a significant difference between these two trends in the level of authority of the decentralized actors. Devolution redistributes not simply responsibilities but also authority, while deconcentration redistributes responsibilities but within a tight framework that limits authority: "deconcentration reforms shift authority for implementation of rules, but not for making them" (McGinn and Welsh, 1999, p. 18). Although devolution and deconcentration might seem to be mutually

5. Comprehensive analysis of these policies was carried out by, among others, Abu-Duhou (1999), Bray (2007), Caldwell (2005), McGinn and Welsh (1999), Rondinelli (1981).

exclusive, many countries have implemented both policies at the same time, transferring specific responsibilities to district councils, such as school construction, and others, such as teacher recruitment, to district education offices. Where the distribution of responsibilities is unclear, conflict between groups of actors is difficult to avoid. But even where responsibilities have been more precisely defined, disputes can arise when proactive municipalities take educational initiatives that are not explicitly forbidden.

The debate around decentralization has gained in complexity in recent years because of the realization that the school as an institutional unit is key in ensuring educational quality. A growing number of studies[6] demonstrate that the management of the school, the relationships between the different school actors (principal, teachers, community), and the school's own involvement in defining and evaluating its improvement all have a profound impact on the quality of education. These findings contributed to shifting responsibilities to the school level in two ways: transferring responsibilities to school-level professionals, in particular principals, is generally called 'school-based management' (SBM), while giving authority to an elected school board with parental representation might be called 'school-based governance', a distinction first made by Caldwell (1998).

A final term needing clarification is 'delegation', meaning the transfer of a specific responsibility and authority to a particular body, which may operate at a central or local level. However, the powers "still basically rest within the central authority, which has chosen to 'lend' them to the local one" (Bray, 2007, p. 176). An examination board, for instance, will be in charge of preparing, administering, and correcting examinations. Other such delegated powers include teacher management, which may be in the hands of a Teaching Service Commission, or school inspection, which in England is taken care of by the autonomous Office for Standards in Education. Such bodies will generally be made up of professionals and benefit from a significant level of autonomy, which is believed to make them more effective.

6. We can quote, among others, Carron and Ta Ngoc (1996), Dalin *et al*. (1994), Heneveld and Craig (1996), Kandasamy and Blaton (2004), Pelletier (2005), UNESCO (2004).

The research programme

Objectives

Responding to the concerns related to the implementation of decentralization noted above, IIEP decided in 2001 to launch an international research programme. The architects of the research sought to

- analyse in detail the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among levels and actors in several countries;
- analyse the strategies developed to accompany the implementation of decentralization (such as capacity building, provision of information, financing procedures, community participation structures);
- assess the impact of management reforms on policy objectives, such as improving quality and lessening disparities;
- draw practical and conceptual lessons from intra- and inter-country comparative analysis.

Methodology

The research undertaken in 2002-2004 focused on West Africa, specifically Benin, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. West Africa was selected because of the recent increase in the scope of decentralization policies and the lack of research devoted to them. The existing rather unsystematic information indicated that the implementation of this sweeping reform would involve major challenges, particularly within local offices and schools. These four countries were selected because each had decentralization policies in place, with some differences in implementation methods and the duration of the reforms, but also profound similarities. Their move towards decentralization in the 1990s was influenced by the international policy climate and by advice from agencies such as the World Bank. At the same time, the legal framework concerning decentralization was inspired by policy in France (Charlier and Pierrard, 2001). This helps to explain why their actual policies are a mixture of different trends, as we will see further on. The stated determination of the governments of these countries to make a success of decentralization was another reason for selecting them. There were also practical reasons: IIEP had good contacts in all of these countries, and its partner, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Plan (formerly Plan International), took a particular interest in them.

Each country established a national team drawn from three sources: one or two staff members from the ministry of education, a senior researcher from a national institute, and the education programme officer of Plan. The reason for including the ministry was to increase the chances that the programme would influence ministerial structures and policymaking. In Guinea, the research conclusions were discussed during a one-day seminar with all regional and provincial directors at the beginning of the 2004/2005 school year. In Benin, following the research, an important policy change was made based on its findings: each local office was given its own budget and no longer had to depend on the regional office or on the goodwill of schools. The field research was undertaken by a national institute under the direction of an experienced researcher. The programme's objective was to use the research as a way of strengthening these institutions through close collaboration with their staff. The existence of such national institutes for education policy research and training seems to be a key factor in the success of a decentralization policy, which requires both regular assessment of the progress made and training of those charged with implementing the policy in the field. The collaboration with Plan was justified by the fact that this NGO was increasingly seeking to reach national policymakers, and thus was working not only with schools but also with local offices and municipalities. For IIEP, Plan was a most useful partner: it provided some financing, but more importantly it had experience at the local level and supported innovations in schools.

The research itself was structured in three main stages: the preparation of a national diagnosis, a study of the way local offices[7] function, and an investigation of the management of schools. The last two stages concentrated on the local actors in decentralization, namely local education offices and individual schools, using field surveys to gather information on how they function under decentralization, the constraints they face, and the innovations introduced to overcome those constraints.

7. Throughout this document we will use the same term, 'local education office', to refer to the offices that are the focus of our research, that is, those closest to the school. They are the *Circonscription scolaire* in Benin, the *Direction préfectorale* (or *communale*) *de l'éducation* in Guinea, the *Centre d'animation pédagogique* in Mali and the *Inspection départementale de l'éducation nationale* in Senegal. The geographical area for which they are responsible will at times be referred to as the district.

The research programme was conducted in a series of phases. First, in each country two teams were set up, a national team and a research team. As described above, the national team was made up of ministry officials, a representative of the NGO Plan, and an experienced researcher from a national institute. The research team consisted of this same experienced researcher and two other researchers from the same institute. The four institutes involved in the programme were the Benin National Institute for Training and Research (*Institut national de formation et de recherche* – INFRE), the Guinea Higher Institute for Education Sciences (*Institut supérieur des sciences de l'éducation de Guinée* – ISSEG), the Higher Institute for Training and Applied Research (*Institut supérieur de formation et de la recherche appliquée* – ISFRA) in Mali, and the National Institute for Research and Action for Educational Development (*Institut national d'étude et d'action pour le développement de l'éducation* – INEADE) in Senegal.

Each team prepared a national diagnosis reviewing the decentralization process in the education sector. The teams analysed structures, the responsibilities of the various actors in a few critical decisions, and evaluation mechanisms. A first technical workshop, held in Bamako, Mali, in May 2003, brought together the four teams to discuss the state of decentralization in the region and to prepare the surveys on the functioning of local offices.

In a pilot exercise in September 2003, the four principal researchers and the IIEP staff prepared a case study of a local office in Benin and its relations with municipalities and schools. The purpose of the exercise was to prepare for the field surveys of local offices by testing the survey tools (interview guides) and producing a first monograph. Similarly, each research team prepared a detailed case study of three local offices. Each team conducted a series of interviews with the director and staff from the local office, the regional or provincial education office, the local authority, a group of school principals, and representatives of the parent–teacher association. A second technical workshop, held in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2004, discussed the conclusions drawn from the research on local offices and prepared for that on school management.

A pilot exercise on two schools in Guinea was undertaken in which three of the four senior researchers participated. As the one from Benin was unable to take part, the senior researcher from Senegal later assisted the Benin team for a short time with its fieldwork.

Each team then prepared a case study of six schools selected from two of the three districts examined. In addition to completing their nine case studies (of three local offices and six schools), each prepared a brief summary of its main conclusions. IIEP then wrote a draft report synthesizing the results of the entire research programme. In the course of a policy seminar held in Cotonou, Benin, in July 2004, the teams presented their research results to policymakers from the West African region, representatives of the NGO Plan, and international agencies.

Through the technical workshops, pilot exercises, and other missions, the country teams and the IIEP maintained regular contact during the implementation of the programme and discussed the results of the research. Support during the conduct of the surveys and collaboration between the teams were encouraged.

By the end of the research programme a number of documents had been produced:

- 4 national diagnoses of the decentralization process in Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal;
- 12 monographs on the functioning of local offices under decentralization (3 per country);
- 24 monographs on the functioning of schools under decentralization (6 per country).

It should be emphasized that the purpose of this study was not to compare the implementation of decentralization policies in these countries, but to identify the challenges present in all four, which can to some extent be considered typical of French-speaking West Africa. The similarities between their educational administrations are more important than the differences. These commonalities concern especially their administrative structure and their institutional history. All were colonized by the French, and their administration remains influenced by the French model. They became independent around the same period and have over the last 40 years experienced a similar history: a period of rapid expansion of their public education systems followed by severe economic and financial difficulties, a period of structural adjustment, and more recently a commitment to Education for All (EFA) underpinned by the search for more sustainable financing strategies. Other common characteristics include the presence of different language and ethnic groups, high levels of aid dependency, and similar levels of social and economic development, on which the next chapter comments in more

detail. There are of course differences between them, for instance in geographical size, population, and ethnic make-up. However, these characteristics may not have a significant impact on the functioning of the educational administration. Political differences may be more important, and although all four countries are nominally democracies, their political cultures are different. We will briefly come back to these issues in the conclusion.

Selection of local offices and schools

The main objective of the research was to identify the major challenges facing the local offices and the schools, analyse the impact of these challenges on their functioning, examine the initiatives they adopt to respond to these challenges, and assess how the decentralization policies have transformed the education landscape at local level.

The research design had two implications. First, merely collecting statistical data or descriptions of human resources and materials was clearly insufficient. It was essential to visit the local offices and schools to meet the different actors, analyse their opinions, observe where and how they work, and try to understand the formal and informal rules governing their work. Ours of course was not an ethnographic study, but used qualitative research to test various hypotheses based on a previous analysis of the literature on decentralization and to put forward others as appropriate. Second, differences exist in each country, and between offices and schools. We could not therefore study only one office or one school and extrapolate to the rest. There is no such thing as a typical office or school. This does not mean that study of a few cases will never lead to overall useful and interesting lessons, since all the bodies concerned operate in the same political framework and within the same administration. Their local context, however, reveals different strengths and weaknesses.

Two decisions were reached in light of these research conditions. First, we were interested in a limited number of cases, chosen so as to represent the diversity in each country. In each we examined an urban local office and two rural offices, one of which was receiving specific support from Plan. We also carried out surveys in six schools in each country, varying on several criteria, particularly location, size, and number of non-civil servant teachers. The selection of local offices and schools studied was determined by the criteria listed in *Box 1*. Then, as noted above, we formed research teams with the national researchers,

who spoke the national language, knew the local traditions and customs, and thus had little difficulty in interpreting references to the political, social, and administrative context. The research teams spent at least two days in each office or school. They primarily carried out interviews with a large number of actors, such as the local education office heads and staff, school directors, teachers, parents, elected officials, aid agencies, and NGOs, and observed and gathered key documents, for instance those relating to their budgets.

Box 1. Selection criteria for local offices and schools

The study in each country covered

- one office located in an urban area
- one office located in a rural area
- one office supported by the NGO Plan.

In each country, three schools were then selected in each of two districts, the one with the urban office and the one with the office supported by Plan. The field surveys thus investigated 6 schools in each country, or 24 schools in total. Schools were selected on the basis of several criteria. The surveys were to cover primary schools, most of which were public, but in some cases community schools were included. The schools surveyed were to include

- one close to the local office and one distant from it
- one large and one small (in terms of number of pupils)
- one employing community teachers
- one supported by the NGO Plan
- one that had taken initiatives concerning its operation and management, which could prove valuable to the research project.

Background information on Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal

Basic data

The population of the four countries in this study varied from 8.5 million inhabitants in Benin to 13.9 million in Mali (*Table I.1*). The average annual population growth rate over the past 30 years (from 1975 to 2005) has been high, ranging from 2.5 per cent in Mali to 3.2 per cent in Benin. Life expectancy at birth was somewhat higher in Senegal (62.3 years) than in the other countries. The adult literacy rate was nowhere higher than 40 per cent; in Mali only one out of four adults was literate. The rural population remained relatively large in all four

countries. It is interesting to note the differences between the size of the rural population and the relatively small contribution made by agriculture to the economy. This was most evident in Guinea: 67.4 per cent of the population resides in rural areas, but agriculture represented only 12.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Guinea had the highest GDP per capita (in PPP US$), followed by Senegal, Benin, and finally Mali, one of the poorest countries in the world.

Table I.1 General statistics on Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal for 2005

	Benin	Guinea	Mali	Senegal
Population (in millions)	8.5	9.0	13.9 (2006)	11.9 (2006)
Annual population growth rate % (2006)	3.0	2.2	2.9	2.3
Annual population growth rate 1975-2005	3.2	2.7	2.5	2.8
Life expectancy at birth (years)	55.4	54.8	53.1	62.3
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older)	34.7	29.5	24.0	39.3
GDP per capita (PPP US$)	1,141	2,316	1,033	1,792
Agriculture as % of GDP	32.2	12.9 (2006)	36.8 (2006)	13.7 (2006)
% of population in rural areas (2003-2005)	60.2	67.4	70.0	58.6

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2007; UNESCO, 2007; World Bank, 2008.

Access to education has improved over the past few years in all four countries, in Guinea and Mali in particular (*Table I.2*). From 1999 to 2005, enrolment in all levels increased by 9 percentage points in Mali and by 17 percentage points in Guinea. The net enrolment rate (NER) in primary education shows that a significant number of children (almost a quarter of those of relevant age in Benin and half in Mali) were out of primary school. Not surprisingly, more girls than boys are out of school, though in Senegal the difference is fairly slight. For the three countries on which information is available, the net enrolment rate at secondary level is lower than 25 per cent. The survival rate to Grade 5 differs quite strongly: Benin has a survival rate of only 52 per cent, Mali of 87 per cent. In Mali there are on average 54 pupils for every teacher. The pupil–teacher ratio is slightly smaller in the other countries, but remains over 40. Public education spending amounts to 14 per cent of total government expenditure in Benin, 15 per cent in Mali, and 19 per cent in Senegal.

Table I.2 Key education data on Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal for 2005

	Benin	Guinea	Mali	Senegal
Combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrolment rate (GER) 2005, %	51	45	37	40
Combined primary, secondary, and tertiary GER 1999, %	45	28	28	36
NER in primary education, % girls and boys	78	66	51	69
NER in primary education, % girls	70	61	45	67
NER in secondary education %	17	24	---	17
Survival rate % to Grade 5 (school year ending in 2004)	52	76	87	73
Pupil–teacher ratio	47	45	54	42
Total public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure 2005	14	---	15	19

Source: UNDP, 2007; UNESCO, 2007; World Bank, 2008.

Decentralization policy in the four countries

A decentralization process has been under way for a number of years in the four countries, not only in education but also in sectors such as health and rural development. The policy has been adopted for a variety of reasons:

- a conviction among central decision-makers and the international agencies advising them that decentralized management is more efficient and less costly than traditional centralized control; many donors have provided considerable support for this policy;
- the democratization process, which has sometimes led to demands for greater participation of local actors and communities in decision-making;
- the budgetary difficulties of the central governments, which have also encouraged the development of decentralization.

We may also note that, given governments' inability to foster the development of social sectors such as education, local actors have been led by default to assume this responsibility. This is very clear at the level of individual schools, where school principals and communities have more independence in reality than the policy grants them in principle. For example, they may collect funds of their own to recruit and pay teachers independently of the central authorities.

Boxes 2a-2d present the main features of decentralization in the four countries.

Box 2a. Decentralization in education in Benin

Benin became independent from France in 1960. After three decades of a revolutionary and socialist regime, a new constitution was adopted in 1990, laying down the basis of a presidential and democratic regime. This took place within the framework of a National Conference on the political and administrative challenges of the country and the need for reform (*Conférence nationale des forces vives de la nation*). A new decentralization policy was gradually adopted and implemented in the country, with the organization of the first elections of local authorities in 2002 and 2003.

In education administration, responsibilities are shared between

- The Ministry for Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS) (*Ministère des enseignements primaire et secondaire*), which is responsible for defining policy. (In early 2007 this ministry was separated into two different ministries.)
- The Regional Office of Primary and Secondary Education (DDEPS) (*Direction départementale de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire*), which is responsible for implementing policy, defining the school map of the department, appointing teachers, and organizing in-service training.
- The School Districts (CS) (*circonscription scolaire*), which, among other duties, monitor the implementation of education policy in pre- and primary schools (through pedagogical and supervision visits), prepare lists of teachers for promotion to head teacher, allocate material resources to schools, supervise and monitor the construction of schools, and collect data.
- The schools: principals and the Parents' Association (APE) (*Association de parents d'élèves*) are together responsible for managing the funds transferred by the central level to their respective schools, which are mainly aimed at financing community teachers. APEs are composed of elected parents, as well as the principal and the head of village, both of whom are members by right.

At the local level, in 2002 responsibilities were transferred to local elected authorities – municipalities – in different areas, including education: they are responsible for building, repairing, and equipping schools. By law they should receive resources from the state to fulfil their mission.

Box 2b. Decentralization in education in Guinea

Guinea became independent from France in 1958. The country undertook important political and administrative reforms in the mid-1980s. A new constitution was adopted in 1990, enshrining the principles of a democratic state.

The transfer of responsibilities from the central to lower administrative and political levels took place in several phases. A reform of the administrative organization of the state was implemented in 1986, shifting responsibilities from the central level to lower administrative actors at the regional, district (*préfecture*), and sub-district (*sous-préfecture*) levels. Since 1990, the country has been organized around 8 administrative regions, 33 districts, 5 urban municipalities, and 341 sub-districts or rural development communities (*communautés rurales de développement*).

In the education sector, responsibilities are shared.

- At the central level, the Ministry for Pre-University and Civic Education (MEPU-EC) (*Ministère de l'enseignement pré-universitaire et de l'éducation civique*) is responsible for defining policy in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.
- At the regional level, the Regional Education Inspection (IRE) (*Inspection régionale d'éducation*), and the Municipal Education Direction for Conakry City (DEV-C) (*Direction de l'éducation de la ville de Conakry*) are responsible for implementing policy in their individual administrative areas.
- At the district level, the Regional Offices of Education (DPE) (*Direction préfectorale de l'éducation*), or in Conakry the Municipal Education Directions (DCE) (*Direction communale de l'éducation*), are in charge of supervising the implementation of policies concerning primary and secondary schools, through data collection and supervisory and pedagogical visits to schools.
- At the sub-district level, the School Delegate for Primary Education (DSEE) (*Délégué scolaire de l'enseignement élémentaire)* supervises primary schools.
- At the school level, principals are responsible for implementing the education policy in their respective schools, managing their school, supervising their teachers, and so on. The Association of Parents and Friends of the School (APEAE) (*Association de parents d'élèves et des amis de l'école)* is in charge of collecting fees.

Responsibilities were also transferred to elected authorities at the district and sub-district levels: municipalities and rural development communities were assigned duties in different areas, including education. More specifically, they are responsible for the construction and maintenance of schools and, at times, for the payment of salaries to teachers. They do not receive any resources from the state, and mainly rely on their own resources.

Box 2c. Decentralization in education in Mali

After several decades of centralization since its independence from France in 1962, Mali introduced institutional and administrative reform in 1991. A special department was set up to develop the policy of decentralization and support its implementation. The country is organized around the central level, the regions, the circles (*cercles*), and the municipalities. The administrative authorities in education at each level are as follows.

- At the central level, the Ministry of Basic Education is responsible for defining policy.
- At the regional level, the Education Academy (AE) (*Académie d'enseignement*) is in charge of implementing the education policy in the region and supervising secondary schools.
- At the circle level, the Pedagogical Advice Centre (CAP) (*Centre d'animation pédagogique*) is responsible for implementing the education policy in its administrative area, with focus on primary schools.
- At the school level, principals are responsible for running their individual schools, and also have administrative, pedagogical, and social duties.

Responsibilities in education were also transferred from the state to elected authorities. At the local level, they were given to the Circle Council as well as to the municipalities, which act at a lower level. These bodies are responsible for the construction and maintenance of schools, as well as for recruiting teachers in primary (municipalities) and secondary schools (circle councils). Municipalities can also adapt the school calendar and the curriculum according to local needs. By law they should receive subsidies from the state to fulfil their mission.

At the school level, School Management Committees and Parents' Associations participate in providing financial resources to their respective schools, and are also involved in its management.

Box 2d. Decentralization in education in Senegal

In Senegal, the policy of transferring responsibilities to lower administrative and political levels was undertaken in several phases. At the time of independence from France in 1960, the country was composed of seven regions. Laws adopted in 1972 and 1996 progressively gave responsibilities to local elected authorities. The territory is now organized around 11 regions, broken down into departments, districts, municipalities, and rural communities. The administrative authorities in education at each level are as follows.

- At the central level, the Ministry of Education is responsible for defining policy in basic education.

- At the regional level, the equivalent to a regional office (*Inspection d'académie,* IA), is responsible for implementing education policy in the region, focusing on secondary schools.
- At the department level, the Local Inspection (inspector) of Education (*Inspection départementale de l'éducation nationale*, IDEN*)* is in charge of implementing the education policy in its administrative area, focusing on primary schools, through supervision and pedagogical visits to schools.
- At the school level, principals are responsible for managing their individual schools.

Responsibilities in the field of education were also transferred from the state to local elected authorities. The municipalities and rural communities receive subsidies from the state to act in nine specific areas related to education, including the construction, equipment, and maintenance of pre- and primary schools, and the recruitment of non-teaching staff.

The SMC and Parents' Associations are involved in the running and management of their respective schools. The SMC is composed of representatives of the teaching staff, parents, pupils, and members of the community. It is responsible for managing the funds received from the state within the framework of school improvement plans. Parents' Associations are composed of elected parents and the school principal. They collect and manage school fees.

In all four countries, decentralization of education is a combination of four quite different, although at times complementary, trends. First, a number of responsibilities in basic education are devolved to local authorities (generally municipalities or village councils): this represents devolution. In Senegal, the central level in principle transfers funds to these local authorities to enable them to assume responsibility for nine areas, including construction, equipment, and maintenance of pre-primary and primary schools, recruitment of support staff, and several tasks related to the eradication of illiteracy. In Benin, where municipalities were only introduced in 2002, they are responsible for the construction, equipment, and maintenance of primary schools. In Mali, such municipalities had existed for more than a decade and are in charge of education in their area. Policymakers expected that in the future they would manage teachers currently being recruited by communities. The corps of community teachers would therefore disappear, being incorporated into that of municipal teachers. This devolution trend is least visible in Guinea, partly because that country has not seen the same degree of democratization as the other three.

A second trend is that of deconcentration: widening the role of regional and local education offices and offering them a greater say in certain decisions, for example concerning the use of their budget or the appointment of principals. This devolution of authority is most evident in Mali, where there has been a major reform of the district structure. The former inspectorates have been transformed into pedagogical advice centres (C*entres d'animation pédagogique*, CAP), and they have a new mandate: to provide assistance and support. They are quite well staffed and work in new, fairly well-equipped offices. The official regulations offer the head of the CAP a much bigger say than before in the appointment of school principals. In the other countries, the reform has not been taken so far. Efforts have been made, however, to increase the efficiency of local offices, either by ensuring that more resources are available or through the creation of a professional corps of pedagogic advisers, as is the case in Benin.

In a third trend, less prevalent in the legislation than the two previous ones, schools are allowed somewhat more autonomy in resource management. A case in point is teacher management, the principal now having a somewhat increased role in teacher evaluation. A reform introduced in Benin is probably more significant: since 2001/2002, funds have been transferred directly from the central level to schools. In Guinea, a step was taken in the same direction in the mid-1990s, when a project was launched to give selected schools access to a fund allocated to financing proposals for improvement. More significant than these 'official' amendments, however, are the changes on the ground. To cope with the shortage of funding and teachers, principals recruit teachers from the community, paying them small stipends, and ask parents to support the school financially through PTA funds and other contributions.

A fourth and less obvious trend is enhancing the powers of communities, parents in particular. Although bodies representing the community vis-à-vis the school are found almost everywhere, they are characterized by lack of representativeness and limited involvement in school affairs, with the result that they have only rarely led to real participation by the community and have failed to strengthen its powers. This participation is, however, commonly announced as an objective in policy statements, and in some cases, particularly when NGOs have made the issue one of their priorities, relationships between school and community have become stronger and more balanced.

In this context, the role of the state changes: instead of being the organizer of the education system, it becomes a regulator of the various actors involved. But its regulatory power is sharply limited by lack of resources and skills, detracting from the credibility of public officials. Planning also takes on a new look: school mapping, the traditional tool of the state as organizer, is transformed from an *a priori* planning tool to a tool for *a posteriori* negotiation and regulation. Observance of the school map depends more on the power of the negotiating parties than on decrees and laws. At the local level, some actors have much more negotiating leverage than those representing the state and its interests.

What this book will discuss

This book summarizes the main results of the field research. In view of the variety of information gathered during the surveys, it focuses on four main themes regarded as key to the implementation of a decentralization policy.

Quality monitoring

Improving the quality of education is regularly presented as a reason for decentralization. Effective quality management is considered to be possible only at a level close to the school, by actors in regular contact with teachers. In the real world, however, do inspectors and principals concern themselves with monitoring and managing quality? Do they have authority over and credibility with teachers? Are they not overloaded with administrative tasks? Management means taking decisions based on observation, but local actors may lack the resources and the power to take such decisions.

The case studies illustrate these constraints. At the same time, they examine initiatives taken by countries or by specific schools to strengthen quality monitoring and to innovate in this respect through reform of inspection and of support to teachers. These innovations, which bring monitoring closer to the school level, have proven their effectiveness and thus raise a number of questions. For instance, could such innovations serve as the core of a broader reform of the mandate of local offices and schools, assigning to the former the tasks of managing and driving the system and to the latter the task of pedagogic supervision?

Financial and material resources

A key principle of any effective decentralization policy is that the responsibilities transferred from the central to the local level should be accompanied by the financial and material resources needed to exercise them. In a number of countries, however, it seems that the lack of resources was a motivating factor for the launch of the decentralization policy: in other words, decentralization was implemented under difficult financial conditions.

The monographs stress the inadequacy of the financial and material resources at the level of both local offices and schools, which results in weak strategic planning and recourse to other funding sources. In every case, moreover, the lack of transparency concerning these funds was criticized, as their management is entirely in the hands of the local office director or school principal, and other officials, teachers, and parents are not kept informed. The question then is how to develop a framework of accountability for those who manage these budgets, how to monitor the use of funds, and how to provide incentives for their efficient use.

Teacher management

Teachers are the primary guarantors of educational quality. When resources are scarce, the human factor takes on overriding importance. It may be asked whether a decentralization policy that maintains centralized control of this human factor is not a contradiction in terms. Various arguments are advanced about local versus central teacher management. The local management arguments include the fact that teachers belong to and have ties with the local education community, while an argument often made for central management is that it preserves equity in the recruitment process and wage differentials.

The case studies show that management (recruitment, deployment, evaluation, and promotion) of teachers with civil servant status is centralized in all four countries. The existence of several other categories of teachers (volunteer, contract, and community teachers), many of whom are financed by sources other than the central government, has quietly led to decentralized management of these teachers. This leads to a second question: Can such decentralized management be used as a basis for reforming the entire teacher management system? What are the benefits and risks of leaving teacher recruitment and promotion in the hands of local inspectors or school principals? How can the central government

exert some control over this process without underwriting the salaries of these groups?

Support from local authorities and communities

In the education sector, decentralization seeks in particular to increase participation in local educational management by actors who are not education professionals, such as local authorities, parents, and communities.

Decentralization has created or strengthened elected authorities at the local level, the best known being municipalities and rural communities. In many countries, and particularly in these four, there are associations and committees that represent the community and parents. These organizations hold the potential to provide considerable support – financial, material, and human – to the school system. The case studies show, however, that relations between these local actors and local offices or schools can bring conflict as well as benefits.

The case studies also reveal the complex relationship between local education offices and local government. In view of the elected officials' lack of experience in education, the local office is sometimes considered the 'trainer' or 'technical arm'. When the local office, with its professional experience, supports the local authorities in exercising the responsibilities transferred from the central level, the collaboration is considered satisfactory. However, the professional legitimacy of the education offices sometimes runs up against the political legitimacy of local elected officials, in which case their relations become considerably more conflict-ridden. The central authorities attempt to establish dialogue mechanisms between the two, but whether they are actually implemented depends more on the political will of elected officials than on the legal framework.

The four chapters that follow discuss these themes in detail, referring systematically to the monographs on local offices and schools. The heart of this research in fact lies in the fieldwork. The interviews conducted with local education actors made it possible to gather a rich base of information on the implementation of decentralization. In our analysis we will regularly cite key remarks by the actors encountered during the

field research.[8] The main objective is to make the text livelier and to allow direct contact with the actors, whose opinions and attitudes may thwart reforms or may guarantee their success. The obvious risk of using such quotations is that they could be interpreted as merely anecdotal, but their integration into a well-thought-out and well-argued analysis that also draws on other data transforms them into supporting data.

Each chapter ends with a summary and some main conclusions. The final chapter focuses on two questions that underlie the entire research programme: Which principles should guide the implementation of a decentralization policy? What initiatives or innovations in these four West African countries can be a source of inspiration for other countries undertaking decentralization reforms?

Readers seeking a quick overview of the research conclusions can simply read the four conclusions and the last chapter, where they will find a summary of the essential points.

It is important to note that the analysis does not address two important questions on which the data gathered do not cast sufficient light. First, it is difficult to compare the impact of decentralization on schools across the four countries, as there are few explicit differences between them with regard to the formulation of their policies and, more importantly, to their implementation. In any case, our objective was to enhance knowledge about the challenges faced in this group of countries by the local offices and schools in general. Second, the question of inequities, already mentioned, is crucial to all debates about decentralization. Our research did not cover enough cases to permit well-founded judgements on this issue, although some data were found that do indeed show the risk of a deterioration of equity. The conclusion will briefly come back to this question.

8. The text therefore contains many quotations, sometimes directly from the actors who were interviewed, at other times from the national diagnoses and from the case studies. Some of the latter quotations contain excerpts from interviews with actors, which explain the use of double quotation marks. Where the source of the quotation is evident, we do not indicate it separately.

Chapter 1

Quality monitoring

When we visit a school, we want to arrive before the principal or teacher. But we often have a breakdown half-way and are passed by the very person we wanted to inspect.

(pedagogical adviser, Benin)

We're glad to be rid of that inspector who sleeps in his car just outside the village so he can surprise a teacher or principal at 7 a.m. the next morning, when they've had no notice of his coming. Enough of the policeman at school!

(school principal, Mali)

Quality monitoring is a key part of the mandate of local offices and school principals. Under decentralization this role generally becomes even more important, as was indeed the case in the four countries studied. But for various reasons, these actors rarely manage to attend fully to this task, even though it is considered a priority. Innovations are under way to address the problem in some of the countries, reflecting a change in the way tasks are shared. Most of these innovations emerge at local level at the initiative of local offices or school principals, illustrating the autonomy they enjoy with regard to quality monitoring.

1.1 Monitoring by local offices

Quality monitoring is one of the key tasks of local education offices. Being responsible for implementation of education policy at local level, they ensure that schools apply the policy properly, primarily through inspections and pedagogic supervision. In theory, monitoring should be based on a variety of activities, including collecting and analysing statistical data and holding meetings with principals and teachers. All 12 local offices covered by our research collect statistics, but seem to use them only rarely for strategic purposes, that is, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their education system or to set priorities. One exception was found in Benin, where at the initiative of an NGO, the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH), some local offices produced indicators allowing them to compare their performance with that of other offices and to monitor their progress towards their own objectives.

The regularity of meetings with principals and teachers varies from one country or local office to the next. In some cases – notably in Benin, as we shall see below – their primary purpose is to monitor and improve quality, but in general they are simply informational meetings in which the agenda is filled with administrative matters. In reality, quality monitoring is conducted primarily, if not exclusively, through visits by inspectors and pedagogical advisors.

Monitoring through inspection visits and pedagogic support visits

The actors interviewed in most of the field studies brought up the distinction between these two types of visits. The distinction is fairly clear when visits are carried out by two different people, as in Benin and Guinea. In Benin, as both the head of the local office and the principals pointed out, inspection visits are different from pedagogic support visits:

> They are always assessed by a mark and an assignment decision, the local office head being, in this respect, obliged to make a proposal and report it up the line. The advice given to teachers is mandatory ... In contrast, the purpose of pedagogic support visits is to evaluate the teacher's work and give advice. It is continuing education. The pedagogic adviser (conseiller pédagogique – CP) has no decision-making power. Their work is supplemented by school principals in Pedagogic Unit meetings.

The distinction is less clear when the same person is responsible for both inspection and teacher support, as in Senegal. In Mali, as we shall see, the concept of inspection has given way entirely to that of pedagogic support.

Inspection visits

In theory, an inspection visit may be concerned either with the operation of the school as a whole (what would be called an 'audit') or with the performance of the principal and teachers. None of the four countries studied has school audits; inspection visits are concerned with the staff members. Inspection of the principal does, however, give some notion of how the school functions as a whole, since it may also involve examining the financial and material management of the school. When the inspection visit focuses on teachers, its aim is to examine how they teach, handle the class, and fill in administrative documents such as attendance and absence sheets or report cards.

Those inspected may or may not be informed of these visits in advance. At a local office in Benin, initially the days of the CPs' visits

were set and known by the teachers. As this practice soon showed its limitations, the choice of dates for the CPs' inspection visits was left to the discretion of the CPs. This strategy now seems to have had the desired effect, as "teachers have understood that they can now be surprised at any time by the arrival of the CPs and make sure they are up to date to avoid criticism" (case study, Benin). Interestingly, CPs' visits, which are supposed to focus on providing support and advice, are interpreted by teachers as inspections, as if any visit by a superior, particularly when not announced in advance, is in the nature of an inspection. In Guinea, those inspected are in principle informed of inspection visits in advance.

Whether teachers or principals are informed of an inspection visit will increase or reduce their apprehension about it. According to a school principal in Mali, "We're glad to be rid of that inspector who sleeps in his car just outside the village so he can surprise a teacher or principal at 7 a.m. the next morning, when they've had no notice of his coming. Enough of the policeman at school!" Moreover, the infrequent timing of inspections – a point to which we will return below – can only increase these fears: teachers in Senegal admitted that they "were afraid of inspectors, because they see them only rarely".

Inspection visits almost always follow the same pattern. They generally include three main elements: observation of a teacher's course preparations, observation of his or her performance in class, and an evaluation session. One-day visits in which all teachers in the school are inspected sometimes conclude with a session evaluating the entire visit, attended by the inspectors, the school principal, and all the teachers.

Traditionally followed by the assigning of a mark to the principal or teacher inspected, the visit has an important role in the promotion process. This is more specifically the case in Senegal. In Benin, only those inspection visits conducted by the head of the local office – of which there are fairly few – can result in assigning a mark. The pedagogic advisers interviewed regret that this is the case. One of them stated: "This is a problem in terms of the effectiveness of our work because teachers attribute absolutely no importance to classroom visits that are not assessed by a quantitative mark and thus have no impact on their careers. ... We CPs do not exist in the mind of Benin's government." The government of Benin is aware of this problem and wants to strengthen CPs by creating a professional corps of pedagogic advisers, though without giving them the power to assign marks.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that when inspection has an impact on the teacher's career – as in Senegal and Benin – the mark given influences the teacher's reaction to the inspection. The mark is primarily regarded as a tool for evaluating teachers, and the inspector as a "policeman", a term that came up repeatedly in teachers' comments. Teachers are all the more opposed to the importance of this mark because they consider it to be clearly artificial. In Senegal, one of the teachers interviewed thinks that the inspection method for teacher trainees should be changed: "In a one-day visit, they want to make a judgement on a teacher's aptitude or lack of it, which is a bit pretentious. A more objective method is needed."

Inspection visits also aim at training the person inspected. Each session thus theoretically ends with an evaluation of the teacher's performance, which he or she can then draw on to make improvements. In many cases, the inspectors stated that they intervened during a teaching session they were observing, "chalk in hand", in order to help the teacher teach the lesson.

In some cases, this training objective seems to have taken precedence over that of assessing and promoting the person inspected. In Guinea, the mark given after inspection seems to be perceived much more as a means of motivating the teacher to improve. In several cases, inspectors stressed that "inspections have a positive impact on teachers, as giving marks pushes them to perform better". In these instances, however, the mark given after the inspection does not have an impact on the teacher's career. Some teachers in Guinea regret this: "We would like those who distinguish themselves during inspections to be rewarded since, as we see it, inspections should have two objectives in view: improving teachers' work and advancing their careers"; "Inspectors have little or no decision-making power. Rather, their work is more concerned with providing advice and addressing the shortcomings of teachers and principals in pedagogic and administrative matters as well as in their mastery of curriculum content."

Pedagogic support visits

The ineffectiveness of inspections as a tool for monitoring and control, owing to their irregularity and superficiality, induced Mali to introduce a radical change in the local education office's quality monitoring mandate and to emphasize the developmental aspect of the visits. In Mali's official terminology, the concept of inspection has

disappeared, being replaced by that of pedagogic supervision (*Box 3*), although in daily usage teachers and supervisory personnel still refer to inspection visits. The title of the local education office was also changed, from 'Inspectorate' to 'Pedagogic Advice Centre'. The political democratization of the country strengthened teachers' demand for such changes.

Box 3. The replacement of inspection with close pedagogic supervision in Mali

"Inspection ... has undergone a notable change recently: namely, its reorientation from terrorism to supervision, support and advice", in the words of one school principal. "School principals and teachers are no longer afraid of supervision, as it is no longer for the purpose of assessment but for providing assistance, without punitive results for those inspected."

"The education system has become more democratic and the basic education Inspectorate (*Inspection d'enseignement fondamental* – IEF) has become the Pedagogic Advice Centre (*Centre d'animation pédagogique* – CAP). The CAP director is first and foremost a leader who assists, advises, and negotiates. When CAP directors talk about the results of past inspections, they are speaking of those that took place during the time of the IEFs. They seem to feel some regret about the changes, as under the current scheme the CAP directors lose much of their authority ..."

"With the disappearance of the IEFs and the creation of the CAP, inspection *per se* has disappeared. Considered traumatizing for teachers, it has been replaced by close pedagogic supervision and training-oriented supervision. Teachers and school principals agree with this approach as far as civil servant teachers are concerned."

"Close pedagogic supervision is done in at least one school per week. It is carried out by the CPs and the CAP director. The aim is to support school principals in school management, strengthen cooperation between teachers and the CAP, help to improve the performance of principals, and help the staff to master teaching methods, use teaching materials rationally, and encourage team spirit. The school principal can be associated with this exercise, and in theory is supposed to be so associated when it concerns teachers at his or her school. The qualities required of the school principal, the CP, and the CAP director to ensure good close pedagogic supervision are mastery of teaching methods for the various subjects, mastery of monitoring tools, being communicative, polite, and discreet, being objective in terms of judgement, and having initiative."

Source: Dougnon *et al.*, 2008.

It can be deduced from the field surveys, however, that this reform is not yet perceived as such by all teachers, for three reasons. First, the process is just getting under way. Second, changing inspectors' working methods will require more than simply changing their title and job description. Last, visits by supervisory personnel are so rare that, for a number of teachers, the last one they remember dates from before the reform.

In the other three countries, the local office handles not only inspections but also pedagogic support visits, which are not marked and whose exclusive purpose is training. They are particularly useful for teacher trainees, community teachers, and contract teachers, whose level of training is very often inadequate (see below). School principals and teachers are generally in favour of such pedagogic supervision, which is mainly focused on training and free of any idea of assessment. In Benin, pedagogic advisers reported that they were at first perceived as "policemen", mainly by community teachers. The latter subsequently came to see their visits in a different light: "It's good because it helps all teachers be on top of things every day."

The main criticism of pedagogic support visits is usually their lack of regularity. In addition, some teachers expressed a preference for supervision by the school principal, who is closer to them and thus more aware of their pedagogic needs than the inspectors and pedagogic advisers: "The supervision provided by the principal fills in the gaps. It is more useful than that given by the other actors; the principal provides daily supervision, while that of the others is occasional" (Senegal). In other cases, these two sources of support are considered complementary.

Actors responsible for monitoring

Generally, the director of the local office is personally involved in school visits, being the only person who can give a mark. The director may be accompanied or replaced by other members of the local office, whose main task is to inspect and advise teachers.

In Senegal, each inspectorate must have a 'pool of inspectors' to handle inspection and teacher supervision visits, in addition to the director of the local office.

In Guinea, it is the pedagogic adviser/teacher trainer (*conseiller pédagogique/maître formateur* – CPMF), sometimes accompanied by the heads of the local office's pedagogic sections, who carries out these

visits. Occasionally, visits may be conducted by the higher devolved level (the regional education inspectorate or city education department), either jointly with or at the same time as the local education office. This situation was criticized by a member of one local education office: "For both the local education office and the regional inspectorate, what staff have called a 'duplication problem' arises: the inspectors from the regional inspectorate are in the field at the same time as those of the local education office, carrying out the same tasks of monitoring and evaluation of teachers and principals. In the eyes of the interested parties, this cannot favour decentralization."

In Mali, the local education office director and a fairly large number of pedagogic advisers (*conseillers pédagogiques* – CPs) are in charge of pedagogic supervision of schools and teachers.

In Benin, "only the head of the local office can carry out inspections that may lead to a mark. The CPs only carry out classroom visits and produce post-visit reports that contain only comments, not marks." It should be noted that in Benin the state seems to have recently become aware of the importance of the role played by the CPs, as it decided to create a professional corps of CPs, qualified through a competitive exam.[9]

The number of staff members available at local education offices to carry out inspection and pedagogic supervision varies greatly from country to country. In Mali, each office is well staffed, with some 12 CPs. In Senegal there are very few, while in Benin the number varies fairly widely from one school district to another.

The impact of monitoring

The opinions of principals and teachers on the usefulness and impact of inspection visits and pedagogic support are somewhat mixed. They feel the visits are needed and are not at all opposed to the concept, but they are dissatisfied with the way they are conducted.

> What must be regretted and what was stressed by the administrative staff and even principals is that, with the exception of remediation and other pedagogic support provided, teachers more or less feel that these inspections serve no purpose. Moreover, they believe that certain teachers may receive a poor evaluation during inspections and nevertheless gain promotions

9. This corps was fully created by mid-2004.

> afterwards, while others are not promoted despite having had very positive comments. (case study, Guinea)

In these instances, inspection not only fails to bring improvements in teaching practices (an ambitious objective, to be sure), it does not even have an impact on teachers' careers.

There are a number of reasons for this observation, which is shared by many teachers in the four countries, though not by all. These reasons reveal a conflict of truly strategic importance: that between the demanding, ambitious, and many-sided mandate of local offices and their limited resources.

The number of inspectors and pedagogic advisers is inadequate, given the scope of the tasks (and in particular the number of schools) assigned to the staff responsible for quality monitoring and to local offices more generally, compared to the number and profile of the staff members in these offices.

In some cases, emphasis was placed on the inadequate number of inspectors and pedagogic advisers compared to the number of teachers in each district, which in most cases has been rising in recent years to cope with growing numbers of pupils. Not only has the number of teachers increased, the level of their qualifications and previous education has diminished. In Benin, the workload of the CPs has recently become heavier, as the number of schools and community teachers has increased while that of the CPs responsible for them has remained the same. In Senegal, the official ratio of 50 teachers to one inspector is far from reality in the three inspectorates studied. One had only four inspectors, including the head of the inspectorate, for 796 teachers, or one for every 199 teachers, a ratio that is not at all unusual. The situation seems distinctly better in Mali, where, with a few exceptions, each local education office has 12 pedagogic advisers. But their task is to provide teachers with support in specific subjects, which means that each pedagogic adviser must regularly check on over 500 teachers.

In addition, local education offices are overloaded by the volume of administrative work to be done and the shortage of staff. In Senegal, for instance,

> 90 per cent of a departmental inspector's time is spent at meetings called by the central education department, processing administrative mail, etc. The rest of his time is reserved for teacher supervision. This constraint forces the inspector to plan several activities at the same time whenever he leaves the

> office: classroom visits, handling any conflicts that have arisen, meetings with communities, etc. Some inspectors are upset about the work overload resulting from the shortage of staff in a few offices, where the number of inspectors stipulated by the organization chart is not provided. (case study, Senegal)

The result of this work overload is that the number of inspections and pedagogic support visits is low. In several countries, this was emphasized by staff from local offices, school principals, and teachers alike.

In Senegal, the Ministry of Education has specified that at least 50 per cent of teachers in a district must be inspected per year. This rule is far from being observed: some teachers go four years without being inspected. Obviously, this is also true for pedagogic support visits. In Mali, the funds of the local education office are inadequate to carry out its tasks, particularly inspection and follow-up support, and schools may go through an entire year without a visit.

The fact that many teachers remain unsupervised for long periods is particularly problematic in countries like Senegal, where the mark given after inspection influences the teacher's career prospects.

In some districts, school principals and teachers are given support on a more regular basis – at least once a year – but this is nonetheless considered insufficient, given the role that such support plays in the training of those inspected and in the supervision and assistance provided to actors in a decentralization context.

The lack of material and financial resources in local offices is systematically presented as the primary reason that monitoring functions poorly. This lack of resources may be because the funding allocation for local offices does not take their monitoring task into account, funds being generally allocated by budget lines, as we will see below (*Chapter 2*).

This is the case in Guinea:

> The expenses incurred for the inspections that the local education office carries out in schools are not budgeted. This makes it harder for the inspectors to carry out their assignments, particularly those to schools that are hard to reach. When one knows the real conditions on the ground (an unreliable transport network, potholed roads, and large distances to be covered), one can appreciate the scale of the annoyances that inspectors face. To give them some relief, the head of the office makes an effort to give them petrol tickets when he has any. (case study, Guinea)

Even when this task is included in the budget, the allocation may be too small or arrive too late. In some school districts in Benin there are budget lines for inspection and pedagogic support assignments, mainly for petrol, but the amount allocated often proves to be too low: "For their travel, the local office heads and their assistants should receive a petrol allocation from the regional education office, evaluated at 60,000 francs [€92] and 45,000 francs [€69] respectively per month. The inspectors complain that this appropriation is inadequate for their mission. But owing to budgetary restrictions this sum has been cut further, with only 50,000 francs [€76] being granted to the local office heads and 40,000 francs [€61] to their assistants" (case study, Benin). In response to this funding shortage, one regional office took the initiative of granting a supplementary allowance to each local head for each trip, which led to some agitation in the other regions. Even in this case, however, it arrives late.

Moreover, the material resources made available to those in charge of monitoring are insufficient in both quantity and quality. In Benin, it was stated that the allocation of the petrol allowance "assumes that the CP has a car to travel with, which is not necessarily the case. A local office head said that he often lent his official car to CPs. The CPs also reported that "they had to cover great distances to make some school visits" (case study).

Under these conditions, monitoring cannot be carried out properly, as indicated by a CP in Benin: "When you make a school visit, you want to arrive before the principal or the teacher. But you often break down half-way there and you're passed by the person you wanted to inspect!"

In some cases, the lack of resources is compounded by the mismatch between the profile of the staff of local offices and the skills required. In Benin, the emphasis was placed on the poor quality of local office staff, who are often in poor health. In one of the localities studied, "Although at first sight the number of staff [19] seems sufficient for the tasks of the local office from the standpoint of available personnel, many of these staff members are teachers who have fallen ill, and whether or not they are present at their workstations does not much change the work accomplished. There are four mentally ill persons, one with impaired vision, one with impaired hearing, and one who has been in dialysis for years and comes to work only two days per week." Two factors account for this: the excessive protection enjoyed by teachers with civil servant

status, and the lack of respect shown for the key role played by local offices. As a result, the healthy staff members, generally the CPs, have a heavier workload. In Benin, during interim evaluations and when urgent assignments are imposed by higher education authorities, the staff are at times obliged to work without respite until late in the evening. It is during these periods that the CPs lend a hand in sorting examination papers, forming committees, and so on. This work overload is felt all the more strongly because it affects only the healthy staff members.

Lastly, although the number of staff members responsible for quality is considerable, their profiles may also constitute an obstacle to satisfactory quality monitoring. This is the case in Mali, where "each CP is responsible for a subject and sets up a section even if the organizational framework of the local education office does not allow for any divisions or sections ... The specialization of the CPs means that they cannot cover all the schools. For example, only one CP at the local education office is a mathematics specialist ... Clearly, the system does not allow proper monitoring of schools and teachers."

In all four countries, inspectors' preferred form of action is the school visit. But such visits seem to have little lasting impact on the functioning and quality of schools, for a number of reasons. First, the visit does not always include discussion and dialogue with the teaching staff. Although the former 'police' style inspection is disappearing, the nature of such a visit is hard to change: "Although the ideal is to have every inspection conclude with a meeting that outlines the successes, constraints, and inadequacies of the person inspected, with a view to building his or her occupational capacities, some inspectors, for reasons not quite understood, evade this formality, which represents the only occasion for the person inspected to express his or her training needs in a direct and mandatory way" (case study, Benin). Simply changing the name of the corps of inspectors does not automatically bring a change in practices. Teachers in a school in Mali remarked that "the supervisory or pedagogic support visit takes the same course as the evaluation visit [inspection], except that no mark is given".

School staff also raised the problem of unsystematic organization of the visits. In certain cases in Guinea, the principal receives considerably more visits than the teaching staff. In the context of decentralization, it is a good thing that management inspections often consist of examining the principal's administrative, material, and financial management. However,

these inspections need to be carried out more regularly to supervise the principal in the performance of these new and often unfamiliar tasks, in addition to monitoring the quality of management to ensure that the school is properly run. Likewise, supervision of and regular visits to community teachers – who are increasing in number in all the countries studied – are indispensable to ensure high quality instruction. Without such visits there is less communication between local offices and schools, although such communication is essential under decentralization.

Given the shortage of human, material, and financial resources, which schools benefit from these rare visits? In Benin, many criteria determine which schools are to be inspected: the size of the school, its accessibility, the inspector's schedule, the supervision period of trainee inspectors, and whether the school is involved in testing a programme. In many cases, however, two factors predominate: the accessibility of the school and the administrative needs of the school and teaching staff. In Senegal priority is given to applicants for professional examinations.

The scarcity of visits and especially the fact that they are limited to rather superficial inspection makes the quality monitoring carried out by the local office ineffective, a weakness that impedes the implementation of decentralization at local level. Awareness of this problem has led some local offices to adopt innovative practices in which certain aspects of quality monitoring are delegated to other local actors. We will come back to this question in more detail in *Section 1.3*.

1.2 Monitoring by school principals

The school principal is the person closest to the teachers, working on the same premises every day, and is thus a key actor in quality monitoring. Like local offices, school principals may carry out two different types of monitoring: inspection visits and support visits. Depending on the country, the principal may either conduct both types or focus on the second to a greater extent, in which case the task of inspection falls to the local office.

In Senegal the school principal carries out both types of monitoring. Where inspection of teachers is concerned, the case studies report that "The inspector marks the primary and lower secondary school principals yearly. The principals then propose marks for the staff under their authority to the inspector." More precisely:

> The principal directly assesses the work of teachers through end-of-year administrative marks. This change in the regulations, which dates to 1999, gives the principal new administrative power. For teacher evaluation, the principal uses individual sheets on which he or she notes positive aspects and good initiatives. This procedure provides an objective basis for the end-of-year marks. The evaluation is formal in that it is reported to the inspector. The annual marking of teachers takes into account whether they have regularly performed the task of signing notebooks. This numerical mark is communicated to the interested party and then transmitted to the inspector, who acts as arbitrator in the event that the mark is contested. This is important to teachers because the evaluation affects their career. The marks given by the principal or inspector enable teachers to advance in their profession.

In Benin, the principal sends a mark for each teacher to the central education authorities at the end of the year. The mark is based on classroom visits and the teacher's daily performance and conduct. Those interviewed, however, stated that these marks have little impact on teachers' careers. Some of them attributed this situation to poor management at central level. One elementary school principal explained: "We don't know what is done with these bulletins, because just before teacher promotions are decided teachers still have to submit their bulletins for the last three years to the Human Resources Department, which was supposed to have copies of all their previous bulletins." Others have criticized the lack of objectivity in the promotion of teachers, and even a political bias in the bureaucracy, which is alleged to favour some teachers' careers over others. A principal pointed out that "a teacher is not required to send his or her transfer application to the principal before receiving a transfer". Another concluded that these were all "factors that lead to the lack of respect and the laziness observed today in our schools". Indeed, while the authority to assign marks to school staff is supposed to strengthen the principal's position and make the task of managing the school easier, the central education authorities' lack of interest in this mark weakens the principal and may give rise to conflict within schools.

In addition to this task of inspection, principals are responsible for providing regular teacher support by signing lesson plans and conducting classroom visits, either planned or unplanned. This is an important part of the principal's job description, even though it almost always remains informal.

In Guinea, support visits are conducted regularly and often, while the principal does not seem to make any inspection visits. The visits take many forms and allow for useful supervision. Teachers stated explicitly

how much they appreciate the principal's visits on the whole: "It helps us to be ready before the inspector arrives."

Box 4 presents the various types of support offered by a principal in a school in Guinea. The school has a large number of both pupils (791) and teachers (13), with a pupil–teacher ratio of 61. Six of the teachers have civil servant status, while the other seven are contract teachers. The principal does not teach classes.

Box 4. A principal's pedagogic supervision of teachers in a school in Guinea

The principal supervises and handles pedagogic monitoring on a daily basis. We have already noted that he signs the teachers' notebooks every morning. This allows him to verify the preparation of each teacher's lessons and to observe their quality as well as any possible errors. On this basis, he can visit teachers during their classes – with or without advance notice – to examine the way they teach. Teachers may also call on the principal regarding points on which they have doubts and which they have not mastered. The principal then monitors teachers through other visits to make sure they properly apply the advice given.

Pedagogic supervision also takes place in the context of pedagogic innovations such as participatory supervision at short intervals. This is defined by the principal as "a form of assistance provided to the teacher in class on a certain number of points" and by the school delegate as "practice lessons aimed at making certain teachers more effective". This supervision happens within the framework of the learner-centred teaching system recently adopted by the ministry. It is carried out by the principal, who had then been using it for about a month. The principal showed the reference system document to the researchers during the interviews. It defines various learning areas to be mastered by the teachers:

- creating an atmosphere of respect, trust, motivation, and happiness in the classroom
- ensuring fair participation by the pupils
- encouraging thinking
- involving the pupil in the learning process
- using a variety of channels to make the pupil acquire the targeted skill
- proceeding by absorption
- providing pupils with a timely, objective, and fair assessment of their performance during the lessons.

The principal stated that in participatory supervision at short intervals, "The principal is the supervisor. He asks the teacher to choose an area among those defined in which the teacher feels he or she has problems. The principal and

teacher make an appointment for a lesson in which the teacher must address this subject. The principal goes to the back of the classroom, attends the lesson, and then gives his opinion and advice to the teacher. If there are still problems, they set a date for another meeting." He also stated that "each principal must be able to help at least three teachers in this way in a week". The principal also made visits to teachers to verify that they were properly applying the advice given during the bimonthly meetings held as part of the Basic Levels of Quality and Equity (*Niveaux fondamentaux de qualité et d'équité* – NFQE) project. The procedure followed here is as follows: A district-level trainer is trained in Conakry. Three schools form a cluster and a principal is designated cluster leader. He passes on information to the schools and teachers in this cluster, meeting them once every other month. He then visits his teachers to examine their application of the training received in this framework, "because he knows that pedagogic innovations are the items that cause problems", as the teachers explained.

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008.

Often principals have difficulty in ensuring the required frequency and regularity of pedagogic supervision owing to an overload of work. In Benin, one of the principals interviewed is also responsible for a fifth-year class and a Pedagogic Unit. His school is fairly large: with 450 pupils, it is the largest of those studied in Benin as part of this research project. It has only six teachers, and four of these are non-civil servant teachers (two contract and two community teachers) for whom pedagogic supervision by the principal is essential. This principal acknowledged that he spends nearly one working day per week on administrative tasks, meetings, pedagogic supervision, and occasionally settling disputes among his staff. This work occupies even his days off. As he put it, "I have to be in several places at once". This example illustrates the main reasons for the work overload of some primary school principals.

First, the principals are not always relieved of teaching duties, especially in small schools. Fairly often they teach an 'important' class, being the most experienced staff members. In a school in Mali with seven teachers, "the classroom visits are not regular because the principal has an exam class".

Second, the growth of the pupil population has led to an increase in the number of teachers, mostly community or contract teachers, who require supervision on a regular basis. In a school in Guinea, "The arrival of new teacher trainees, whose level of competence is dreaded by the staff and criticized by certain parents, forces the school principal to intervene

in the teachers' preparations and even in the course of the lessons. The school management is thus obliged to provide them with professional training and academic education in addition to its new activities" (case study, Guinea).

The new responsibilities that fall to the principals add to this work overload. They result not only from the decentralization policy but also the necessity of becoming active in some managerial areas owing to the gradual disappearance of state support. In Senegal, the principal's need to find partners was pointed out in several schools: "Today, there is the profile of the new principal, who must develop partnership relationships to benefit the school." This applies primarily to the search for new sources of financing to make up the shortfall in schools' funding (a question explored in greater depth in *Chapter 2*). The principal may also hold other posts at local level, such as that of town councillor. Teachers in Senegal stressed that "To improve the execution of the principal's duties, external calls on him should be reduced. The legal framework must be changed to correct this imbalance, which increases the principal's administrative responsibilities to the detriment of pedagogic supervision."

School principals can try to cope by delegating tasks to their assistants and teachers. This ability to delegate testifies to the autonomy they enjoy in internal management of their schools. It is also highly appreciated by teachers, who see it as an indication of the principal's respect for them and willingness to share power.

Appointment to the position of principal does not necessarily imply that the person will have the right profile to monitor and support colleagues. The example of a principal of a small rural school in Mali is probably unusual but not fully exceptional.

> The principal is a 26-year-old contract teacher; he has a *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* [two-year vocational certificate] in mechanics. He has been principal for two years, since his arrival at this school. Prior to his recruitment, he took a three-month SARP [Alternative Strategy for Recruitment of Contract Teachers] training course and underwent a 45-day practical internship. Before teaching, he had a two-year practical internship in his original trade. As principal, he is in charge of two grades, the third and fifth years, with about 29 hours of courses in a normal week.

It was explained that although this principal tries to provide adequate supervision for his teachers, he also consults nearby principals for this

purpose: "where supervision is concerned, the principal's basic problem is his lack of experience".

Teachers in a community school in Mali said they preferred supervision by the local office to that of the principal, as the inspectors have higher academic qualifications and more teaching experience than the principal.

Principals with more experience and better qualifications have rarely been entitled, however, to a training programme in human resources management or pedagogic advice, a worrisome fact in light of the growing diversity of the principal's tasks. A school delegate in Guinea comments: "Today, principals handle financial and material management, human resources management, supervision and pedagogic advice, follow up at short intervals, the design and development of work plans, and evaluation."

There is a pronounced contrast between the actual profile of principals today – in many cases they have few administrative or managerial skills, rarely any specific training as a principal, and their career prospects are not inspiring – and the ideal profile, which is that of a team leader, well versed in both pedagogical and managerial matters, highly motivated, and well supported.

1.3 Sharing the tasks involved in quality monitoring: an obligation to innovate

In short, there are many obstacles to effective quality monitoring at local level, arising from the mismatch between the mandate and the resources of those involved. Local offices and principals are overloaded with work and a conflict of roles. Resources are insufficient or inappropriate. For local offices, the problem is primarily the lack of human, material, or financial resources (depending on the case) for visiting schools. But the expertise, experience, and training of the personnel are also a resource, and here again there are problems, for example when a principal's profile is poorly suited to the post.

Confronted with this shortage of resources, local actors undertake no strategic planning. One solution would be to adapt the mandate of local offices to the available resources, rather than to go looking for elusive resources elsewhere. Another – a solution in fact adopted by some local offices and schools – is to redistribute tasks by involving other actors in

monitoring. In most cases, these innovations arose out of local initiatives but have become, for example in Senegal, a matter of national policy.

The importance of having at least minimal resources must be highlighted. As quality monitoring is a central task of local offices, adequate material and financial resources should be transferred to them so that they can properly carry it out. But the challenge is not simply one of providing assistance (financial and other) to each local office, but also of distributing these resources and support appropriately. The ideal solution might be to identify the resources needed based on the characteristics of the district for which the office is responsible (number of schools, distance, terrain) and those of the schools themselves (teacher quality, availability of resources). The lack of such strategic thinking is one reason for the differences in local offices' situations, as we shall see in the next chapter. (The situation also varies from one country to another.)

Task-sharing by local offices

In most cases we observed task-sharing by local offices in the conduct of pedagogic supervision of schools as well as in certain administrative tasks. This obligation to share is a response to the failure of the state and its representatives, the inspectors in the local offices, to provide regular substantive support to schools. At the same time, schools and teachers recognize that learning through dialogue between schools can be of great value.

Delegating pedagogic supervision

Boxes 5a to *5c* present three quite distinct initiatives whose shared main objectives are to bring pedagogic supervision closer to the school and to involve persons other than the inspector in such supervision. Pedagogic Units in Benin have existed for a number of years and have become an almost traditional feature of the educational landscape. The title of School Delegate (DSEE) in Guinea has existed only since 2002; previously, the same person was known as the 'sub-prefectoral pedagogic delegate'. The change in title also implied a change in tasks, from administrative responsibilities to pedagogic supervision. The Local Collective of School Principals in Senegal is another grassroots innovation.

All these initiatives aim at relieving the local office of the task of pedagogic supervision of schools. In each case, the task of inspection remains in the hands of the inspectors: given the decision-making nature of this act, especially as marking may have an impact on teachers' careers, those to whom the local office delegates the supervisory and support task do not have the power to attribute marks. A mark can be given only by those authorized to do so. At the same time, this demonstrates that support is being increasingly favoured over inspection.

Some of these innovations arose from local initiatives. For example, the Local Collective of School Principals was launched in two inspectorates in Senegal, which were subsequently called on to present their innovation to the Ministry of Education. The practice was then extended countrywide after proving its effectiveness. In contrast, the school delegate initiative in Guinea originated at the central level.

These innovations do lighten the local office's responsibility for carrying out pedagogic supervision of schools. Schools are given support and supervision on a somewhat more systematic basis and teachers receive training somewhat more regularly. Based on the reports submitted to local offices, they are also a way of identifying training needs as well as which principals and teachers should be inspected.

Delegating administrative tasks

In other instances, the local office delegates some administrative tasks to other actors. These primarily concern communication with schools (including transmission of documents from the local office, information). This is one of the functions of the school delegate, in addition to pedagogic supervision, in Guinea, and of the 'relay' principal (concurrently with the head of the Local Development Committee) in Senegal.

Box 5a. The delegation of pedagogic supervision by local offices in Benin

Pedagogic Units

Faced with the inadequate support and pedagogic supervision provided by the local office, teachers have in recent years been getting together to discuss professional matters. This initially local initiative spread rapidly, and was supported by various local education offices and incorporated into their operation. Today, all over the country, teachers are grouped in Pedagogic Units.

Pedagogic Units are led by heads and deputy heads. They have no administrative existence, but function rather as pedagogic subdivisions. Every other week, teachers and principals from several schools meet for a Pedagogic Unit session to discuss subjects that concern them, with the presence and support of pedagogic advisers. A teacher or principal runs the meetings and serves as head of the unit. An attendance sheet and a session report are sent to the local office, to help both their heads and pedagogic advisers to identify the training needs of principals and teachers and to act accordingly.

The informal, voluntary nature of these meetings is both their main advantage and their main challenge. Since they play no inspection role and are not 'owned' by the education authorities, they are popular with teachers and not strangled by red tape. But the fact that they receive no financing from the state and have no formal organization makes them highly dependent on the initiative and enthusiasm of local actors, particularly the pedagogic advisers. Significant differences may thus be expected from one district to another.

Box 5b. The delegation of pedagogic supervision by local offices in Guinea

School delegates

"School delegates form the link between the school and the local education authorities." "They coordinate educational activities in the schools under their jurisdiction. They are responsible for pedagogic supervision, i.e. training the teachers and monitoring their classroom practices. They take part in training, visit classes and inspect teachers in the schools under their supervision. They write bimonthly activity reports and settle disputes. They supervise all the projects initiated at the school." "The delegate must have an overall vision of the school and be informed of the number of people recruited, supervisory staff, and the real number of pupils enrolled and transferred, and must use an organization chart."

Box 5c. The delegation of pedagogic supervision by local offices in Senegal

The Local Collective of School Principals

The Local Collective of School Principals was created to offset the shortage of inspectors – there are three inspectors for 600 teachers in the district concerned – and to meet the training needs of teachers. The collective originated in an initiative taken by two inspectorates and was applied at national level after proving its effectiveness. It is defined as a "quality monitoring and management tool at the local level". In some areas, schools pay a contribution to finance, collected from the school cooperative, PTAs, and textbook rental. It is not obligatory, however: "out of ten schools in one area, two or three pay the contribution". The departmental district of Nioro is divided into 15 zones, each having at most 15 schools. Partitioning is carried out on the basis of geographic proximity (neighbouring schools make up a zone). These zones also follow administrative zones as closely as possible, as the president of each rural community is empowered to act only in the schools of his or her community. A principals' collective – all principals and acting principals from each zone – coordinated by a 'relay' principal is organized in each zone. Relay principals are chosen by their peers based on their experience as a principal, morals, and the academic performance of their school. "Those who are best at monitoring are supposed to be good relay principals." It is vital that they be accessible, located in the main town either of the rural community, where there is generally a private phone booth, or of an electoral district, where there is a telephone or the administrative command radio network (each sub-prefect has a radio so that he can be reached by the Ministry of the Interior). There is, however, no hierarchical relationship between the members of a collective or between the relay principal and schools. Principals are responsible in their zone for transmitting information from the educational and administrative authorities or partners to teachers, and for supervising their assistants as well as new principals through the principals' collective. They also play the role of mediators in the event of school disputes. The local office encourages rural community presidents to consider these principals as their own representatives, able to provide them with full information on schools. They are generally relieved of teaching one class, but if not, the inspector assigns substitutes (teachers without a fixed class who can replace a principal or absent teacher at any time).

Source (*Boxes 5a-5c*): Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008; Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

Problems in implementing these innovations

Although these innovations have proved successful, problems of implementation were identified during the surveys. The first is the

meagre support actors receive for carrying out their tasks. In Benin, the Pedagogic Units operate without any government funding and can count only on what schools and teachers contribute voluntarily. In the case of the Local Collective of Principals in Senegal, one respondent testified:

> The amount of travel this method of action requires has resulted in principals bearing the costs of calls on personal mobile phones and paying their own travel expenses, as the principals' support fund does not receive an adequate allocation. This fund depends in fact on schools' contributions: 3,000 CFA francs for a school with six classes, 2,500 for four to five classes, 1,500 for two to three classes, and 1,000 for one class. The contribution is paid by the school cooperative or partners chosen by schools. The fact that the relay principal has to teach classes adds to these problems. (case study, Senegal)

Some of those interviewed regretted that the delegation of tasks was limited to pedagogic support. In Senegal, the inspection mark plays a role in a teacher's career and task delegation would considerably lighten the workload of the inspectorate, which, as noted, suffers from a shortage of inspectors. One of the inspectors stressed that, "This organizational system did not aim at simply dealing with the shortage of inspectors: it is also a new vision. It would be good to take the devolution process further by giving these principals the power to deliver inspection marks. The role of the inspector would then change to enable him to devote himself more to the tasks of design, action-research, and driving the system." But giving these principals inspection powers as well risks alienating them from teachers, who almost instinctively resist an inspection leading to a mark. This resistance is precisely the reason why Mali requires its local offices to concentrate on support and abandon the notion of inspection.

Teachers also criticized local offices' failure to provide follow-up to the pedagogic supervision provided. For example, in the pedagogic advice units set up at school level in Senegal, "According to the teachers and principal, subjects were handled without the inspectors' participation, apart from the one responsible for education in family life and health. The unit's activity reports sent to the inspectorate get no response or feedback, even though these reports sometimes seek advice on teaching problems raised during the pedagogic discussion sessions." The work of these actors is thus still not taken seriously by the authorities. This is perceived – by pedagogic advisers in Benin, for example – as a lack of respect. To deal with this situation and increase their motivation and credibility, the

government of Benin recently created a professional corps of pedagogic advisers.

Such innovations also run into implementation problems precisely because they are innovative and in some cases are poorly integrated into the education system as a whole. In Benin, the head of a Pedagogic Unit stated that in 2003/2004, "training of teachers began at the start of the school year; this is a constraint, as we could not begin the Pedagogic Unit sessions without these teachers".

Moreover, these innovations do not always have the institutional backing needed to make all actors apply and adhere to them. The same Pedagogic Unit head in Benin noted that "With retired people as principals in private schools, they are not too interested in these Pedagogic Unit sessions. They send only the teachers of the subjects concerned. When we have a session, we send the children home, and since private education is a business, parents don't appreciate that."

Still other factors may work against implementation. The same Pedagogic Unit head in Benin pointed out that "In past years, the work went forward normally, except in the 2002/2003 school year, which was disturbed by strikes, and the 2003/2004 school year, owing to the late arrival of new pedagogic advisers on the ground."

These problems will force governments to make a policy choice. Will these initiatives be allowed to remain partly informal or will they be totally integrated into the education administration? The second option might lead to better financing of these practices and greater recognition of the actors involved, which would contribute to their long-term viability. But it entails the major risk that they will lose their innovative character and that the administrative overload of local offices will be handed down to these new local 'administrations'.

Task-sharing by school principals

An apparently attractive solution is to enhance the school principal's role in pedagogic supervision, but here again there are problems. Many principals are just as overworked as inspectors and experience the same conflict of roles between support and inspection. Because of their heavy workload, they too share tasks with their assistants and teachers. As in the case of local offices, quality monitoring and administrative duties are among the tasks delegated. The practice is well liked by teachers, who see it as a sign of respect, a chance to build their skills, or an incentive.

Delegation of pedagogic supervision and support by school principals

In order to ease their workload, some principals turn over the pedagogic supervision and support of teachers to their assistants or another teacher. One school principal,

> aware of his inability to complete all his tasks in view of the large size of his school, with its 48 pedagogic groups, chose two assistants: one in charge of pedagogic matters and the other responsible for management of material resources. The first handles duties that the principal gave up after appointing him as assistant four years ago. He has no class to teach, but organizes model lessons, carries out class observations, signs teachers' lesson preparation notebooks, organizes compositions, supervises inspections, ensures that the school is kept clean and discipline is maintained. (case study, Guinea)

In some cases, principals encourage teachers to supervise each other. In Guinea and Senegal, "There is also a kind of peer supervision. Teachers may go into the classroom of a colleague, who is a candidate for the *certificat d'aptitude professionnelle* (two-year vocational certificate), to prepare him or her to receive colleagues who have come to supervise. These cases occur primarily with newly assigned teachers" (principal, Senegal). Internal support of this kind is much more difficult to introduce in small schools, which do not have the critical mass needed to develop the practice. Some schools form networks for this purpose, or else the initiative is taken by the local office. Benin's Pedagogic Units play this role to some extent, while the principals' collectives in Senegal include only principals, not teachers.

In a school in Guinea, the surveys revealed that "to meet the training requests of teachers and lacking someone with the desired skills in their school, the principal may go as far as to ask for the help of experienced outside teachers. For example, that happened in October and November, when a teacher training session in administrative writing was held every Saturday" (case study, Guinea).

It must be noted that, like the delegation of pedagogic tasks by local offices, and for the same reasons, task-sharing by the school principal does not concern formal inspections.

Delegation of administrative tasks by school principals

In Benin, the law provides for sharing of responsibilities among teachers. In this regard, those interviewed even spoke of 'collegial management'. Within a single school, one may find

- one person responsible for pedagogic advice, administrative management, and external relations;
- one person responsible for economic production;
- one person responsible for patriotic and ideological education and cultural activities;
- one person responsible for implementing health and nutrition education programmes;
- one person responsible for administrative affairs (enrolment of new pupils, distributing and keeping records of incoming and outgoing mail, preparing examination packages);
- one person responsible for the upkeep of school equipment and infrastructure (consumable supplies, furniture, premises).

These roles are freely chosen by teachers, except in one case where the teachers emphasized the principal's authority in this respect. It can be seen from the terminology used that this was an initiative of the revolutionary government that ran Benin in the 1970s and 1980s. The initiative, well liked by teachers, survived the disappearance of that regime.

In other cases, the school principal may take the initiative of delegating administrative tasks to assistants and teachers. In Benin, one principal supplemented the official task-sharing by giving other responsibilities to teachers. She explained that she took care that these tasks would not interfere with their teaching obligations, and selected these teachers on the basis of their "dynamism and availability".

Having a different duty teacher each week seems to be a widespread practice in Guinea and Senegal. Duties usually include

- being on time (7.25 or 7.30 a.m.);
- ringing the first bell;
- raising the flag;
- having the schoolyard cleaned;
- organizing the pupils and getting them into the classrooms;
- making a list of teachers and their arrival time;
- verifying the punctuality of teachers and pupils;
- settling problems with parents and pupils;
- reporting to the principal on the week's activities.

This relieves school principals of most of these tasks, allowing them to devote their time to managing pedagogic affairs and financial

and material resources. All the teachers also view this function very positively, as they "feel like they're playing the role of the principal for one week" (teacher, Senegal).

1.4 Summary and main conclusions

One key mission of a local education office is to monitor the quality of the teaching in its schools. Inspectors are expected to visit schools at regular intervals and examine the teaching provided there. Their recommendations should be followed up by both the education administration and the school itself. Statistical information, transformed into indicators, should be of assistance to the monitoring process. The reality, though, is quite different.

Few inspections are actually made, for a number of reasons, most obviously lack of staff and resources. The number of teachers per inspector has increased; in one Senegalese school district, for example, 4 inspectors supervise nearly 800 teachers. The profile of teachers has also changed: many have less training and lower qualifications than was the case some years ago. This is coupled with a lack of resources, especially for travel. In Benin, pedagogical advisers receive a petrol allowance, but many do not have vehicles. Consequently inspectors undertake very few visits, and these are generally brief and superficial. The problem, though, is more than one of mere resources:

- The profile of local officials sometimes leaves much to be desired. In Benin, quite a few local offices are used to accommodate teachers unable to continue classroom teaching for health reasons.
- The mandate of local offices is demanding, as they are expected to cover all schools, and conflicting, as they must both exercise control and provide support.
- In their interaction with schools, district officials prefer traditional visits and place little reliance on other types of actions for influencing and guiding schools, such as holding workshops or providing assistance in a school self-evaluation process.
- Local offices very seldom engage in strategic planning; rather, they act in response to administrative requests from higher up in the chain of command, or to urgent situations on the ground.

The situation of these four countries is not unique. Research on the role of local education offices in school supervision in South Asian and Southern African countries (Carron *et al.*, 1998; De Grauwe, 2001) has

reported the same challenges and lack of effectiveness, caused by a severe discrepancy between the mandate of these offices and their resources.

In all four countries efforts are under way to reform inspection. In Mali, local offices have been renamed and are now called pedagogical advice centres: they no longer inspect schools, as the traditional inspection is felt to have no impact and leads to conflict with teachers, but focus instead on advising. In Senegal a few years ago, one district decided to group its schools into clusters and ask the principals to meet regularly and to visit each school to offer assistance where necessary to teachers, with one principal acting as the head of the cluster. Principals and teachers greatly appreciate this clustering initiative, which offers them more regular and appropriate support. It has recently become national policy, but its implementation is not without challenges. One somewhat controversial question is: Should these principals be given the authority to evaluate teachers, or should the whole structure remain more informal? Some principals find the latter option frustrating, but turning the heads of clusters into sub-district inspectors could simply mean that they will encounter the same old problems as inspectors. In Benin, clustering in pedagogical units has existed for some time and has become entrenched: teaching staff from neighbouring schools meet nearly twice a month to discuss pedagogical and other matters. Every local office has a few advisers to support these units. The pedagogical unit heads have no supervisory authority; their role is simply to ensure that teachers meet regularly and to guide their discussions.

Supervision by local offices will never have much of an impact if it is not accompanied by control and support within the school. This highlights the importance of school principals; at the same time, somewhat like inspectors, they are increasingly overburdened with tasks for which they are poorly prepared, such as raising resources, negotiating with the municipality, recruiting volunteer teachers, and finding funds to pay their salaries. They lack the time to give significant support to their teachers. Some have felt it very useful to delegate that task to the more experienced teachers, a solution that is greatly appreciated and functions well in bigger schools. Nevertheless, problems remain. First, especially in small schools, few principals have a suitable profile to be at the same time manager and pedagogical leader. In a small Malian school, the principal is 27 years old, with a plumber's certificate, a few weeks of teacher training, and no further experience. While this is an extreme example, it highlights the absence of a policy aimed at making the job of principal

a motivating one. A related problem is that principals lack the authority and resources to take any action at all, be it supportive or disciplinary. The need for a national policy to strengthen the role of the principal and to create a genuine corps of professional principals has been emphasized by other authors, referring either to the same region (Pelletier, 2005) or to the Asian continent (Kandasamy and Blaton, 2004).

The findings are thus somewhat contradictory. Local offices and school principals have some autonomy where quality monitoring is concerned. Apart from a few cases where the local office has a given number of inspections to carry out each year, these actors are free to organize such monitoring as they think best, as is demonstrated by the innovations they have introduced to ensure that the monitoring actually takes place. The task-sharing introduced as one of these innovations has a decentralizing effect, delegating specific functions to new actors instead of the traditional ones. The resulting partnership relations that form between local offices and schools indicate that local actors have become aware of the quality monitoring responsibilities that fall to them.

Although this autonomy is real, it is highly limited. Its effectiveness depends on the support provided by the central level to those exercising it on the ground. The scarcity of human, material, and logistical resources restricts the implementation of these innovations and makes effective monitoring more difficult. These innovations can have a real impact only if they too are supported by the central government. But the support is not there. As shown in the next chapter, the financial and material resources they receive are insufficient. There is also little intellectual support in the form of guidance or supervision of the activities of local offices and schools. Neither the ministries nor their regional directorates are driving change at the local level. Innovations at this level thus reflect local self-sufficiency and are scarcely an expression of a national initiative or policy.

Chapter 2

Material and financial resources

> *It's not easy to function like this. When you talk about functioning and the basics just aren't there ... "Principal, I don't have any pens, I don't have any books ...". You have to take into account what's needed on the ground.*
>
> (school principal, Guinea)

> *The construction of the local office premises is an obligation of the state, and we absolutely cannot agree to finance such projects: for us, the priority is building classrooms and hiring teachers to give our children good conditions for their schoolwork. We already do enough by bearing the cost of infrastructure and the salaries of our community teachers.*
>
> (parent, Benin)

This chapter examines a key aspect of decentralization: the distribution of financial and material resources from the central level to other levels, the availability of these resources at local level, and local actors' autonomy in using them. Decentralization of resource management is commonly supposed to make resource utilization more efficient and appropriate. The analysis of resources offers a crucial test of whether real decentralization has occurred: Are resources sufficient for local offices and schools to carry out their mandates and achieve independence? Are these actors free to use them as they think best? Are they in fact used more efficiently, and do they help to improve schools?

In all four countries, the central level does transfer financial and material resources to local offices and to local governments under decentralization. In two of them, it transfers funds directly to schools as part of a school devolution and empowerment policy. Local governments receive some resources and collect others, but they are not obliged to use either of these for education. Taken together, these funds are insufficient to allow actors to perform their roles properly, and the latter frequently turn to other sources of financing. Although such sources help to overcome the shortage of funds here and there, they are dispersed and unregulated, which raises problems regarding their management and calls for a framework to make local actors accountable in this respect.

2.1 The availability of resources

The resources of local offices

In the four countries studied, the financial and material resources of local offices are mostly allocated by the central level. In some cases, particularly in Benin, these resources are so inadequate that schools or parents are asked to contribute. A few local offices receive funding from municipal authorities, but this is the result of personal initiative on the part of the mayor or inspector rather than a general system.

Resources allocated by the central level

- **Financial resources**

The central level generally allocates funds to local offices in the form of operating funds or budget lines. In most cases, these are for petrol, vehicle maintenance, and the purchase of supplies.

Local offices do not receive cash. This was stressed in the Senegal and Benin case studies. In Benin, one of the reasons put forward was school districts' inability to manage cash:

> The state's contribution through the regional education office is in the form of material resources only. Although there is a budget allocated to each school district, which is added to the budget of the office, school districts have no control over its general outline or its execution. On the pretext that "school local office heads are not managers" (according to a regional director), their superiors refuse to make cash available to them to solve their own problems. This situation gives the local office head the impression that inspectors at district level are treated like children ...
> Yet there is a formula for allocation of the budget of the regional education offices, established by the Office of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education. In fact, according to ministerial circular no. 0298/MEPS/CAB/DC/DRF/SP of 15 April 2003, school districts have the right to a certain percentage of the funds allocated to the regional education offices. (case study, Benin)

The allocation of these operating funds should in theory be based on the needs identified by local offices. In Mali, as we shall see below, various criteria are used to evaluate the resources needed by a local education office, but the funds generally allocated do not match these needs. According to one inspector in Senegal, "The budget is proportional to nothing at all. For me, there is no budget allocation criterion whatsoever." Likewise, in Guinea, "The budget isn't allocated

in accordance with the needs expressed; to the contrary, they ask us to determine our needs based on the funding allocated to us, which is predefined." In Mali, emphasis was placed on the fact that the local office is not consulted when its budget is drawn up.

In a few cases, an increase in the funds granted to local offices has been welcomed; in others, the lack of any such increase has been criticized. In Mali, "Funding for the local education office hardly changes at all, as it is an operating budget calculated on the basis of distances, which do not change; the number of people working at the local education office, which does not change; and on the equipment purchased, which also does not change" (local office head, Mali).

On the whole, the financial resources granted by the central level to local offices were considered inadequate to enable them to perform their duties properly. In Guinea, "The funds allocated are considered very unsatisfactory. The administrative and financial affairs department of the regional education department was obliged to explain that there can be an enormous gap between the needs expressed and the funds allocated." Moreover, they are frequently subject to delays: in Guinea, the head of a local office's financial department told the research team that as of the interview date (in late 2003), only one-third of the 2003 budget had been received and used.

In some cases, allocation has been described as inconsistent. As an inspector in Senegal explained, "The inspector at district level does not know the criteria for drawing up the budget. He receives the same amount of petrol as the Dagana high school principal, who has no supervisory duties." Some of those interviewed spoke of disparities in the amount of resources allocated by the central level to local offices. For example, once again in Senegal, the inspector stated that "The candidates for the primary school-leaving examination in one inspectorate exceed the entire school population of another inspectorate. Yet the two inspectorates receive the same number of litres of petrol."

In sum, at least three types of constraint are operative: the available resources are insufficient, local offices lack autonomy in the preparation and utilization of their budgets, and the distribution of funds among the various offices does not follow strategic criteria. In decision-making related to financial resources, local offices can play only a very limited role, given their lack of knowledge of the budget available at regional level, the amount they should be allocated, and the distribution criteria used.

With regard to material resources, there is wide variation among the local offices covered by the study. *Box 6* highlights these disparities by examining two contrasting examples. In Mali, it was reported that local offices were allotted material resources of good quality and sufficient quantity, while in Senegal the central authorities had made a significant effort to equip local offices with computers in the framework of the Ten-year Education and Training Programme. In Benin and Guinea, however, the emphasis was laid on the meagreness of the material resources of some offices.

These resources are either provided to local offices in kind – premises, vehicles provided for inspection trips, computer equipment – or purchased using the offices' operating budgets (generally through the 'purchase of supplies' budget line).

Box 6. The material resources of local offices: two contrasting examples

Meager material resources in one local office

The local office does not have its own premises. It is located in one of the flats of a dilapidated residential building now used also to house the town's vital statistics department. Ceremonies (weddings, baptisms, etc.) are held there all day long, preventing everyone from concentrating on their work. The flat is divided into five small, inadequate offices:

- An office for the director, serving as both the latter's workplace and a conference room, connecting to a small outdoor shower. The small size of the office is an advantage, since the air-conditioning works all right during the brief periods when the electrical power supply is stable. The office is full to bursting.
- An office with three tables, shared by the examination/testing and secondary education sections.
- An office shared by the secretariat and personnel management.
- An office for the elementary and secondary education pedagogic sections.
- An office for the planning/statistics department.

The small size of the offices makes it difficult to work. Some employees do not have enough room, as the director acknowledged. The offices all give onto a single corridor, where the orderly responsible for screening the people entering the director's office sits. It is constantly filled with countless visitors. This environment cannot be conducive to calm, clear-headed work.

Some departments are located outside the premises, in schools. These include the sports, civic education, literacy, continuing education, and administrative/

financial sections, as well as the storeroom. The principal of one primary school told the research team that her office is often used as a branch office by the director of the local office in person. All the interviews except that of the director took place in the office of this principal.

Material resources of good quality and sufficient quantity in a different office

Direct observation showed that the local education office has nine offices, two teacher training rooms, a library, a storeroom, two indoor WCs, and two WCs outside, each having three toilets. The offices are well equipped with cupboards, work tables, and chairs. The director's office and secretariat have computers. Two computers are in the storeroom pending their allocation. A new photocopier is due to arrive, the old one having broken down in the presence of the research team.

The local office has a new car, three motorbikes, a television, telephones, a refrigerator, a video-cassette recorder, etc. The staff considers that the office is well equipped and its equipment in good condition. This equipment was provided by the state.

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Dougnon *et al.*, 2008.

The shortage of equipment in certain local offices for conducting inspection and pedagogic support visits has already been discussed (*Chapter 1*).

In Guinea, the interviews emphasized the disparity in resources between the regional and local facilities. This applied more especially to their infrastructure: some regional offices had purpose-built premises, whereas local offices did not even have these, and those they had were cramped and inadequate. Similarly, in Benin the research team visited a regional office where the director had a computer, printer, fax machine, and television. The local office visited in the same region had none of these, not even a telephone line, and was in general poorly equipped.

In a district in Benin, the material resources made available to the school district remain in general incommensurate with its needs, a situation that the local office head summed up with "It's the same old song: they don't have the money!"

In some instances, the conditions under which certain field surveys took place provide tangible proof of the poor quality of the premises of local offices. In Benin: "The premises are small and decrepit. There is no meeting room, so certain interviews, such as those with school principals, took place outside the local office, under a tree, exposed to rain and other

vicissitudes of the weather. Moreover, electricity cuts occurred during some interviews, and they had to be finished by candlelight" (case study, Benin).

The inadequacy of the financial and material resources allocated by the central level has led some local offices to turn to other sources of financing, mainly schools.

Resources allocated by schools

In some cases, local offices receive financing from schools. This happens in Benin and to a lesser extent in Guinea.

Parents' contributions to financing school districts in Benin play a very important role, because they provide the only cash available to the district: "The revenue of the local office thus consists exclusively of these contributions, representing the effort made by parents and schools to support local offices" (case study). Although this solution helps to offset the insufficiency of the resources allocated by the central level and enables the local office to perform its duties, it is not without its drawbacks. In this respect, several inspectors stressed the local office's "heavy dependence" on the schools it controls.

This dependence manifests itself in three ways. First, schools – or rather parents, because they are really the ones who pay these contributions – can refuse to continue the payments. The schools in one district refused to support the construction of the premises of the local office, an incident that revealed that without this source of financing the local office is practically without resources: "This good collaboration was, however, no longer there when, in 2002/2003, the local office head had wanted to build new premises, with contributions from these same parents, that were to be used as the local offices, and had consequently drawn up a budget plan whose amount was more than double that of the past years (4,285,900 CFA francs). This budget plan encountered opposition from parents and even from certain principals, who refused to adopt it" (case study). When the research team interviewed the parents, they said in substance, "The construction of the local office premises is an obligation of the state, and we absolutely cannot agree to finance such projects: for us, the priority is building classrooms and hiring teachers to give our children good conditions for their schoolwork. We already do enough by bearing the cost of infrastructure and the salaries of our community teachers" (Secretary-General of the PTA Coordination Unit).

Second, school districts' control over individual schools becomes weaker. Obviously, when a ministry inspectorate can function only because of contributions from the schools it is supposed to inspect, its credibility and power to apply sanctions are weakened.

Third, this situation enhances the authority of schools and parents, who in theory are entitled to verify how the funds they give the local office are used. It might be supposed that the schools that make such contributions will become more demanding and require efficient service from these offices in exchange. It does not seem to us, however, that such a demand for accountability has developed. It is true, though, that some local offices in Benin, through the work of pedagogic advisers and their support for pedagogic units, do a job that is very much appreciated by many schools, which should facilitate payment of the contributions.

In Guinea, schools and parents are less involved in the local office's budget than in Benin. This involvement comes in the form of textbook rental (also the case in Senegal) and in other ways. In Guinea, "The local education office provides no financial support to schools. On the contrary, it is the schools that finance, from time to time, certain actions of the local education office, on the occasion of ceremonies, football tournaments (50,000 GF per school), the death of a teacher (5,000 GF per school), etc."

The existence of this reversed flow of funds – in which schools finance the operations of local offices and not vice versa – shows at the same time the weakness of the state and the willingness of parents to contribute to their children's education. The impact on equity remains uncertain, however: one may well suppose that parents in the most disadvantaged areas contribute no less than those in easier circumstances, and hence that the impact on equity is negative. This is only a hypothesis, however.

The resources of schools

In the countries studied, schools' main source of financing should be the government. However, the inadequacy of their financial support forces schools – especially their principals – to look for resources elsewhere. Hence parents become the primary, if not the only, contributors. In some cases, NGOs also offer crucial support. These external partners also play a key role in providing material resources.

Financial resources

- **Resources from the central level**

Schools receive the funds that the central level earmarks for them through various mechanisms (for more on this, see *Box 7*): either through the local office, which transforms these funds into material resources (Senegal), or through the local office, which transfers the actual funds to them (Guinea, in an innovation started in 2003/2004), or directly (Benin, where this too is a recent practice). Schools in Mali receive nothing from the state except the salaries of teachers with civil servant status. We will return to this point in detail below.

Box 7. Three mechanisms for allocating funds from the central level to schools: the experience of schools in Senegal, Guinea, and Benin

Transformation of funds earmarked for schools into material resources in Senegal

"The budget allocated to the local office by the state for 2003 is in two parts: one for local office operations ... the other for schools. For schools' operating funds, which the local office receives by delegation, the apportionment criterion is the class. The total amount allocated is divided by the number of classes in the district, and this quotient is then multiplied by the number of classes in each school. It is on this basis, and in accordance with the budget lines, that the needs expressed by schools are met, within the limit of the amount allocated to each school ... The most important items in schools' operating budgets are school canteens, teaching materials, other supplies, and other purchases of goods and services. School canteens account for 62 per cent of schools' operating budgets. This is a characteristic of rural schools: the poverty of rural people is such that the meal given to pupils is a factor favouring access to and quality of learning. Teaching materials and other supplies represent 25 per cent of schools' operating budgets."

Allocation of funds to schools through the local office in Guinea

"The school has a budget, to which the state is the main contributor ... For the preparation of the budget, the school expresses its needs, and the local education department decides what its allocation should be vis-à-vis the needs of the other schools and deals with suppliers."

"Once the state has allocated the funds via the competent ministries (the Ministry of Pre-university Education and Civic Education in this particular case), the types of information collected for the apportionment of funds are access to the school, the number of classes, the condition of the premises, table-benches,

teaching materials, etc. Using these criteria, the local education office delivers the funds to the school delegates, who in turn remit them to schools. For the moment, the various local actors assert that they do not know if there has been an increase in resources, for the simple reason that this is the very first time that resources have been allocated to schools individually; there is thus no precedent."

Direct allocation of funds to schools in Benin

"Within the framework of the debt remissions granted to Benin by the international community, the political authorities of Benin decided to grant a state subsidy to public schools. The amounts selected for nursery and primary schools are set at 3,000 CFA francs per pupil in the Ouémé, Plateau, Atlantique, and Littoral administrative departments and 2,000 francs per pupil in the other eight administrative departments. One principal explains: 'At the outset, the previous enrolment of the schools was taken into account. This year, given the exponential growth of this enrolment, fixed rates were granted to each school taking into account the base population, which is different from the real one'."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008; Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

In Guinea, since the start of the 2003/2004 school year, these resources (known as 'start of the school year funds') have in theory been allocated directly to schools. In most of the schools examined, however, the pre-reform practice remains in effect, and the bulk of these funds are spent directly on material resources by local offices. One case study of a school in Guinea drew attention to the fact that "out of 13 million francs declared, only 1 million is paid in cash; the rest is provided in the form of supplies including, in this particular instance, a TV placed in the principal's office and an electric generator", the need for which had not been mentioned at the outset. In a second school, "The principal indicated that in September he had received 139,500 GF. The local education department gave this money to the principal via the school delegate. The funds were allocated in the form of budget lines for the cleaning of the school, repairing furniture, and buying the most basic supplies. It should be noted that no other actor in the school knows that these funds exist." Later we shall see that these financial and material resources are generally considered insufficient.

The difficulties encountered in implementing this innovation reflect, first, resistance on the part of local offices, which lose one of their important powers, and second, the fact that schools are poorly informed about innovations that concern them directly. Taken together, these factors characterize a state that experiences difficulty in implementing its reform and a lack of transparency and open discussion at the local level.

This lack of transparency reappears in the criteria for distribution of funds. Funds are supposed to be allocated on the basis of distribution criteria, which in turn are based on school populations (Benin) or the number of classes in the district (Senegal). In some instances, school principals said they were not familiar with these distribution criteria. In Guinea, a principal indicated that he had not been consulted at all regarding this allocation and did not know the criteria either. He had received no mail from the Ministry on this subject: "I don't know how it came from up there. It was simply during a meeting that they communicated the amount to me. I then signed an attestation that I had received the amount."

In Benin, direct subsidies to schools have existed since 2001/2002. But this subsidy does not increase systematically in line with the number of pupils, as the following example (*Table 2.1*) demonstrates.

Table 2.1 Subsidies received by a school in Benin

Year	2001/2002	2002/2003	2002/2003	2003/2004
Subsidies (CFA francs)	702,000	630,000	783,000	525,000
No. of pupils	227	251	233	212
Subsidy per pupil (CFA francs)	3,093	2,510	3,361	2,476

Source: Odushina *et al*., 2008.

The principal of this school explained to the research team: "Unlike what had been done at the start of subsidy allocations [2000/2001 school year], it is very difficult to understand the current allocation formula of these subsidies. They are no longer in proportion to the number of pupils. Only the Ministry's technical experts are in a position to explain how subsidies are allocated." As *Box 7* explains, the initial criterion for allocation of the funds provided directly to schools was the number of pupils. As a result of growing pupil numbers, however, this criterion did not prove useful, because there is no effective system for verifying this information, a recurrent problem that complicates any distribution of funds to schools. What is needed are indicators that may be difficult to manipulate but at the same time allow for equitable and transparent apportionment of funds among schools.

Schools are not consulted on the budget assigned to them, except in Guinea, where the school expresses its needs and the local education department decides what its budget allocation should be vis-à-vis the needs of the other schools.

We have already noted, and shall again, that many schools are ignorant of the budget the central level allocates to them. As a result, schools have no real autonomy in this regard. However, they have a very large degree of autonomy concerning the other sources of finance that they try to mobilize by themselves to compensate for the inadequate resources allocated to them. But here, on the whole, schools encounter the same three problems as local offices vis-à-vis the state: inadequate funds, lack of autonomy, and inconsistent distribution criteria.

- **Contributions from parents**

The various fees and contributions required of parents are an important source of revenue for schools in the four countries studied. The largest of these are the contributions made through the parent–teacher association (PTA), the school cooperative (where these exist, i.e. in Senegal), and enrolment fees.

Contributions to the PTA generally range from 1,000 to 2,000 CFA francs per year per pupil. They may in some cases be very modest, as in one school in Senegal where they are only about 100 CFA francs (in this case, however, the other contributions required of parents fill this gap). The amount of the contribution is generally decided by the national PTA, but schools can make changes. We will come back later to the allocation formula for these funds and how they are used.

PTAs frequently have problems in collecting these contributions; parents of poor pupils sometimes cannot pay them, especially when they have several children in school. According to one school principal, "The difficulties encountered by the PTA are related to the poverty of the people in the neighbourhood, who do not often respond to requests for meetings, being fully occupied trying to meet their basic needs." In one case, the fact that the parents do not live in the school's neighbourhood was offered to explain the failure to collect contributions. Most of the school principals and PTA members interviewed stated that failure to pay did not lead to the exclusion of the pupils concerned, though this is done in a few of the schools studied.

In Senegal, a cooperative is instituted at the level of the school, made up of the pupils' representatives and a supervising teacher. The pupils are also asked for contributions for the cooperative. They generally amount to about 500 CFA francs and may be part of the PTA contributions.

Fees may also be charged during the enrolment of new pupils. In one school in Guinea, each new pupil pays 10,000 GF to be enrolled in the school. A portion of these funds is then given to the PTA for repairing table-benches, renting textbooks (funds paid to the local office), and the like. In Mali and Senegal, these charges may amount to 1,000 to 2,000 CFA francs. In rare cases, where the cash economy is relatively undeveloped, parents contribute whatever they can: in a community school in Mali, "the PTA budget is supplied by the parents' contribution through a levy on cotton at the rate of 3 kg per cut per grower and the contribution of 500 francs per head of household per year".

Box 8. Parents' contribution to the budget of a school in Senegal

"The amount of the contribution to the school cooperative amounts to 500 CFA francs per pupil per year. For this year, the school cooperative collected: (500 CFA francs x 282 pupils) + (200 CFA francs + 5 pupils) = 142,000 CFA francs. The contributions of 200 CFA francs are explained by the fact that pupils are permitted to pay their contributions in instalments. In addition to this 500 CFA francs contribution, each pupil pays 100 CFA francs per month for the custodian's salary and the water bills (half for each purpose). 250 pupils paid this so far this year. As a complement to contributions earmarked for the custodian, teachers freely contribute 1,000 CFA francs per month per person for a total of 7,000 CFA francs. The latest monthly amounts collected to pay the custodian (pupils and teachers combined) amounted to 12,500 CFA francs + 7,000 CFA francs = 19,500 CFA francs. The water bills vary between 10,000 F and 15,000 F and are paid by the pupils."

"The recruitment fees for enrolment in the first year amount to 2,000 CFA francs and are paid to the PTA. This money is used to support the school cooperative for the expenses of furniture repair, purchase of medication for the pupils, and first aid. The PTA contribution is set at 100 CFA francs per pupil per year. This year, they were able to collect only 1,500 CFA francs. As small as the requested contributions are, the PTA cannot manage to collect them. The local office's explanation is that 'most of the parents don't live in the neighbourhood. As a result, they are not aware of the school's needs because they do not experience them.' Under the circumstances, the PTA is forced to collect 2,000 CFA francs per pupil when first-year pupils are enrolled."

Source: Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008.

In most cases, pupils and their parents are an important source of financial resources for the schools, supplementing those allocated by the state (as an example, see *Box 8*). This is true of all four countries,

but perhaps most marked in Mali, where schools receive no funds from the state, either directly or indirectly, except to pay a few salaries. The most obvious difference between these funds and those allocated by the government is that they are in cash and are therefore immediately available for the school.

In general, the school budget is made up of the funds collected for the cooperative, PTA contributions, and recruitment fees, as the funds allocated by the central level rarely arrive in cash.

Various questions may be raised about these funds, two of which are discussed here. First, are the contributions voluntary or imposed? In principle, they are voluntary, but there are some indications to the contrary, for example the exclusion of pupils who do not pay them. It is noteworthy that in Benin the introduction of state subsidies allocated directly to schools caused parental contributions, which had been the main source of school revenue, to decline and even to disappear. In most of the schools covered by the surveys, however, the insufficiency of these subsidies has led to the reintroduction of PTA contributions, as shown in *Table 2.2*, which tracks changes in a school budget and its main components. The school's revenues rose from about €1,000 (660,896 CFA francs) in 2001/2002 to nearly twice that figure (1,232,710 CFA francs) in 2003/2004.

Table 2.2 Evolution of the budget of a school in Benin, 1999/2000 to 2003/2004 (in CFA francs)

	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Revenues					
Previous balance	129,318	103,674	55,720	115,142	161,710
State subsidies	-	690,000	603,000	819,000	597,000
PTA contributions	780,850	-	-	60,000	474,000
Other resources	-	-	2,176	2,516	Not reported
Total	910,168	793,674	660,896	959,087	1,232,710
Expenditures					
Salaries	174,500	180,000	210,000	390,000	690,000
Equipment and supplies	316,469	262,295	169,760	193,025	165,000
Other expenditures	315,525	281,806	183,150	204,670	377,710
Balance carried forward	103,674	69,573	97,986	171,392	Not reported
Total	**910,168**	**793,674**	**660,896**	**959,087**	**Not reported**

Source: Odushina *et al*., 2008.

The second question is whether these funds are public or private in nature. We will address this below in the discussion of the management of these funds.

- **Other sources of school financing**

Several schools also have other sources of financing. The teachers may contribute regularly to a solidarity fund. In a school in Guinea, the principal explained: "We jointly set a quota per teacher [rate of the teachers' financial participation chosen consensually], and the principal deducts 2,000 GF at the end of each month from the teachers' salaries. The financial contribution made to the family concerned is in proportion to the seriousness of the situation." The decision to create this type of fund as well as the amount of the contribution falls to the school itself, through the principal and the teachers.

Only in a few cases were local authorities involved in granting financial resources to schools. Again in Guinea, one of these authorities agreed to pay the school's water bill. The lack of financial support to schools from local authorities is surprising, at first glance, under decentralization.

Local authority involvement will be discussed in more depth in *Chapter 4*, but two points connected to financing may be mentioned here:

– the municipalities that heavily finance education (none of which figured in our research) seem to focus much more on the construction of infrastructure than on the running of the school. The former is obviously much more visible and less technical than the latter;
– these few instances of financial support are not the result of a general policy but rather reflect the initiative of individuals who are interested in the school, often for personal reasons.

The diversification of the sources of school financing is thus very visible. The need for it was explained by some school principals in Senegal: according to one, "The tasks and roles of all these actors [teachers, parents, municipal authorities, inspectorate] have changed over time. The tasks that are required today are much more complex and difficult than before." Another principal reported that he is asked to carry out tasks without any resources: "It's up to me to look for partners and funds." A third principal said he would like more autonomy

in fund-raising. This idea has been defended by the director of a local office in Senegal, according to whom, "On the financial level, the local office gives no funds to schools but creates the conditions for schools to generate funds themselves." This has important implications for the post and profile of the principal: negotiating ability and access to social networks become crucial, though they remain difficult to assess.

Material resources

- **Resources from the central level**

As we have seen, the financial resources earmarked for schools are in several cases transformed into material resources by local offices, which then allocate them. This is the case not only in Senegal but also in Guinea, where we have seen that although local offices are currently supposed to transfer these funds directly to schools, they sometimes transform them into material resources instead.

The inadequacy of material resources and their mismatch with the needs of schools were mentioned by school principals and teachers during the field surveys. The teaching staff often lacks basic supplies such as chalk, ballpoint pens, notebooks, and even textbooks. In Guinea, a teacher confided to the interviewers that he had to borrow a book from one of his pupils to prepare his lessons. A principal of a school commented: "It's not easy to function like this. When you talk about functioning and the basics just aren't there ... 'Principal, I don't have any pens, I don't have any books ...' You have to take into account what's needed on the ground."

The lack of textbooks is a recurring problem in many schools. In Guinea, the teaching materials used in one school are provided either by the local education department, the Institute for Research and Pedagogic Action, or the NFQE and PPSE projects. There are not enough textbooks, and the school has no library. According to the principal, the civic education books are not in such short supply; what is especially lacking are science books and readers. During the reading sessions, the teachers put together small groups of five or six pupils for a single book.

Although material resources are, in theory, allocated on the basis of the needs expressed by the schools, they do not meet these needs. In Guinea, a school principal told the interviewers: "On opening day the school had 40 staplers and 30 attendance registers instead of lesson preparation notebooks and boxes of chalk. What are you supposed to do

with 40 staplers when one or two are enough for the administration? But they don't leave us the choice." Accounts by some teachers reveal that the readers and French books are distributed to the children without even respecting the standard of one per table-bench. It seems that the books are distributed on the basis of three to four per row, which makes using them impossible for most of the pupils.

Likewise in Senegal, "In all cases, schools' needs are fully reported but the appropriations are always inadequate or unbalanced. The school lacks readers and first-level maths exercise books, whereas for introductory material (science, history, and geography) there's a plethora, the storeroom is flooded with surplus," said one principal.

A school principal in Guinea stated that the expression of material needs by the schools is only theoretically effective. In fact, "The appropriation in materials does not match the needs expressed. It is the local education office that sends the teaching materials and the procedure is as follows: going to the local education office with the supply notebook and seeing the person in charge of materials at the local education office, who then takes you to a delivery store and takes out the appropriation granted to the school."

What criteria are used to apportion material resources among schools? As with financial resources, these are neither clear nor known to the schools. Their existence in any case does not succeed in limiting inequities. There are disparities in the material resources available to schools, a situation criticized at a school in Senegal: "Less effective schools find themselves granted infrastructure that their achievements don't justify in the eyes of parents and teachers from other schools."

Consequently, apart from communicating their needs to the local office, schools have no autonomy regarding the material resources supplied by the central level. As these resources are inadequate, here again it has become necessary for schools to turn to other sources. External partners play a key role in this respect.

- **The role of external partners**

As one of the field studies on a local office in Senegal stresses (with a certain amount of exaggeration):

> The school's partners inject, as far as they are concerned, ten times more than the state into the running of schools. The NGO Plan/Senegal injected 1,026,497,041 CFA francs into this district alone between 1991 and 2000. The

> Paul Gérin Lajoie Foundation spent, in the Saint-Louis Schools Improvement Project (which is active in three local offices), nearly 2,700,000 CFA francs. The "Naga Def" organization has a project called "Computer Science for All at School" whose purpose is to computerize the 210 schools of the district, lighten the workload of school principals, make the database accessible, and introduce all fifth-grade pupils to computers.

This situation is similar in many but not all of the schools studied. It frequently happens that the NGOs and the agencies build and maintain the schools' infrastructure, and provide teaching materials and school supplies. But they choose to focus on schools in disadvantaged regions, which forces them to use selection criteria that exclude certain urban schools, even if those are also in an intolerable situation (as in the case of a school in Benin, located in an urban area and consisting entirely of straw huts).

In some cases, these resources seem to reflect the school's needs better than those provided by the government, because of the more direct involvement of the principal in decisions on resource allocation. The principals also have more autonomy in their use. As the assistant principal of a school in Senegal said, "It is only vis-à-vis the material that comes from the NGOs that the school is autonomous. Where the material that comes from the local office is concerned, the dispatching is already done and the school has nothing to do but accept it."

2.2 Resource management

The use of financial resources

The use of resources from the state

Just as local offices and schools have little or no autonomy in determining the financial resources allocated to them by the central level – all they can do is report their needs – they also have very limited autonomy in the use of these funds. The situation is not quite the same in all four countries.

In Guinea and Senegal, the budget is delivered in most cases in the form of budget lines, which schools cannot deviate from. Two case studies of local offices in Senegal stressed that "in using the budget, it is not permitted to change a credit line. This constitutes an active misuse". "The control of the use of these funds is done *a priori*, since orders cannot deviate from the budget lines and official prices [are] approved

by the governor of the region." The purchasing procedure is summed up in one of the case studies in Senegal:

> The payment process goes through the following steps: the local office makes its expenditure proposal to the prefect, who examines it and transmits it to the tax collector. If the proposal is approved, the tax collector then authorizes the local office to make the purchase. The local office confirms the order with the supplier, who delivers the merchandise in the presence of a reception committee presided over by the prefect or his representative.

Only in some cases do actors have some degree of autonomy in managing their appropriations, when these have a general designation, such as 'purchase of goods and services', and they can freely decide how these resources are allocated within that category.

In Mali, local education offices have more manoeuvring room: "The operating allocation ... is not subject to any management initiatives. The local education office director is therefore free to use these resources as he likes, although he is asked to account for the use of occasional support funds." Likewise in Benin, the expenditures made by schools on the basis of state subsidies are grouped under the headings "expenditures for operating materials, salaries, other expenditures". In this case, schools do have a certain level of autonomy.

When schools receive funds directly from the state – as is the case in Benin, and as is slowly being implemented in Guinea – principals have some room for manoeuvre in their use, which is the beginning of genuine autonomy. However, though these funds are useful for making minor repairs or a few indispensable purchases, they are far too small for taking initiatives with a long-lasting and deep impact on school operation.

The use of resources stemming from other sources of financing

Local offices and schools have much more autonomy in managing the funds they collect themselves from sources other than the central level. This autonomy, already apparent in the collection of these funds, also extends to their use. In fact, most of these sources of financing do not fall under any type of regulation, whether on the national or local level. Each local office or school decides by itself how to cope with the inadequacy of the resources allocated by the central level.

We thus find a range of scenarios among local offices and schools within a single country or region. These actors set different management rules and decide how to use these resources in their own way. As we have

seen, a local office in Guinea collects money from schools for textbook rental. In other cases, parents must participate in the payment of the school's custodian (Guinea, Mali) or water bills (Senegal).

In Benin, Senegal, and Mali, parental contributions to the PTA vary from one school to another. In Benin, as mentioned above, the small amount allocated by the central government has led most schools to reintroduce parental contributions. In one of the schools studied, the leaders of the PTA decided not to call for further contributions from parents and to give priority to support from external partners. In other cases, these contributions were reintroduced, with the amounts differing from one school to the next, in the range of 200 to 1,000 francs per pupil.

In Guinea, parents' contributions to the PTA are in principle subject to regulation at the national level. Articles of association have been drawn up – although they are not available to actors at the grassroots, as we will see – and an allocation formula for PTA contributions determined. The PTA has offices at the national, regional, and local levels, and a portion of the contributions is earmarked for them. In some cases, another part is paid to the local office (e.g. for textbook rental). Some of the funds are used to enable the PTA to carry out its tasks (building maintenance, table-bench repairs, etc.). In addition, it emerged from interviews that many inspection and pedagogic support visits are paid for out of PTA funds. For example, a school principal explained that, "When there are inspection missions from the local education office, as they stay at the school the whole day, it's the school that provides their meals. We also pay for the petrol. The money is given in cash. If three of them come, we can give 20,000 GF; if it's just one person, we give 5,000 GF. The minimum is 5,000 GF. We also pay when there are semi-monthly meetings. It's taken out of the PTA funds." Once again, schools help to finance some of the local offices' actions, including quality monitoring.

Although PTA funds are managed in a more regulated way than other funds collected at the level of individual schools in Guinea, two problems arise. First, schools do not always adhere to the framework established by the PTA at national level. When the need arises, they may increase the contributions requested and use them for their own purposes. Second, teachers and parents have criticized the poor use of PTA funds in some cases: "Although [the sum is] modest [roughly 400,000 GF], the money collected is not always used in the immediate interests of the school. It is especially this aspect that is criticized by teachers, who are

responsible for collecting money from pupils, but see nothing for it in the end." Similarly, a principal and teachers stressed that they did not see what the PTA did for the school. As one teacher said, "Concretely, the PTA does nothing. We don't know where the money goes." We shall see further on that the allocation formula for PTA funds and their effective use is not always clear and differs depending on who is involved.

In short, many local actors – in particular teachers and parents – have little knowledge of how the PTA funds are used. This is partly because management of these funds is monopolized by local education officials (the head of the local office, school principal), and other actors have no supervisory rights over them.

The monopolization of resource management

All the case studies found that the management of funds, whether allocated by the central level or derived from other sources, is monopolized by a few powerful individuals: in the local office by its director and sometimes its treasurer, and in schools by the principal in regular collaboration with the PTA president.

What emerges from most of the interviews is the lack of knowledge about the budget of the local office and schools on the part of others concerned. They are unaware of the amount of the budget, its composition, and even its very existence. The comments below refer primarily to schools, but the situation is fairly similar in local offices.

Many teachers in Guinea emphasized that they knew absolutely nothing about the funds allocated by the central level to schools for the 2003/2004 school year: "But where are we in terms of informing the assistant principal, teachers, and other actors regarding the budget and financial management? The interested parties answer that they have no idea, starting with the school delegate, even though the latter serves as the liaison between the municipal education department and the school. And teachers add: our school doesn't have a budget since the principal hasn't talked to us about it." Likewise, it was said in Senegal that "only the inspector and the accountant know what the budget is", and in Mali, "the local education office director has considerable autonomy regarding its use [use of the budget] and decides alone".

Most of the interviews conducted in schools revealed that the school principal has a stranglehold over the PTA funds. In Senegal, "Each voucher is supposed to be signed by the president, the treasurer,

and the secretary-general. However, in the accounting records, there are three vouchers signed by the principal alone." The same is true in Guinea (*Box 9*). The representatives of the NGO Plan reported that in one school the principal "weighs down" the PTA. In a few atypical cases, some control is exercised by actors other than the principal: in one school in Mali, "The accounts secretary handles the control of expenditures and cash management. The balance sheet is presented with accounting records to all the parents during the two annual general meetings."

Box 9. The roles of the principals in the management of PTA funds in two schools in Guinea

School 1

"The principal is the sole 'captain of the ship' since the president has given her full authority over the signature of documents. She is authorized to sign in his place and to report to the PTA board." "The principal is automatically a member (secretary-general) of the PTA board. The board president has delegated all his responsibilities to her, authorizing her to act in his name (with a stamp to back it up) and report everything to him that she does in this position. The PTA chose the school librarian as cashier, and when expenditure has to be made, the principal asks the cashier for the money without seeing the president."

School 2

"The principal plays the largest role in the PTA and directs all its activities. The other members make do with verifying afterwards." "As secretary-general of the PTA board, the principal is very close to the active members of this board. Having their trust, he acts in their name and makes sure to report to them during their frequent meetings."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008.

Such a stranglehold by the principals has several causes. First is the lack of regulation of these funds, as well as, in the case of PTA contributions, the inaccessibility of the regulations governing the principal actors at local level, including parents, who are major contributors to the local education budget. Parents have no means of knowing the exact scope of their role: "The parents unanimously say that they don't know the current amount of the funds or the expenditures made. In fact, they wish to challenge the management of their funds by the school, but say that, not knowing the regulations, they don't know what to do" (Senegal).

Another cause is that the principal is automatically the secretary of the PTA, permitting him to control its agenda and co-deciding on the use of the funds. If, as occurs in certain schools, the principal and the PTA president know each other well, the PTA may well become an instrument in the hands of the principal, strengthening and legitimizing his control over the funds.

A third cause is the lack of skills of the other PTA members, especially in financial management. The fact that many of them are illiterate creates a very unbalanced relationship with the principal, especially when it comes to verifying accounting documents.

One must keep in mind the social context in which these actors live, with little tradition of questioning, let alone criticizing, those in positions of power. A vicious circle can develop: the lack of financial transparency increases the power of the principal and/or the PTA president, and this monopoly of power in turn facilitates the lack of transparency.

This type of situation is risky, first, because the other actors do not have supervisory rights over fund management and, second, because the principal has little or no training in this area. In a school in Senegal, the principal had turned over to a local merchant the money sent by the local administration to pay water bills: "Summoned with the school treasurer, the principal stated that this sum had been turned over to a merchant while waiting for the bills, which had not arrived since the municipal decision had been made to turn over water management by means of this subsidy directly to the schools. 'I refused to open an account that would entail opening charges', the principal explains to justify giving this municipal subsidy to the merchant."

2.3 Control of resources

How is control exercised?

Control of the management of resources from the central level

In theory, as an inspector in Senegal points out, the need for control is limited, as financial resources from the state are allocated in the form of budget lines: "This is an *a priori* control. The procedure does not allow deviation from the budget lines, which are set by the Ministry of Finance and controlled by its departments, such as the Regional Finance Audit Office and the Inspectorate of Financial Operations."

In some cases, audits of local offices are conducted, but with a strictly financial objective. In Guinea, the execution of the budget allocated by the state is checked every quarter by Ministry of Finance staff. Likewise in Mali, the Financial and Administrative Division of the Ministry carries out routine, but very infrequent, checks. The first limitation of audits is their infrequency; the second is that they are concerned only with compliance with the financial regulations, and rarely with the effectiveness or impact of expenditures.

Auditing the management of funds the schools receive from the central level is usually performed by the local office, often on the occasion of management inspections. In certain cases, the central level plays a greater role, allocating funds directly to schools. In Benin, control of school funds is exercised externally by the Internal Verification and Inspection Division. In general, however, such visits seem to be organized only rarely, and hence little is known about the use of these funds. This is most unfortunate, because this issue is crucial: Does direct distribution of funds to schools improve schools' effectiveness? Our interviews in schools in Benin revealed a lack of transparency surrounding the management of funds, but precisely for this reason, we could not obtain specific information on their use or impact.

Control of the management of other sources of financing

Control of the management of other sources of financing by local offices and schools is less regulated and sometimes non-existent. There are, however, a few exceptions.

- The funds collected for the PTA are in theory subject to verification by PTA offices above the school level. In Guinea, management of the funds of the local PTA is to be verified by both the municipal and prefecture-level PTA office. This principle is not always put into practice, however.
- When schools make a sizeable contribution to the financing of the local office, as in Benin, they have in theory a right to oversee the management of these funds: "The local office head, with his chief of secretariat, draws up the budget plan for the district. Once the plan is drawn up, the local office head asks all the primary school principals to evaluate it. The budget is not operative until this is done ... In fact, there are no other forms of budget control, except that at the end of the year the local office head holds a meeting of school principals and gives them a report on budget execution."

These situations are exceptions, however. The management of many other resources collected by local offices from schools and by schools from parents is not subject to verification by these contributors, nor by anyone else. Those who provide these resources often do not know how they are used. All the field studies clearly showed the lack of transparency in this area.

Lack of transparency in resource management

The case studies revealed a lack of transparency in the management of funds collected by local offices and schools independently of the central government. When the interviews tried to address this subject the head of the local office or school principal admitted in nearly all cases their inability to give precise information, owing to the absence of their accountant or of the relevant files. This problem of transparency has at least three inter-related elements.

First, there is a lack of clarity about the total amount of the budgets available at the level of local offices and schools and of what should be transferred from one level to another. In Mali, discussions have shown that certain schools were not informed of the existence of funds earmarked for community schools (25,000 CFA francs per school) and that this sum had not been transferred to them. Similarly, *Table 2.3* shows the different understandings of actors from a single school in Guinea as to the total amount and the allocation formula of the funds collected for the PTA.

Table 2.3 Allocation formula of PTA contributions in a school in Guinea (in GF)

Person interviewed / Allocated to:	Principal	PTA treasurer	School delegate	Assistant principal	Teachers
Local education office	200 GF	500 GF	0 GF	not reported	not reported
School delegate: EFA teachers	0 GF	0 GF	500 GF	not reported	not reported
PTA office (school level)	600 GF	650 GF	800 GF	not reported	not reported
Municipal PTA office	100 GF	100 GF	0 GF	not reported	not reported
Prefecture PTA office	50 GF	100 GF	0 GF	not reported	not reported
Regional PTA office	0 GF	100 GF	0 GF	not reported	not reported
National PTA office	0 GF	50 GF	0 GF	not reported	not reported
Sports activities	50 GF	0 GF	200 GF	not reported	not reported
Textbook rental	0 GF	0 GF	500 GF	not reported	not reported
Total	1,000 GF	1,500 GF	2,000 GF	2,000 GF	2,000 GF

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008.

Second, there is very little clarity about how these funds are used. For example, when money is paid by pupils for textbook rental in Guinea, the funds are sent to the local education office. In one school, however, all those interviewed stressed that the pupils have actually paid their contributions for these textbooks but have yet to receive them. The principal declared: "Parents pay the local education office 500 francs per year per pupil for textbooks, whether they get the books or not." The teachers summed up the situation: "You rent something that no longer exists." This is of course connected with the monopolization of financial management discussed above.

A third aspect is the 'private' origin of these funds and thus the lack of clarity regarding their legal status and whether contributors have any right to control them. "The money collected at enrolment time, as in most of the schools surveyed, goes into a secret fund whose purpose is apparently not known to anyone" (Senegal). This lack of transparency results in part from the lack of a regulatory framework for these resources and the fact that local actors do not have access to the regulations that do exist in this area (statutory instruments concerning PTA contributions). As a result, they fail to share responsibilities and many are unclear about their roles. This favours the monopolization of financial management by the head of the local office and the school principal.

Several interviewees also suspected disparities between the amount of the resources allocated by the central level and the amount finally received by local offices and schools (*Box 10*). Obviously the extent of this phenomenon is not easy to measure, but people at school level are well aware of it. Reasons certainly include officials' lack of training in the use of funds and a lack of transparency concerning the regulations, but there are also more complex factors connected to power relationships and control of funds in a context of near-universal scarcity. This lack of control and transparency points to the need to develop a framework of accountability in which various actors participate.

Box 10. Funds budgeted and actually allocated by the central level to local offices and schools in Guinea and Senegal

In Guinea, "The principal and teachers questioned the transparency of financial and material flows between the Ministry and the school, implying that deductions are made at various levels of the system and that the funds earmarked for the school do not correspond to those it actually receives. They suggested eliminating the intermediaries between the Ministry and the school." "The principal stated: 'The major problem is that what is earmarked for the school never arrives in its entirety. Maybe a tenth arrives. As principal, you're subject to intimidation so that you won't say anything. If you're no longer principal, you won't be able to speak out any more. The decision-makers must go down to the level of the school and make sure the allocations reach it.' Teachers agreed: 'The decision-makers have to be told to find a way to get to the school. The money must be sent to the principal, who will use it after consulting with the teachers'." "The principal stated that over 60 per cent of the theoretical budget remains (unofficially) in the machinery of the bureaucracy, between taxes to the governorship and the municipality and commissions to the regional education department."

In Senegal, "One principal said, 'If each school actually received the sum that on paper it is supposed to have spent, we'd have more and we would have been able to do more'." "Such a situation in a context of transferred powers raises a number of questions. Do schools receive the funds earmarked for them? Do local governments take into account the funds received by schools from the local office when distributing their own funds? It is odd that principals state that they don't know about the existence of these operating funds, even though they are earmarked for schools. Such a lack of information should lead the inspectorate to review its strategy of communication."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008.

The need for a framework of accountability

We seem to be faced with an ambiguous and paradoxical situation. Schools have very little autonomy concerning the resources that come from the central level; they rarely decide on the total amount or breakdown of these resources, and the funds are subject in theory to strict control. At the same time, the funds collected at school level by school staff or by the PTA seem subject to very little regulation and control. Schools thus have a lot of room for manoeuvre, but the impact of these funds on the quality of the school is hardly visible, precisely because there is no monitoring of their use.

How can this complicated situation be resolved? The problems highlight the need to develop a framework of accountability for those involved. Those interviewed made more concrete proposals, reflected in the following paragraphs.

Such a framework could be based on two key principles. First, any actor who contributes to the financing of the education system should have the right to be informed of how these funds are used. Second, accountability should apply not only to higher-up officials in the education administration but also to colleagues and actors outside the administration, such as parents and local authorities. If local offices and schools supplement the inadequate resources allocated by the central level by other sources of financing, regulatory instruments should grant all actors in and around the school – and particularly parents – the right to oversee the way these resources are managed. If local offices can examine the management of schools' funds, schools should be able to do likewise with the funding they provide to local offices (as is already being done to some extent in Benin). However, the existence of such regulations does not automatically mean that they will be enforced. The culture of both local offices and schools, and in particular the distribution of power within them, works against such enforcement. Other actions could be taken to help create a culture of openness and transparency.

- A first step could be to make the legal instruments concerning the management of PTA funds (and other funds) available to all interested parties at school level and to explain them to these parties, in order to avoid creating a monopoly of expertise in resource management among heads of local offices, school principals, or PTA presidents.
- Systems could be created to verify whether the funds allocated by the central level to local offices and schools correspond to those initially budgeted. Obviously, the creation of such systems does not guarantee their effectiveness; their make-up and specific remit require a great deal of thought.
- Considering the scale of the resources privately collected, school principals and PTA members should receive training in resource management. This is what the NGO Plan wishes to do for several PTAs in Guinea.

The autonomy of local offices and schools in the search for new sources of financing may be welcomed and encouraged, since it enables them to cope with the inadequacy of the resources allocated by the central

level. At the same time, it may lead to even greater disparities between communities: the schools of the 'poor' survive through the support of parents or an NGO, whereas schools in better-off areas continue to receive more solid financing from the state. The policy goal of equity calls for the central level to monitor the system – and the disparities likely to develop within it – more closely. An information system should be developed, containing comparative data on all sources of school financing, to enable decisions about the level of state financing to be made on the basis of the characteristics of individual schools and of parents. Autonomy must go hand in hand with a framework of accountability for actors at local level, granting them an explicit role as well as the authority to play this role effectively. Safeguards need to be created to prevent poor management of the resources.

2.4 Summary and main conclusions

In all four countries – and this surely comes as no surprise – local offices and schools struggle with a lack of resources. The situation differs quite significantly from country to country, however. In Benin, many local offices function only because schools help to finance them, through fees and parental contributions. This can include financing the construction of new buildings for the local education office, although in one recent case parents finally refused to pay for such construction, arguing that this was the responsibility of the state. In Senegal, the financing provided by central government is sufficient to cover the day-to-day operations of local offices, but does not allow them to take initiatives that could significantly enhance their impact on schools. The lack of resources beyond the minimum requirements goes some way to explain why local offices are seldom able to engage in strategic planning, undertake initiatives, and focus their efforts where they are most needed.

This ineffectiveness is not only the result of insufficient resources, but is compounded by three management-related factors. First, resources from the central level are generally allocated in the form of tight budget lines, sometimes based on forecasts made by local offices and schools. Once the resources arrive, district and school managers have little if any autonomy in deciding how to spend them. Any change in planned spending needs approval from higher up. This budget does not always reflect the needs of schools, and its lack of flexibility makes local offices and schools less efficient. Absurd situations can result, like that of

the school in Guinea that received 40 staplers and 30 registers, but no notebooks or chalk.

Second, the size of the budget allocated by the government generally does not take into account the characteristics and needs of each district and its schools. In Senegal, the same operating budget is presented to all regional and local offices, regardless of the geography and the number or quality of schools. One district's total primary school population is nearly as large as the number of sixth-graders in another district, yet both have the same budget. This is not only inefficient; it also frustrates district managers, whose complaints go unanswered. The problem is not lack of information, since each education system generally has a good many indicators on the development of the system by region or district, the number of schools, pass rates on examinations, and the distance between the school and the local office. Rather, the challenge is that of allowing some positive discrimination and managing a slightly more complex system of financing.

A third problem concerns the lack of transparency in the use of resources. This is especially the case when funds are collected from parents or pupils. In nearly all schools in all four countries, the decisions concerning the use of these funds, which can add up to sizeable amounts in a context of scarcity, are made by the principal and/or the chairperson of the PTA. Although in principle the PTA committee members have the right to verify the use of these funds, they are generally unable to do so. Many are illiterate or do not have the standing in the community needed to contradict the principal or PTA chair. The ambiguous nature of enrolment fees and other fees imposed on parents (which may be considered as either public or private funds) complicates matters. Rose (2003, p. 57) in her research on a district education office in Malawi, discovered a similar situation: "Community members were expected to provide monetary and non-monetary contributions to schools without having any role in deciding how these contributions should be used. There is, therefore, no reason to believe that such contributions would enhance efficiency in the ways anticipated, since they did not result in increased community ownership or accountability of schools to the community."

The issue of transparency also gives cause for concern when it comes to spending by regional and local offices. Although there is an initial control through the tight budget lines, there is no check on the specific purpose of an expenditure, nor on how it contributed to

educational improvement, as long as it stays below the budget ceiling. In one country, the research team visited a regional office where the director had the use of a computer, printer, fax machine, and television. The local office in the same region did not even have a telephone line. The lack of transparency reinforces the monopoly of power exercised by certain individuals within many offices and localities, and this monopoly in turn reinforces the lack of transparency.

The situation is a paradoxical one. Where autonomy could bring better resource utilization, it is lacking because of rigid, inefficient, and counterproductive controls. Where control is needed, for example as regards the use of parents' contributions, it is lacking. As a result, educational resources are not only scarce but are undoubtedly not used as productively as they could be.

Chapter 3

Teacher management

When a teacher is assigned to my school, I would have preferred to receive some information about him so as to prepare my first contact with him. For example, that his CV be communicated to me. Otherwise, it takes me two or three months to get to know him. In the meantime, he is responsible for a class, without my knowing anything about him … You have to accept whoever they throw at you.

(school principal, Senegal)

We need a teacher raised in the community who speaks the language of the community.

(local authority, Mali)

In any decentralization process, the question of who takes decisions regarding teachers' careers is a controversial one. Several countries otherwise quite far along in their decentralization efforts have kept teacher management centralized, partly because of resistance by teachers but also because centralization is supposed to allow greater equity and higher quality. In our four countries centralization is the rule for teachers with civil servant status. However, the scenario has become much more complex as other categories such as volunteer, contract, and community teachers have emerged. These categories are managed at a much lower level, sometimes at that of the individual school. Their existence may be interpreted in various ways: as instruction 'on the cheap' owing to the state's helplessness and its lack of interest in disadvantaged groups, or as the emergence of true community education, the only viable system in conditions of scarcity. In any event, the decentralized management of those teachers seems to have advantages and disadvantages that may be a source of inspiration for the system as a whole.

3.1 Teachers with civil servant status

Management of civil servant teachers

The four case studies show that the management of civil servant teaching staff is highly centralized. Such teachers are mostly recruited,

appointed, deployed, and paid by the central government. Local actors have little authority here, and school principals really none at all.

The responsibilities transferred to local education offices are of two kinds. These offices may play a key role in the appointment and posting of school principals and may handle the posting within their district of the teachers appointed by the government (Guinea, Mali), or they may have very little power or no power at all in this area (Benin, Senegal).

In Guinea, "Principals and school delegates are mostly appointed on the recommendation of the local education office. It can be said that local education offices make the appointment and have it confirmed by the government. Anyway, everyone agrees that the recommendation is, most of the time, adopted as it is." In Mali, similarly, "Principals are appointed on the recommendation of the local education office director according to criteria based on probity and performance, while teachers are recruited by the central level of the ministry. The local education office director's recommendations are always adopted, but for some exceptional cases. These are generally political cases and won't be mentioned officially (well-known political opposition figure, anarchist)." In both countries, although local offices play an important role, the central level can – and according to several sources, does – occasionally overrule them.

In these two countries, local offices also have the authority to deploy the teachers within their district, but their autonomy is to some extent limited. In Mali, posting is based on a quota allocated by the government every year and on the needs of individual schools. The director of the local education office deploys the teachers recruited by the government. The local education office teaching staff and civil servants are directly recruited by the central level. "Once the staff are appointed, the local education office director cannot post them anywhere except within his own district because it is the central level, not him, that decides on appointments." "The local education office can post teachers within its district. It transfers and posts teachers according to service requirements. But it has no authority to recruit."

Local offices in Benin and Senegal have less power. *Box 11* describes the procedure used to recruit and post civil servant teachers in Senegal. In Benin, the 'aptitude list' through which local office heads can make recommendations for the appointment of principals has fallen into disuse, as a local office head explains:

The aptitude list has lost its importance because of some abuses noticed by the official hierarchy. But these officials themselves sometimes break the law by appointing teachers who are not on the aptitude list.

Box 11. The recruitment and posting of civil servant teaching staff in Senegal

"Teachers and principals are posted through the national deployment scheme. Announcements of vacancies or new posts are published in the 'Mirror' of the Ministry of Education and circulated country-wide. Candidates apply for the post they are interested in, and hence may come from any of the eleven regions of the country. As they do not have a seat on the national deployment committee, district heads have no authority over the posting of teachers into their district. But once the teachers take up their duties in their districts, inspectors have the authority to post them where they are required. Inspectors are obliged to ensure that the schools in their districts function."

Source: Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008.

Teachers with civil servant status are in most cases paid by the central level. Centralized management is practised in part with the objective of keeping a national education system. These four countries are relatively young and still in the process of nation-building. The role of the education system and the civil servants employed in it is to assist in this process, which is driven by a vision of the nation as one and indivisible. This implies that any civil servant may be posted anywhere in the country, which requires centralized management of the teaching force. It comes as no surprise that local offices, still less school principals, have little power to recruit civil servant teachers. As we shall see, however, this lack of authority is to some degree offset by the part they play in the recruitment of other categories of teachers.

Comments of principals and teachers on the management of civil servant teaching staff

Those mainly concerned by this issue – principals and teachers – made many comments on the way civil servant teachers are currently managed in their countries, in particular on the way principals and teachers are recruited and appointed. As one might expect, principals and teachers have contrasting opinions on the subject. Their positions in schools, particularly with respect to recruitment and appointment, are too far apart for them to find common ground.

Comments on the procedure for recruitment and appointment of principals

Principals tend to be satisfied with the way they are recruited, which is primarily through a simple appointment procedure on the basis of a grade, while teachers made a variety of criticisms of the procedure. Some principals would like to see several criteria, more in line with the skills needed by today's principals, taken into consideration in their appointment. According to a principal in Senegal, "The way principals and teachers are appointed, based on competition within the national deployment scheme, has advantages and drawbacks. Taking the highest in grade solves equity and administrative problems. But the drawback is that people do not emphasize morals and ethics. Grade alone is not enough; a morals enquiry should be introduced and district inspectors, who know the principals better, should be entrusted with the selection." Another principal, though himself appointed according to the national deployment scheme, suggests that this method of appointment should be revised. "In fact, the appointment committee gives preference to grade, even though other criteria are more objective and better suited to the present context: managerial capacity, open-mindedness, initiative, skill in personal relations, and the like."

Teachers are more critical of this appointment procedure. Their foremost concern is with the seniority criterion. The view expressed by some teachers in Senegal reflects that of many in the other three countries: "Teachers maintain that seniority is not a sufficient criterion for appointing a competent principal. They would like young principals to be appointed, but the seniority criterion does not favour youth." They recognize, however, that this criterion offers the advantage of transparency.

Their second concern is the failure to observe all the official criteria for recruitment. In Benin, some principals and teachers criticized the influence of politics on the recruitment of principals. According to the principal of one school, "Initially this appointment procedure was not bad; it was conducted with at least some care, including a morals enquiry and performance analysis. But nowadays, appointments are made on doubtful bases. It would be good to have the procedure changed, for although current appointments are preceded by inspection to evaluate candidates' suitability, the process is highly politicized; as a result, many current principals are not as well qualified as their predecessors." These views were confirmed by teachers who felt discouraged because "the

winners are not always the best qualified, but those who know how to grovel". In Guinea, some teachers said that personal relations were an informal but important criterion in the appointment of principals.

Teachers went beyond sharp criticism of these criteria to propose a number of alternatives. Some would like to see the principal elected from among his or her peers. In Guinea, "Teachers who do not appreciate the appointment procedure get together to discuss it. They think that the selections made today are not always appropriate and that the implementation of the decentralization policy implies that the decision should be made at the level of the school, that is, that teachers should be entitled to elect the principal from among the teaching staff." Others approve the idea of an election, so that the principals will be worthy representatives of the staff, not appointees obtaining their position by favour.

Some teachers would prefer principals to be recruited by exam. In Benin, teachers propose that "the appointment be made on the basis of a competitive exam, as is now the case for pedagogic advisers, because it happens sometimes that those with a lower level of educational attainment are in charge of those with better qualifications". A principal in Guinea, however, thinks that "a competitive exam would not be a good idea, because you can have a good intellectual background and yet be a poor manager".

Comments on the procedure for recruitment and posting of civil servant teachers

These differences of opinion between principals and teachers also exist with respect to the recruitment and posting of teachers, but here the situation is reversed. Whereas principals were on the whole satisfied with the way they themselves are appointed, while teachers were not, teachers are satisfied with the way they themselves are recruited and posted, while principals would like to make some changes and to have more autonomy in this area.

In all four countries, teachers have a positive perception of the procedure for their recruitment and posting, which is centralized and mostly based on competence (passing an exam or competitive exam). One reason given for this is the neutral character of such a procedure, since priority is indeed given to competence: "the procedure of recruiting through a competitive exam is appreciated by all, since only the best

are recruited" (Guinea). Moreover, with this procedure discretionary appointments can be avoided: "The same recruitment method, on the basis of a competitive exam, is also proposed for teachers. This competition is organized nationally to ensure transparency, by protecting those in charge of organizing it from local social pressure where familiarity, neighbourhood acquaintances, and ties of friendship, kinship, political affiliation, and religion could, unseen by the organizers, detract from the neutrality of local juries" (Senegal).

Nonetheless, principals expressed regret that they have no autonomy in the recruitment and posting of their teaching staff, who are managed in general by the central level or in some cases by the local office. As shown by their comments (*Box 12*), their objections are of two kinds. They object to the fact that they have very little or no role to play in teacher postings: the schools under their authority may be assigned teachers without their input, and they object to their lack of power to evaluate teachers. In short, principals have very little control over teachers: they have neither official powers nor the informal authority that some participation in teacher management might provide. Some principals view this situation as paradoxical: they are responsible for the performance of their schools, but they have no control over their main resource, the teachers.

Teachers do not share the principals' desire for autonomy, arguing that it would prevent transparency and equity in recruitment. One teacher said, "It will be worse; he will recruit his nephews; the teachers' unions would never agree to it. With more autonomy, principals would become arbitrary."

Principals' lack of autonomy in recruiting and appointing civil servant teachers is, however, compensated for by the role many of them play in recruiting and appointing other categories of teachers.

3.2 Other categories of teachers

Other categories of teachers have developed these last years in the four countries, in parallel with civil servant teachers, to address the growth in enrolments and the teacher shortage. These initiatives originated in various ways, but there are two main scenarios. In Senegal, the government took the initiative in the early 1990s of recruiting volunteer and contract teachers, developing a career plan that included the various categories. In the other three countries, it was local communities or principals themselves who, in the absence of action by the state to meet

the needs of schools, began to recruit community and volunteer teachers. These initiatives were then gradually recognized by the central level.

Box 12. Principals' comments on their lack of autonomy in the recruitment and posting of civil servant teachers (Benin, Guinea, and Senegal)

"The posting of teachers with civil servant status theoretically depends on the director's opinion, but this is not what happens on the ground" (principal, Benin).

"The principal criticized the school's lack of autonomy in staff recruitment ... He expressed his wish to be more involved in decision-making about the recruitment and posting of teachers in the school: 'Generally, it is the local education office that manages this; the principal only gets what he is given. If I had been allowed to organize my school myself, things would have been different'" (Guinea).

"The human resources department of the ministry was reproached with torturing schools by accepting teachers' requests for transfer or to stay in post against the recommendation of principals, who are therefore frustrated and cannot manage their teachers. In the same way, a teacher may be transferred even though neither the teacher nor the principal ever requested a transfer; this is what authorities call 'service requirements'" (Guinea).

"But he [the principal] can neither recruit nor dismiss nor even promote teachers. His decision-making power is limited to submitting recommendations to his superiors. The school complains it does not have all the staff it needs. It is not allowed to recruit more staff" (Guinea).

"The principal has no say and indeed no role at all to play regarding a new teacher: 'We have to manage their temperament without any information. When a teacher is assigned to my school, I would have preferred to have some basis for evaluation so as to prepare my contact with him. For example, that his CV be communicated to me. Otherwise, it takes me two or three months to get to know him. In the meantime, he is responsible for a class, without my knowing anything about him'" (Senegal).

"Commenting on his autonomy as regards staff management, the principal stated that 'you have to accept whoever they throw at you'" (Senegal).

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008; Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

Unlike civil servant teachers, these other categories are in some cases primarily managed by the communities themselves. The role played by the state, through the central education authorities and local education office, is fairly limited.

The role of actors at central and local levels in the management of non-civil servant teachers.

Various categories of teachers are to be found in the four countries studied (*Box 13*).

Box 13. Categories of teachers in Benin, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal

Community teachers and contract teachers in Benin

"One of the consequences [of increased enrolment rates] has been very high pupil–teacher and pupil–class ratios, the latter as high as 135:1 in some schools. Such situations have led communities to recruit teachers themselves, mostly without the required qualifications, and has given rise to the phenomenon of community teachers ... Community teachers are normally paid by PTAs and their coordinating bodies at municipal level ... Money comes from parents' contributions, which in some schools can amount to 1,500 or 2,000 CFA francs per year." "The civil servant teachers and contract teachers in this school said they were recruited solely on the responsibility of the central government ... Contract teachers joined the teaching corps after a competition organized by the Ministry of Civil Service, Labour and Administrative Reform."

Government contract teachers, Plan contract teachers, and community teachers in Guinea

"There are two, or arguably three, categories of teachers: civil servant teachers, government contract teachers, and contract teachers from NGOs such as Plan. In one of the schools we researched, only the first two categories still exist. (The third one existed until 2002, but after three months' training, the teachers in that category became government contract teachers. What happens is that through the local education office, and at the request of the community, Plan recruits teachers who are regularly supervised by pedagogical advisers. Plan pays them the same level of salary as government contract teachers for a year, at the end of which it hands them over to the government.) In the first category, recruitment in the civil service is now based on a competitive exam; once recruited, teachers are deployed in schools by the ministry. The second category is that of government contract teachers. After graduation from teacher training colleges, they are deployed to the regions by the ministry. Regional offices then appoint them to a post according to the needs of the local education offices. At the local level, the same scenario is repeated: teachers are posted by the local education office on the basis of the needs expressed by principals through the school delegate. This mode of recruitment is good from the standpoint of contract teachers, who think that 'it is better than unemployment'. Sometimes there are also community teachers, recruited by communities. The community will recruit the teacher if there is a prolonged shortage of teachers in the district or village; the

local education office visits the person and, if he or she is satisfactory, confirms the recruitment. The community pays these teachers."

Contract teachers in Mali

"Teachers in community schools and in non-formal education centres (*Centres d'éducation pour le développement*), known as contract teachers, will in the long run be more numerous than civil servant teachers. They are paid by communities (management committees). There is no fixed salary. They may be paid in kind, in cash, or in provision of service (communities provide and till plots of land for them). The government contributes to their salaries by allocating 25,000 CFA francs per year to each community school. Contract teachers are paid when they are working, that is, during the nine months of the school year. In addition to the government allocation, parents make contributions towards their pay."

Contract teachers and education volunteers in Senegal

"Currently, admission into the contract teaching force requires the following stages:

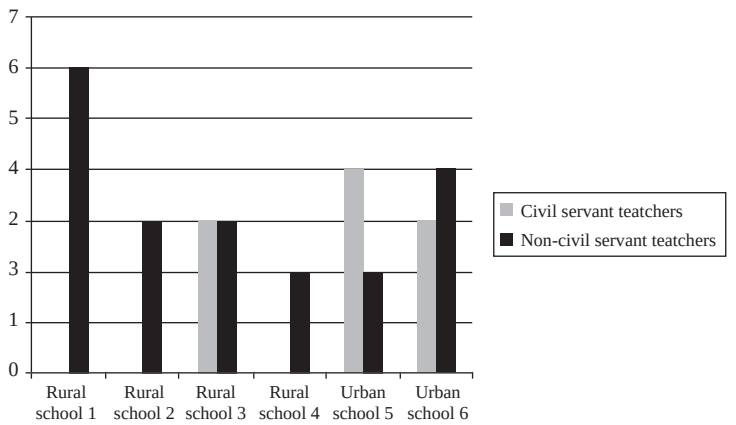
- Acceptance as education volunteer through competitive exam at inspectorate level;
- Training of volunteers in teacher training colleges;
- Appointment as education volunteer in the inspectorate where the recruitment took place;
- Integration on the basis of an annual quota into the contract teaching force, after passing a professional exam (CEAP level for those who have the junior secondary certificate, local education office level for those who have passed the *baccalauréat*);
- Obtaining permanent status in one of the teaching corps, depending on the professional diploma earned."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008; Dougnon *et al.*, 2008; Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

Each category is managed in a different way from country to country, with responsibilities shared differently. In some cases, communities play a key part in the recruitment of these categories of teachers. In Mali, local authorities recruit contract teachers. In Benin, principals and PTAs recruit community teachers. Sometimes communities have to pay these teachers as well, for example in Benin, where parents finance the cost of such teachers, and in Mali, where parents supplement the subsidy provided by the government. Community teachers may also be recruited and paid by external partners, such as in a district in Guinea, through the involvement of the NGO Plan.

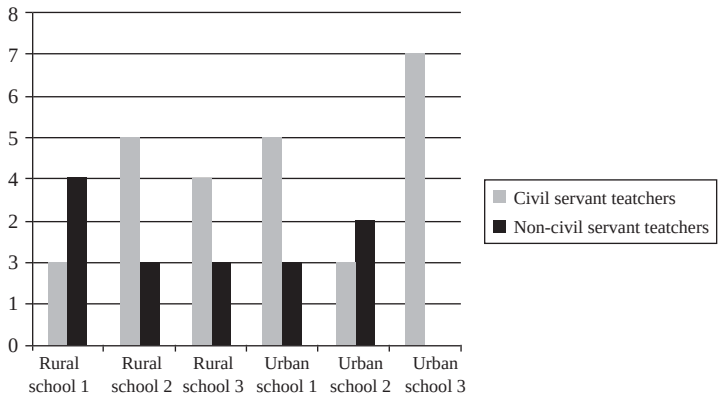
A large number of schools thus have teachers in several categories. In a good many cases, there are more non-civil servant teachers than there are civil servant teachers. This is often the case in rural areas, as evidenced by the situation of the schools studied in Mali (*Figure 3.1*). This phenomenon is also becoming more widespread in urban areas: this category of teachers had a substantial presence in some of the urban schools studied in all four countries (*Figures 3.1* to *3.4*). It is clear that hardly any schools now function without non-civil servant teachers. Some – for example, two rural schools in Mali – have no civil servant teachers at all.

Figure 3.1 Civil servant and non-civil servant teachers in the schools studied in Mali



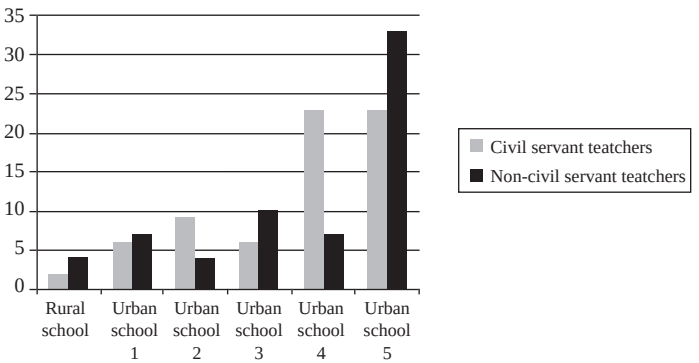
Source: Dougnon *et al.*, 2008.

Figure 3.2 Civil servant and non-civil servant teachers in the schools studied in Benin



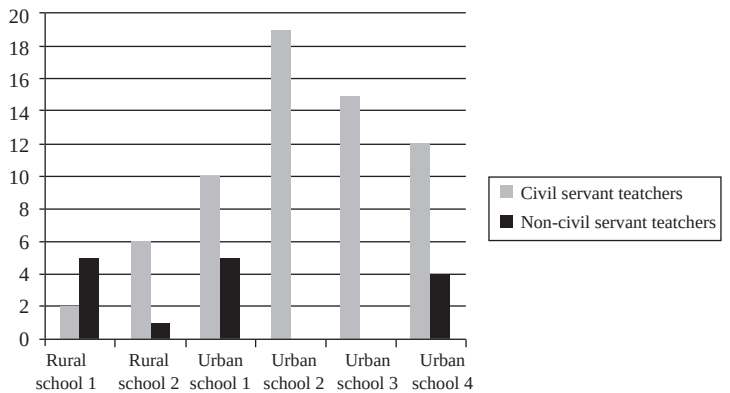
Source: Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

Figure 3.3 Civil servant and non-civil servant teachers in the schools studied in Guinea



Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008.

Figure 3.4 Civil servant and non-civil servant teachers in the schools studied in Senegal



Source: Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008.

Often neither the central level nor the local office is aware that these teachers exist, since the initiative was taken by the school alone or, more rarely, the municipality alone. The ministries have tried to regain control over part of this grassroots process by involving local education offices. As we have already noted, Senegal has had the most success in doing so, setting up a regulatory framework very early on. In Guinea, the regional education department may approve or reject applications. In Mali, the central level contributes to their salaries by allocating 25,000 CFA francs per year to each community school, but without having a precise idea of the profile of such teachers.

In Benin an attempt was made to strengthen the ministry's regulatory role and at the same time to monitor the quality of the education delivered by these teachers. Until a recent order, there were no rules governing their recruitment. Those recruited had diverse experience and profiles, but most did not have the qualifications required for teaching. A ministerial order adopted in 2002 introduced a little regulation by requiring that applicants for the post of community teacher be "holders of the basic teaching ability certificate (*certificat élémentaire d'aptitude pédagogique* – CEAP) or the teaching ability certificate *(certificat d'aptitude pédagogique* – CAP), or, failing this, the junior secondary school diploma (*brevet d'études du premier cycle* – BEPC), or the *baccalauréat*". This regulation is limited, however: recruitment of these teachers is now conditional on their educational level, as attested by a diploma, but not on their ability to teach. The regional education offices have provided some additional

guidelines by circulating a memorandum specifying the hierarchy among civil servant, contract, and community teachers: "Only those who have been contract teachers may apply for a civil service post, and only those who have been temporary and community teachers may become contract teachers." The case studies note, however, that "this regulation is often not observed by communities, which continue to recruit teachers who do not meet the required criteria in order to cope with the persistent shortage".

The government's efforts to manage these categories of teachers thus face considerable challenges. First, owing to lack of resources and hence lack of credibility of the central government, legal and regulatory instruments are not always enforced, and local actors continue to take initiatives not included in the national regulatory framework. These should not necessarily cause problems, because they help the country to achieve the national goal of Education for All. The studies show, however, that conflicts arise between the education authorities and local actors, partly because they are not guided by the same interests.

An example comes from Mali, where the local education office often comes into conflict with the local authority that recruits the teachers.

> These elected officials [such as mayors] evoke the law (Decree 3/3) to preserve their recruitment prerogatives. In their view, the role of the local education office is to evaluate whether the teachers that they propose are able to teach, even if they have neither the academic credentials nor the professional qualifications normally required. While for the local education office a qualified teacher from somewhere else (i.e. a stranger in the town) would suit, local elected officials want a teacher raised in the community who speaks the language of the community. The concerns of the two parties do not mesh. The two local education office directors whom we interviewed both stressed this, because for them it creates conflict of authority.

A second example comes from Senegal. According to a local education head, the municipality believes that its powers allow it to become involved in areas exclusively reserved for the school authorities, such as staff management, classroom practice, and flow management. He criticizes the tendency of local authorities to confine the movements of staff or pupils to their places of origin. In his view, this is inconsistent with the requirements of school mapping, because it would accentuate or maintain rural–urban disparities. There is thus a conflict between two legitimate arguments, the political versus the technical, and between two sets of interests, the local versus the national.

Comments of local actors on the existence of these other categories of teachers

While the presence of these categories makes it possible to address growing enrolments and the shortage of civil servant teachers, many criticisms are raised about teachers' quality and profile. Most such teachers do not have the required degree for teaching and have a variety of occupational backgrounds, including farmers, mechanics, and the like. Their lack of training (knowledge and teaching skills) casts doubt on the quality of their teaching. In Benin, whose education system has a large proportion of community teachers, "The officials interviewed (the regional directors, local office heads and their staff, principals) insisted that such a situation was detrimental: while it is true that these teachers help to meet quantitative needs, this does not mean they have the needed qualifications and skills. As the regional directors said during the interviews, 'You don't become a teacher just like that'." In Mali, some civil servant teachers expressed disapproval of other modes of teacher recruitment on the grounds that the central government was "abandoning its responsibilities".

For similar reasons, in both Benin and Mali the central level has required that local offices have a say on all applications for these posts. The local offices' opinion has only consultative value, however, and their recommendations are not often taken into account.

Criticisms voiced by civil servant teachers include the lack of equity between the way they and these other categories of teachers are recruited. Civil servant teachers are recruited centrally, on the basis of a competition or an exam, while the others are recruited locally, using other criteria. In Mali, for example, local authorities want "a teacher raised in the community who speaks the language of the community". Choosing these criteria is not easy. Reasons of objectivity or transparency would suggest simple criteria such as experience and qualifications, but these do not give a complete picture of the applicant. Belonging to the local community clearly has some importance, as it seems to increase commitment, but its more subjective nature may allow a local decision-maker, such as the mayor or school principal, to exert more influence.

Civil servant teachers feel that this method of recruiting gives the other categories of teachers advantages they lack; they would prefer these teachers to be recruited in a way that would guarantee their own status and some degree of equity within the teaching force. In Senegal the civil servant teachers explained that they were once recruited on the

basis of a competitive exam for admission to teacher training colleges, but this has been replaced by recruitment of education volunteers who become contract teachers after two years. These volunteers are recruited on the basis of a competitive exam organized by local offices – thus in a decentralized manner. Civil servant teachers would prefer the tests to be scored outside a specific district, in a single scoring centre, which they believe would ensure that the test takes place under reliable conditions. For instance, they pointed out, "at present the envelopes containing the exam papers are not sealed; those who score them are selected by the inspector". These comments show the difficulty of establishing a decentralized system of teacher management, in the absence of effective control over local actors and a framework for the assumption of responsibility by these actors.

Teachers in Senegal also expressed criticisms of the factors taken into account in the posting process:

> As regards the posting of teachers, especially education volunteers, teachers in one district said it was left to the inspector's judgement. They think that criteria should be defined for the posting of education volunteers and contract teachers, who may be transferred anywhere and at any time. Teachers also criticized the transfer criteria based on scores calculated according to geographic area: in Senegal, teachers get points according to where they are posted. Thus it happens that those serving in certain large towns get no points, penalizing them in comparison to those who serve in rural areas. During meetings of the transfer committee, it is common to see a young teacher getting higher scores than another one working in an urban area, although the latter's responsibilities (assistant principal in a 12-class school) are much heavier than those of the young teacher (who runs a one-class school). Various teachers made it clear that they feel their situation is not equitable compared to that of education volunteers and contract teachers: first, there is doubt as to the reliability of the current teacher recruitment process, in which the local office plays a central role in all operations; and second, the points system based on the area of service is sharply criticized.

The existence of all these categories of teachers clearly causes problems. The difficulties do not lie particularly at the level of individual schools, where civil servant and non-civil servant teachers coexist without conflict, as shown by the comments of a teacher and principal in Benin: "We treat one another like brothers to avoid conflict"; "People change, of course; you have to adapt to the different types of teachers when you're trying to build cohesion. As soon as misunderstandings arise, we make an effort to clear them up." Conflicts resulting from status

differences between teachers were not mentioned in any of the schools examined. The problem lies much more at the level of the authorities' management of the teaching force as a whole. Even in Senegal, which has a national regulatory framework governing teachers, criticisms are heard of the differential treatment of different categories and the fact that this framework is not systematically applied. In Benin and Mali, where local offices in theory have supervisory rights but rarely exercise them, the criticisms are sharper yet.

3.3 Summary and main conclusions

All four countries have several categories of teachers. Volunteer, contract, and community teachers have joined the civil servant teachers to make up for the lack of civil service hiring caused by governments' financial difficulties.

The appointment and posting of civil servant teachers remains a somewhat contested issue. Principals argue that they are the best placed to decide who should teach in their schools, and that they cannot be held accountable for school performance if they have no say in teacher postings. Local education officials feel that the interests of the district as a whole should take precedence over those of a single school, and that they have more insight into the needs of all their schools. The central level, which pays salaries, keeps control over this process in many cases, partly out of concern for national unity but also because teacher posts are scarce assets to be distributed. There is also disagreement over the best practice for appointing principals. Principals themselves are quite satisfied with the current arrangement, whereby the decision is made at a fairly high level, based mainly on academic grade. In contrast, teachers would like to have a say in the process, and would also like the criteria to take personal skills and leadership skills into account.

Still more contentious is the question of how to manage teachers recruited other than by civil service contracts. Governments did not go about creating these categories of teachers in the same way. In Senegal in the 1990s, the government took the initiative of recruiting volunteer teachers, and there is now a fairly clear career path, open to all teachers whatever their category. Elsewhere, these various types of teacher have arisen rather out of initiatives taken by local communities, municipalities, NGOs, and even PTAs. In some districts, the teaching corps now contains a minority of civil servants, and there are schools with only volunteer or community teachers. Somewhat surprisingly, the coexistence of these

different categories in most of the schools we visited does not create great tension between the teachers. That does not mean that there is no jealousy or conflict, but these do not seem to be played out within the school. Each category prefers to criticize the policymakers. Civil servants feel that the teaching profession is undermined by the existence of unqualified and poorly trained young teachers. A study by Welmond (2002) on Benin indicated that the increased recruitment of lower-paid teachers without civil servant status led to a more embittered teaching corps and was interpreted as an attack on the teachers' identity as respected civil servants. In contrast, contract teachers feel that they perform as well as their colleagues who have more job security and higher salaries.

Although the existence of other categories of teachers makes it possible to address the growth of enrolments and in some cases the shortage of civil servant teachers, it is sometimes doubtful whether these teachers have an appropriate profile. Policymakers have not remained indifferent to these complaints, and have tried to regulate teacher management more effectively, for instance via rules about the level of qualification required for this type of teacher or the role of an authority responsible for oversight of the process. But where the state does not have the financial resources to contribute to their salaries, its legislation meets with little compliance. In such cases, local offices may prefer not to intervene too strongly in the recruitment of volunteer or community teachers for fear that such intervention will lead to demands for greater financial involvement.

Recruitment at the local level has certain advantages: it allows for a more thorough assessment of an applicant's profile, giving some weight to human qualities and connection to the community. This can lead to the selection of candidates from the community who show greater commitment to the local school. At the same time, such recruitment is not accompanied by a salary or by career prospects good enough to motivate staff. This creates many problems, including rapid turnover and non-payment of community teachers, who get little response to their complaints, as both the principal and the head of the local office disclaim responsibility. Lastly, principals or PTA chairs sometimes select family members as teachers. It is interesting to note that principals and civil servant teachers view these recruitment procedures and criteria in the same light: they think them very useful for recruitment of the other categories, but reject them when it comes to their own case.

As already noted, the existence of a regulatory framework could improve the quality of the education provided and also maintain a measure of equity within the teaching force, but the question remains of which authority, local education office or local government, can impose such a framework. This is a somewhat complex question, as illustrated by the case of Mali. It must also be borne in mind that these various categories of teachers emerged precisely because the state – and hence the central education authority – is short of resources. This in turn leads to the more general question of whether the trend is towards centralized or decentralized management of teachers, and whether, if there is decentralized management, it can and should be subject to oversight by the state, exercised through local offices.

Chapter 4

Support from local authorities and communities

Local authorities are not yet aware of the special nature of schools: they do not make enough resources available, and they do not respond rapidly enough, as they are unaware of the deadlines imposed by an inflexible school calendar. They also lack information about the new education strategies and, above all, know nothing about the tasks transferred to them. Some of their staff are even illiterate.

(local office head, Senegal)

The PTA board does its job, but I haven't yet seen any decisions aimed at profoundly changing the image of the schools.

(school principal, Benin)

Decentralization essentially requires the involvement of authorities or actors who previously played only a minor role. Together with local offices and schools, local authorities (municipalities, village communities, or mayors, depending on the country) and communities must be involved in education at the local level.

The four countries began the decentralization process at different times. In Benin, the first municipal elections took place in December 2002 and January 2003. In the other countries, the decentralization process is much older and has developed in the last ten to twenty years.

In each case, local authorities were assigned responsibilities in the field of education, to support the implementation of education policies through a range of actions. Communities also play a part, mainly through PTAs and, where they exist, school management committees. As shown in the introduction, however, the implementation of these policies varies significantly from one country to another.

4.1 Local authorities and their responsibilities

Actions related to education

Local authorities in each country have been assigned responsibilities in the field of education, mostly related to school construction, repair, and maintenance. Mali is an exception here, as its local authorities are also responsible for recruiting and paying contract teachers, as we have seen.

Local authorities are involved in education with varying degrees of importance. Some limit their activity to exercising the responsibilities transferred by the central level, and may not even do that much; others offer real support to the school and go beyond the scope of their responsibilities.

Box 14 illustrates the diversity of educational involvement of local authorities, both among countries and within each country. Although all the local authorities in a given country have had the same responsibilities transferred to them, they support schools in different ways.

Box 14. Examples of different levels of involvement of local authorities in education

Benin

"The principal said that 'another request has been introduced for completing a building with three classrooms at group/C, and the mayor has promised to do it'."

"At the beginning of this school year, the pupils of this school, like their peers in municipality X, were given a few copybooks by the municipal authorities."

"Now that we know that the municipality can help us to develop our school, we will certainly call on them at any time, because until now we have not received any support from the municipality."

Guinea

"The rural development community [*communauté rurale de développement* – CRD] is involved because it is the CRD that guides NGOs and other partners to the communities that have expressed needs. Thanks to the CRD's capacity to mobilize and to negotiate, support to schools has improved. If Plan or another NGO goes to school X, it was guided there by the CRD ... According to the school delegate, if all that was possible, it was thanks to the dynamism of the CRD, which mobilized NGOs, negotiated with them, and guided them to schools where they would support sporting or health-related activities or would offer

reading materials for children, school bags, rewards for pupils, etc. The CRD has well understood its role and is fully playing it."

Mali

"The local authority is involved in the maintenance of buildings and equipment and in the management of non-teaching staff. This involvement is in accordance with the regulations and is useful and effective."

"The municipality collaborates with the local office, offering assistance and support. For example, it takes charge of the organization of exams at the end of basic education by purchasing supplies, paying for meals and accommodation of candidates and supervisors, and paying the salary of security officers."

"The local offices blame the municipalities for their carelessness and lack of dialogue in some actions (creation of new schools, confused recruitment)."

Senegal

"Facing these numerous difficulties, the school is not happy with the Rural Council, as the very inadequate supplies it provides at the beginning of the year offer sufficient evidence of its meagre resources and weak capacity. Actors expect very little from the Rural Council, which, however, has correct relations with the school: it instructs the councillor from the school's village to be kept informed on a daily basis of the school's problems."

"The chair of the education committee said that for this year, 'The municipality has set up a budget of 300,000,000 francs for the schools. Of this amount 180,000,000 francs are subsidies from the Minister of Education, himself a town councillor in this same municipality, independently of the granted funds.' This budget is for the rehabilitation of some schools in the town, payment of water bills, and grants for the poorest pupils."

"According to the principal, the municipality took the initiative of bringing electricity to the school, as it had done in all the schools in the district ... The principal considered that the involvement of the municipality is satisfactory as well. 'They have significantly increased the budget and given municipal grants to pupils from poor families.' The grant amounts to 15,000 francs per pupil, and ten pupils have received it. Partly or wholly orphaned children are given priority ... The municipality pays for water and electricity bills and for the weeding of the school yard when school is in session. In addition, the municipality has given a copybook per pupil and given grants (10,000 CFA francs) to two or three of the poorest pupils."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008; Diakhaté *et al.*, 2008; Dougnon *et al.*, 2008; Odushina *et al.*, 2008.

Several factors explain local authorities' varying involvement in local educational matters. In Benin, municipalities take little action because the municipalities themselves are a recent phenomenon. Personal

factors also have some importance; for example, a mayor may take an interest in education because of a career in teaching or good relations with the principal owing to family ties. The case studies also point to two more structural factors: the financial resources and technical skills available to local authorities to carry out their assigned tasks.

Financial resources of local authorities

Local authorities generally get subsidies from the government to implement the transferred responsibilities. In Senegal they are granted funds that are distributed into nine transferred responsibilities:

- construction, equipment, and maintenance of elementary and pre-elementary schools;
- recruitment and support of additional personnel in elementary and pre-elementary schools;
- grants and scholarships;
- participation in purchase of textbooks and school supplies;
- participation in the management and administration of junior and senior secondary schools through dialogue and consulting systems;
- implementation of illiteracy eradication plans;
- recruitment of literacy instructors;
- training of trainers and literacy instructors;
- resource mobilization.

In Benin and Guinea, local authorities have more limited educational responsibilities, mainly for the construction, maintenance, and equipment of elementary schools. Local authorities are generally autonomous in their use of these funds. Although the government funds granted in Senegal are meant for the schools, according to a local office head the law does not require the municipal authorities to spend them exclusively on schools; they are free to allocate them as they choose. There are indeed no tight budget lines fixed by the central level for the use of these funds, on grounds that in order to preserve the spirit of decentralization, local priorities should not be set at the central level.

This argument calls for more critical examination, however, because the situation is not without its challenges. Four in particular are worth noting. First, this autonomy can work against the interests of education: "the limitation of this principle is that, without intensive lobbying of the municipal authorities, education issues may be relegated to the

background". According to an advisor to a mayor, "the municipality is facing a thousand problems, so schools are sometimes forgotten".

Second, financial decentralization is not implemented automatically. For example, local authorities in Benin and Mali are supposed to get subsidies from the central level, but these subsidies are not actually received. In Benin, a principal noted that "the municipality has not yet received the subsidies from the government, and so can hardly do anything". Another municipality "has done nothing for this school, because it has very limited means just now", said the head of the municipal council's social and cultural affairs committee. In Mali, similarly, "The municipal council says that the municipality can do nothing for the school as long as the law is not applied, in other words as long as the resources are not transferred to the local authorities. The law stipulates that 40 per cent of the education budget is to be transferred and that less solvent municipalities should benefit from the solidarity of the country through subsidies."

In this situation, local authorities contribute their own resources. They are obliged to do this even when they receive subsidies from the state, because these subsidies are usually insufficient. The municipalities' own resources are local taxes and rural taxes. However, local authorities have serious difficulty in collecting these taxes. In Senegal, according to the president of a rural community, "The main resource of rural communities comes from the rural tax, which is indeed compulsory, but if you do not pay it, you are not penalized, which often happens in rural communities." In Mali, similarly, a mayor noted that the task of collecting local taxes was repressive and said it would be better assigned to the prefectoral and sub-prefectoral administrations, which would then transfer the money to the municipality. He also explained: "No elected official would be suicidal enough to demand taxes by force from those who have elected him, unless he does not intend to seek re-election. There is also drought. For example, in 2003, no tax was asked from the people who were facing a very serious famine. The absolute priority was to find food for the population." The municipal council of this town reported that they have never been able to raise 50 per cent of the budget. Even if the local community manages to collect these resources, they are still insufficient. In Senegal, it was pointed out that "The only taxes rural communities can collect from their populations are rural taxes, collection of which is not compulsory. In addition, they get granted funds from the government, like all other municipalities. Yet even when taken together,

these financial resources are insufficient to enable them to act at the level of the rural community."

The third problem relates to a form of competition between the central government and the local authority. Presidents of rural communities complain that elected local authorities do not have financial autonomy, as the government is still collecting taxes at the level of their administrative districts instead of transferring that authority to them. Caution is needed on this issue, however, in view of the lack of skills and regulatory provisions mentioned above.

The fourth problem is that the financial resources available to local authorities to meet their responsibilities depend on their capacity to collect and mobilize these funds, with implications that in principle are detrimental to equity.

The variation in the level of involvement by local authorities in education depends, then, on the funds that are available to them, and also on the proportion of these funds that they decide to allocate to education.

The technical capacity of local authorities

The issue of the technical capacity of local authorities was raised by some interviewees, for example in criticism of the illiteracy of their members. No training is focused on the responsibilities transferred by the central level. A statement by an inspector in Senegal is a good summary of the situation: "Local authorities are not yet aware of the special nature of schools: they do not make enough resources available, and they do not respond rapidly enough, as they are unaware of the deadlines imposed by an inflexible school calendar. They also lack information about the new education strategies and, above all, know nothing about the tasks transferred to them. Some of their staff are even illiterate."

In Benin, similarly, the officers of the social and cultural affairs committee of one municipality explained that the committee had done little on the educational front because of its lack of preparation: "Right at the beginning of the process, we did not take all the measures needed. There was a certain lack of preparation, which is why the municipality is still at the stage of making proposals. Working sessions with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education are planned to explain the municipality's views on education to the authorities responsible for this sector."

Relations with local education offices

- **Relations are informal in most cases**

There is rarely a formal framework for dialogue between the local office and local authorities. Relations are in most cases highly informal, consisting of more or less regular attendance at meetings or exchanges of information.

At times, the informality of these relations makes them highly productive. An example from Senegal shows how such meetings can constitute a framework for dialogue and allow the local office to guide local authorities in exercising these transferred responsibilities:

> The inspector emphasized that he was involved "in all bodies where school affairs are decided: the municipality's vote on the budget and the use of granted funds". Conversely, the inspector involves local authorities in all technical meetings, such as the Departmental Development Committee (*Comité départemental de développement* – CDD.[10]) The mayor chairs the Departmental Coordination and Monitoring Committee (*Comité départemental de coordination et de suivi* – CDCS), which monitors the ten-year educational development programme and aims at strengthening the decentralized management of schools. The inspector participates in the meetings.

An example from Mali shows, however, that such informality does not always result in regular collaboration:

> The local education office collaborates with the municipality through meetings. They mainly communicate by post. This communication does not take place in a well-defined framework of dialogue, but according to needs and circumstances. Thus, if needed, the mayor invites the director of the local education office, especially when there is some action about the school. However, the local education office director does not attend meetings of the municipal council. Communication with the municipality is on the whole judged positively by the local education office director.

A formal framework of dialogue can also be established. In Senegal,

> The CDCS, as a framework for dialogue, is in charge of preparing the start of the school year and of monitoring the ten-year educational development programme at the level of the municipality. As such, it can make trade-offs. Until the recent establishment of the CDCS, there had been no contact

10. The CDD is a body at the regional level, chaired by the prefect, which can devote its meetings to a given sector (health, education, etc.).

> between the inspectorate and the municipality ... At present, both think that the CDCS and local education and training committees are positive developments, since they gather everybody around the same table, in the same framework.

The prevailing situation is nonetheless one of informal relations between the local office and the local authorities. The personalities of the head of the local office and the mayor hence often play a key role, since they are the ones who decide whether to initiate or refuse to initiate contact.

- **The local office as a technical arm of the local authorities**

As it is traditionally responsible for the implementation of education policy at the local level, the local education office has a body of expertise from which actors with newly assigned responsibilities in this field – such as local authorities – may benefit.

During the surveys, local offices were in some cases described by the local authorities, and by the offices themselves, as the 'right hand' or the technical adviser of the local authorities. This was particularly stressed in Senegal: "With their experience, local offices are now helping the local elected authorities in the implementation of transferred responsibilities in the field of education. In this context, the perception of inspectors as the technical advisers of the local authorities does make sense." In Benin, where local authorities are a recent phenomenon, this relationship is yet to be developed. The head of one local office said that he is waiting for the mayor "to call on him before making contact". He did, however, say that he would like to "change these relations, to be considered more as the mayor's technical adviser on educational issues, summoned to meetings of the municipal council, than as his subordinate".

The local office thus may try to get the local authorities to be more involved in education issues. In Senegal, this seems to happen more often in rural communities than in urban areas. One inspector described his relations with rural communities as "shy", adding that "it is we who are trying to mobilize them".

Viewing the local office as the technical arm of the local authority may mean seeing the relationship between the two as vertical, the mayor having political legitimacy as an elected official and the local office having technical legitimacy because of its experience. This was highlighted in Benin, where the mayors are regarded as higher-ranking than the heads of the local offices, for two contradictory reasons: first,

they were elected by the people, and second, they are still supposed to be the representatives of the state. Before the elections in late 2002, a number of mayors were in fact sub-prefects. Some principals stressed that "the mayor is the representative of the President of the Republic; he is the boss of all bosses". A local office head noted that although the relationship between the local education office and the municipality should have become horizontal with decentralization, it remains vertical. This does not fail to create conflicts between local offices and local communities, as we shall see below.

- **No relations at all in some cases**

In some cases, relations between the local office and the local authorities are non-existent. An interesting example comes from Benin, where one of the local office heads expressed regret "that no contact has been established to date with the mayor or the social and cultural affairs committee to discuss educational concerns in the municipality". In fact, the municipality has taken a number of actions concerning education, but has not informed the local office of them. It apparently organized an awards ceremony for the best pupils in the municipality, without inviting anyone from the local office. The principals interviewed also told the research team that local elected officials are visiting schools in increasing numbers, but without asking the local office head to accompany them: "It even happens that the municipality undertakes construction or renovation of school buildings without informing the local office head either before or afterwards."

It was explained that in this case the municipality much preferred to contact the higher administrative level (the education office at regional level) rather than the local office. According to the chairwoman of the municipal committee for social and cultural affairs, the basic reason for this preference is that "it is the regional office that controls the substantial government resources the municipality needs to take action in schools, until the transfer of responsibilities becomes a reality".

Local authorities are sometimes poorly informed about the division of responsibilities within the education administration, and may have only a vague perception of their own role. A municipality may consider the local office as a mere subordinate and may even bypass it, which can generate conflict.

- *The existence of conflicts*

The monographs highlighted the difficulty of sharing responsibilities at the local level and the presence of conflicts between local authorities and local education offices. The former's political legitimacy and the latter's technical legitimacy may clash, as was particularly emphasized in the case of Mali (*Box 15*), though it is not limited to that country.

Box 15. Conflict between local government and the local education office in Mali

"Appointed educational professionals see themselves as the sole competent actors, while elected local authorities feel that the law is on their side. Whether it is voiced or not, this creates a problem of leadership and of a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities."

"Collaboration between local education offices and municipalities is uneven, according to principals and local education office directors. Principals go even further, saying that 'their relations with the municipality are bad'. Dialogue is very rare and irregular, being determined by circumstances. For example, the municipality invites local education office directors to the municipal round-table for dialogue. The mayor calls upon the local education office on issues related to the recruitment of teachers, fitting out of classrooms, and the school canteen. Local education office directors characterize their relationship with municipalities as one of conflict, for each side may think it has authority over the school (especially regarding the way teachers are recruited). For the municipal officials, however, there is no conflict, as the local education office is only a supporting and advisory body that cannot make decisions in their place, even if they themselves have no expertise in education. These elected officials recognize that the education specialists are the teachers, but they still invoke the law (Decree 3/3) to preserve their recruitment prerogatives."

Source: Dougnon *et al.*, 2008.

4.2 Community bodies and their responsibilities

The relationship between local education offices and local communities is repeated, with some significant differences, in relations between the school principal, who represents the ministry, and the PTA or management committee, which represents the local community. We describe here the various community organizations and then comment on their limitations.

Community bodies

PTAs

They generally have a chairperson, a secretary-general – usually the school principal – and a treasurer. These are the key functions found in each school, but others may be added to them. In a school in Benin,

The board of this PTA comprises eleven officers elected during a general assembly, with the following functions:

- Chair;
- Deputy Chair;
- Secretary-General;
- Deputy Secretary-General;
- Treasurer-General;
- Deputy Treasurer-General;
- Facilities Officer;
- Officer for Social and Women's Affairs;
- Adviser;
- First Auditor;
- Second Auditor.

The board members' profile often matches the tasks required of the PTA: for instance, a mechanic or plumber will enable the PTA to deal with necessary repairs and maintenance. "Choosing tradespeople as board members is justified by the fact that they may be called upon in case the school needs repair work done" (Benin). While this is indeed an advantage, things are different where the managerial functions of the PTA are concerned. Some interviews emphasized the lack of competence of PTA members – more specifically of the treasurer – in financial management, while others raised the problem of illiteracy: "they are all illiterate except for the Secretary" (principal, Guinea).

There are statutes governing PTAs in each of the four countries, but they are not often accessible at the local level and, as we have seen, many PTA members are not aware of their existence. However, lack of access to these legal instruments does not prevent PTA members from being well aware of the traditional roles assigned to them (except that of financial management); these are chiefly the collecting of PTA contributions and using these resources for the upkeep of the school.

Like local authorities, PTAs will be involved to varying degrees in educational issues at the local level. Some do not play any role at

all, others are content with fulfilling their traditional role, and some go beyond this. For example, two school principals stressed that "the PTA is not dynamic"; "the PTA does not do its job, and it is lethargic". At the other extreme, the PTA may play a key role in local education affairs. Such involvement was particularly highlighted in Guinea, where PTAs engage in awareness-raising and mediation among the local population (*Box 16*).

Box 16. Role of PTAs in Guinea in raising communities' awareness of education issues

"It is through PTAs that the district is kept informed of the problems facing schools; they are in charge of school maintenance and welcoming strangers, making parents aware of the importance of school attendance, and helping to organize construction of housing for teachers."

"PTAs get involved by participating in the enrolment of pupils, the maintenance of the school, sensitizing parents about school attendance, and organizing the building of houses for teachers."

"PTAs give advice to pupils and sensitize parents regarding payment of their contributions and resolution of conflicts."

"When a parent is called to the school, one of the PTA members is often present to try and be the mediator."

"The PTA keeps parents informed ... It keeps the population in the district informed on how many places are available and when enrolment will take place, based on what criteria."

"The PTA can disseminate in places of worship (for example in mosques) the information resulting from its dialogue with the principal, in particular concerning the maintenance work and the expected contribution."

Source: Baldé *et al.*, 2008.

Management committees

In Mali and Senegal, management committees have been set up at local level.

In Senegal, "This system exists at the level of the school, but it is not yet functioning. Created as part of the ten-year educational development programme, it is made up of two representatives of the pupils, two parents, and all the teachers at the school; the principal is the secretary-general and the head of the urban district is the chair." One principal

"thinks that 'in this field [management of PTA funds], the school would be more autonomous if the granted funds were given to the management committee'." In another school, "The principal considers that 'with the existence of this system, there is a problem of coexistence with the PTA, since it has to manage all the funds coming to the school, including those coming from the parents'."

In Mali, the management committee is in charge of school organization, control of the teaching staff, and minor rehabilitation work on the building. The management committee must deal with difficulties, handle enrolments, and deal with the social problems of teachers, whether conflicts within the school or between the school and the population. These provisions, specified in the regulations, have not changed over time. The research noted that these regulations cannot be found in many schools, as the chairman of the management committee keeps them.

In Senegal, these committees were created at national level and should thus eventually come to exist everywhere. In other countries, they have at times been established by NGOs, including Plan. They are called on to play a key role in the management of schools – in Senegal in the management of PTA funds, and in Mali, among other tasks, in the control of the teaching staff and enrolments. Given the part played by other actors in this field – PTA, local education office, local government – there is some risk of conflict in the sharing of responsibilities, as a principal in Senegal hinted (quoted above). The main reason for creating the committees, even if it is not always acknowledged, is lack of confidence in PTAs' ability to manage the resources collected at school. The committees are supposed to ensure that these funds are used more effectively and also to serve as an incentive for teachers to improve. All of this has yet to be verified, as the committees were created only recently, and still did not exist in some of the schools visited.

Other structures

Other groups and actors who represent the community may play a role in local education.

In Guinea, examples include urban and rural district councils. In principle, these are genuinely decentralized, but in reality they reflect a policy of deconcentration, as their heads are appointed by the central government rather than locally elected. They perform awareness-raising and mediation among the local population. For example, "The urban

district provides moral support to the school; young people in the district, the principal says, help the school, for instance in cleaning it up and making it more attractive, and improving the latrines and other facilities." This school principal has "a high opinion of the district council and highlights the support it gives, especially in terms of security, sanitation, and awareness-raising for parents". In another school, "The district is involved in building school facilities and housing for teachers. It is also active in enrolment of pupils, informing and sensitizing communities, and accommodating important delegations." In a third, "The practical role of the district council is its involvement in ensuring the security of the school. A few other activities may be mentioned, such as the replacement of a stolen flagpole, helping the teachers to buy rice (now managed at the level of the district), and the traditional role played in school renovation."

Awareness-raising is an important role when the school is troubled by a difficult environment, with security problems (comings and goings in the school yard, robberies, and even vandalism). Under these circumstances, the assistance provided by the district council or even by the PTA, as we have seen, is very useful.

Other organizations have been set up at the community level in order to support schools. For example, an association in charge of the repair and cleaning of schools in a village in Senegal, the Women's Involvement Group (*Groupement de promotion féminine* – GPF), made up of the women of the village, has volunteered to prepare the school lunches. "The women of the village are divided into three groups (from the centre, the left side, and the farther east side), and each group in turn, helped by their daughters, manages the cooking properly and does it free of charge ... This spontaneous contribution has allowed the school canteen to keep going, and without the canteen many pupils would have dropped out," the principal said. Every Friday, GPF also organizes a *set setal* operation (cleaning of the school) in which the whole population participates.

Those interviewed praised more specifically the role played by one woman from this village:

> The "mother of the pupils" (in an initiative started in 2003) is a lady of about 40, living in the village. Chosen because she has free time, she loves children and she has a great sense of solidarity; every morning she welcomes the children coming from distant satellite schools and takes care of them

> during the day. She makes breakfast for them and takes them to school. When a child falls ill, which happens very often at the beginning of the school year because of malaria, the teacher informs her. She takes care of the child, gives him/her a sedative and tries to find a way to take him or her back home, often in a borrowed cart. (school case study, Senegal)

Such examples of involvement are spontaneous rather than part of a regulated framework, a sign of community members' willingness to work for the school.

Limitations of the involvement of community bodies in local education issues

Community bodies frequently face constraints that impede their capacity for action in local education. Official groups, such as the PTAs and management committees, may not have the tools they need to carry out their mission. As we have seen, their involvement is more spontaneous and based on their own evaluation of their capacity – technical as well as financial – to carry out the tasks they have set for themselves.

Their constraints are essentially related to their understanding of their role, their ability to perform it, and their sense that the school does not belong to the community.

The absence of regulation of these groups at the local level is one obstacle to their involvement in local education. We have already mentioned the unavailability of the regulations governing PTAs; the same is true of the management committees in Mali: "These regulations do not exist at the level of the school – it is the chairman of the management committee who keeps them. The principal has asked for them just once, just to see the receipt for the school. According to the president, the other actors do not ask to see them." "The school does not have access to any of the regulation texts relative to the PTA or school management committee and the principal does not know whether they are available to the other actors concerned with the school" (school case study).

Without access to the statutes and regulations, members of these groups do not have a precise idea of their role or of that assigned to others in their field of activity. Many teachers we met would like the documents relative to the roles and tasks of the different actors to be generally available. According to them, the parents are not clear about their role: "The PTA does not play the role it should play. However, some of them visit the school regularly. For the teachers, there is a problem of

awareness" (Senegal). This absence of a regulatory framework prevents the actors from carrying out their tasks, and prevents others from asking them to do so. Such a situation also means that each party may encroach on the responsibilities of the others (as in the principal's role in the management of PTA funds).

Some lack the competence to carry out their tasks, for instance in the area of financial management. The fact that some members of these groups are illiterate constitutes a real impediment to their involvement in local education.

The school may not be integrated into the local environment or recognized as belonging to the community. At a school in Mali, it was noted that the teachers say that "The PTA does not perform its duties properly because the town of Kiban gives little consideration to the public schools. The people are more interested in Koranic schools." Teachers may sometimes not be members of the community. This has a negative impact on the involvement of the PTA in school affairs, as in an example from Senegal: "The PTA is not very dynamic. Indeed, the principal acknowledges this when he says that the school is not a neighbourhood school, supported by the people of the neighbourhood."

Lastly, conflicts may arise between schools and local communities. In Guinea, a fence built by one school as protection against the outside environment and to stop the coming and going of people not connected with the school, of vehicles, and so on, was immediately destroyed by the community, which refused to allow the school grounds to be closed off in this way.

4.3 Summary and main conclusions

One of the core objectives of decentralization is to expand the involvement of actors who do not belong to the community of education professionals, in particular elected local authorities and community or parent representatives.

There is wide variation in the involvement of local authorities in education. Often it is very low, virtually nil, with teachers complaining about the total lack of support from municipalities. Others do spend some resources on school construction or the hiring of teachers; in general, though, their interest does not go beyond the visible, which is in many cases superficial. In Benin, where elected municipalities started to function only a few months before the field research began, this is not

all that surprising, but the scenario is not very different in Mali, where municipalities have existed since the early 1990s.

There are a variety of reasons for this. First, few municipalities have ample resources. Their tax base is small, and many complain that it takes too long for funds from the central level to arrive. In one rural community in Mali, no local taxes were collected in 2003 because of a famine, the priority being to find food for the people. Second, there are many competing demands on municipalities, and schooling is not always a priority. Third, few municipalities have the expertise needed to address complex education issues.

A fourth factor is that the relationship between elected authorities and local education offices is as often one of conflict as of collaboration. Two types of legitimacy are in confrontation: education officials cite their professional legitimacy, local authorities emphasize their political legitimacy. The balance between the two depends not on an official framework, which does not exist everywhere, but on the characteristics of each party and on the personal relationships between them. Their collaboration may be mutually beneficial, with the education office providing technical support to the local authority, or there may be conflict over recruitment of teachers or transfer of funds. The inspector or head of the local education office is seldom invited to municipal council meetings, even if they concern education.

The relationship between schools and communities is much closer than that between local education offices and municipalities, but this positive general assessment has to be qualified. First, the actual areas in which the community participates are limited and concern mainly, if not exclusively, financial and in-kind contributions, either individually or through the PTA and the SMC. Even if the official decrees lay down core principles for a comprehensive partnership between the school and the community to promote democracy, accountability, and efficiency, this may be far from being achieved. One reason is that even where these regulations exist, community members seldom know about their existence or about the school management responsibilities that have been transferred to them. They may also lack relevant experience and expertise. These constraints are not new, and have been much commented upon in literature on community participation from the 1980s and 1990s (see, for instance, Shaeffer, 1994; Wright and Govinda, 1994; Holland and Blackburn, 1998). They remain important, and more recent research, for

instance in Ghana (Mfum-Mensah, 2004), has confirmed their continued presence. Bray (2001, p.33) identifies a general principle for successful community–school relationships: "Partnerships need nurturing. Skills do not develop overnight and attitudes may take even longer to adjust."

Second, the partnership between schools and communities is quite firmly controlled by two individuals who are to some extent representative of (or beholden to) the local elite, namely the school principal and the chair of the PTA. This domination by the local elites was identified as a concern in a review of World Bank programmes (Nielsen, 2007). Teachers and other PTA members may be poorly informed, or excluded altogether. One reason for this is the profile of the PTA members: many are illiterate and have been chosen as members because of their possible usefulness as, for example, mechanics or plumbers. Many do not know of the decrees that govern PTAs, and readily accept that their role is mainly one of mobilizing funds and offering practical help. Even in a somewhat more developed African country, South Africa, "many parents lack the cultural capital to participate in the decision-making process, and accept the professionals' (principals and the teachers) definition of participation in democratic decision-making" (Grant Lewis and Naidoo, 2006, p. 423).

In all four countries in our study, the school principal is *ex officio* the secretary of the PTA. As principals are also in many cases the only well-educated people and the only ones with a good knowledge of education issues, this position offers them great leverage over the PTA's decisions. The PTA thus seems to have become an instrument in the hands of the principals – at times in collaboration with the PTA chairpersons – which they use to reinforce their authority over the school and the teachers, rather than a body representing parents. The conclusion is indeed that community participation "is not dependent on membership [of these groups] alone or attending meetings; it also depends on who has power" (Grant Lewis and Naidoo, 2006, p. 423).

In several of the schools in the sample, the teaching staff appeared to be reluctant to involve the community in school management. Research in a wide range of countries has found a similar reluctance among teachers, for instance by Carron and Ta Ngoc (1996) in Guinea, Mexico, and India and more recently by Grant Lewis and Naidoo (2006) in South Africa. Such resistance is an expression of teachers' sense of professionalism. They feel threatened, as we have seen, by the inclusion

of non-civil servants in the teaching corps, and interpret stronger community involvement as a further attack on their status.

Third, the relationship between the school and the surrounding community is not always conflict-free, especially when the use of land is at issue. The PTA structure does not seem to be of much help here, as it is not representative of the community as a whole, but only – and imperfectly – of the parents of children in school. There are from time to time quarrels between the PTA and the principal, for instance over the use of PTA funds. The principal will then seek support from the teachers to gain an advantage, and generally someone from outside, such as the local education officer, will have to intervene.

Dissatisfaction with school–community partnerships and with PTAs has led Mali and Senegal to set up an alternative structure, the school management committee, but these bodies are not functioning much better, although it is true that they were created only recently. But other more worrying factors are at work. The authority of this committee comes into conflict with that of the PTA, and their respective powers, which are already not very clear on paper, are much less evident in practice, especially as PTAs have a tradition to which they can appeal. Such conflicts are already visible in some schools, and have also arisen in other countries such as Mexico (Gershberg, 1999, p. 72), Malawi (Wolf *et al.*, 1999, p.28), and Ghana (Mfum-Mensah, 2004, p. 150). What is needed is not so much the creation of a new structure, but the development of a culture of accountability and participation. In the absence of such a culture, those who hold power at the local level will easily hijack any structure.

Conclusions: Building a decentralization policy

If the state would pay the salaries of community teachers and build classrooms that are up to standard, our difficulties would be reduced and we could think about autonomy. Otherwise, talking about autonomy right now just increases our hardships.

(school principal, Benin)

Properly conducted, decentralization is the best means of managing education efficiently. But it requires many sacrifices; it requires transparency, resources, better training of actors, good dissemination of information, etc.

(school principal, Guinea)

A synthesis of key findings

This research has painted a somewhat frustrating picture of the implementation of decentralization, but it also highlights some rays of hope. First, parents contribute a great deal to the education of their children, even going so far in some places as to finance the functioning of local education offices. Such reliance on financial support by parents is not a sustainable policy for developing quality education, and its impact on equity is probably negative. However, parental involvement shows a commitment to education, which is an indispensable building block for any decentralization policy. It also puts into perspective a conviction that has pervaded educational planning since the 1980s – that the slow progress of enrolment in rural Africa was largely attributable to the lack of demand for education. Undoubtedly, lack of demand was and still is present, but its significance may be less than was thought in the 1980s, when enrolment rates stopped increasing in several countries. If parents manifest their dedication to education through resource mobilization, they should be offered the opportunity to play more important roles, for instance by participating in teacher supervision or financial management. The case studies have offered examples of parents participating in school life in other than financial ways, and of how such involvement strengthens the linkages between the school and the community.

A second positive element is that there is a strong belief among the parents, teachers, mayors, and education officials interviewed that decentralization is the way forward. There are differences of opinion, of course: many teachers in Mali, for instance, are disappointed and feel that decentralization has made no difference whatsoever. The support for decentralization among many other actors is not a sign of gullibility: they are aware of what decentralization should entail and of its weaknesses, but this does not translate into rejection of the policy. The feeling expressed most often is "If only everybody would play their role fully…"

A third finding to offer hope is that several schools and local offices, though struggling with resource constraints, have undertaken innovative initiatives. Arguably, the lack of support from the central level obliges them to do so, and the absence of a regulatory framework gives them room for action. Many initiatives are small-scale, but they do point to possible ways forward. In one village, a mother helps the school by taking care of pupils so as to close the distance between the school and the village. In another, teachers and parents are working together to prepare a school improvement plan with support from the NGO Plan. Several school principals are reorganizing their staff to allow better monitoring of teachers and to increase the motivation of all personnel by involving them in decision-making. In one locality, the local education officer systematically assists the mayor and municipal council with decisions about education.

The implementation of reforms by several governments is a fourth reason for hope. An example is the reform of school supervision in Mali, where traditional inspectorates have been transformed into relatively well-staffed pedagogic support offices. The establishment of a professional corps of pedagogic advisers in Benin is a first indication, though in itself insufficient, of the importance attributed to the advisers' work by the government. The local collective of school principals in Senegal, an innovation that originated at local level, has been integrated into the education administration by the ministry.

Both the political will to reform and the space available for local initiatives depend to some extent on the nature of the political system. Our study does not demonstrate this as such, because we did not systematically compare these four countries on the basis of their political systems. Our purpose was rather to analyse commonalities than to identify differences. Our study hints, however, at the impact of the political landscape on decentralization. While all four countries are

nominal democracies, only three can be said to be relatively stable ones, Senegal for a somewhat longer time than Benin and Mali, though Mali's democracy is considered particularly vibrant in the region. Guinea's is the weakest of the four.[11] These differences are to some extent visible in the trends towards decentralization, with somewhat more vigorous moves in Mali and more recently Benin, and a more timid approach in Guinea. However, these differences do not have a profound impact at present on the functioning of the district education offices: the administrative structures, the constraints within which these offices work, and the social relationships at local level are similar in all four countries and their impact seems more profound than that of the young democratic polity.

At this stage the reader may wonder what the experiences from French-speaking West Africa, one region with its own particularities, can teach us about other regions and countries. The region has four characteristics, also found in many other developing countries, which are important factors in an analysis of decentralization:

- The weakness of the state. In all four countries the state has few financial and human resources at its disposal and has difficulty in implementing its policies and imposing respect for its rules and regulations. This leaves a wide margin of manoeuvre for actors at the local level. The weakness of the state reflects on its local representatives, in particular the inspectors and the school principals.
- A general scarcity of resources. This leads many actors to interpret decentralization mainly as a resource mobilization strategy, and produces a regular complaint that responsibilities are decentralized without the accompanying resources. It also increases the risk that decentralization will exacerbate inequities, as public resources are insufficient to make up for the poverty of local authorities and local administrations.
- The relative youth of the nation-state. These countries gained their independence only some 50 years ago, and each was at that time hardly a unified nation-state but rather a conglomerate of chieftains and villages. The process of nation-building is surely not yet completed, and therefore the danger that decentralization may facilitate a breaking up of the country is a real one.

11. This paragraph was written a few months before the death of the Guinean president Lansana Conté and the subsequent military coup.

- An unequal distribution of power at local level. Precisely because the state is weak, much autonomy is left, at times by default, to the local actors, such as local authorities, chairpersons of PTAs, school principals, or village elders. Our studies show that the most powerful among these actors make use of the decentralization policies to strengthen their own positions of power, so reinforcing existing social and gender disparities.

Countries with these same characteristics may encounter situations similar to those we identified. Even for very different countries, the above analysis may usefully highlight the factors to take into account when implementing a policy of decentralization.

Reflecting on principles for a decentralization policy

The community commitment to education and to decentralization, linked to the existence of effective initiatives and political will for reform, provides fertile ground for the successful implementation of decentralization in French-speaking West Africa. The challenge remains to transform these initiatives into national practice, which demands strong and concerted government efforts. This research has helped to identify key principles to guide such efforts and has highlighted a number of promising strategies. A first principle concerns the need for complementarity. The essential strategy of decentralization is to incite more actors to work together towards EFA. While the efforts of a single individual are easily outweighed by the challenges, collaboration among all can make a difference. Indeed, the schools that function most satisfactorily are those where relations between the community and teachers are good, and where the PTA assists the principal. Legislation recognizes this principle, but isolation or conflict are often the rule.

One reason for such conflict lies precisely in the failure to respect a second principle, namely that the mandates of all actors should take into account their resources, skills, and assets. The opposite may be the case: parents contribute from their very scarce resources but are refused control over teacher performance. Principals manage finances and recruit teachers (difficult and intricate tasks), but their involvement in pedagogical supervision has not been strengthened. Inspectors are supposed to inspect all teachers, while their resources allow them very few visits. Strategic reflection is needed on this question of the balance between mandates and resources. The term ‘resources’ should be understood in a broad sense to include not only financing or formal qualifications, but also elements

such as credibility and social networks. In that sense, school principals may have better assets for supporting teachers than inspectors, because of their credibility and because they are close at hand.

This principle of complementarity helps in rethinking quality monitoring, a key concern in a context of decentralization. Initiatives in Benin and Senegal show the potential of school networks, where teachers exchange experiences and a tradition of peer support can develop. Research in Africa and elsewhere shows that if principals receive appropriate training and support, many are competent to monitor the performance of their teachers, while parents, community organizations, and municipalities can assume the responsibility of supervising teacher performance and possibly play a role in recruitment. The local office is best placed to offer intensive support to a few schools that are seriously under-performing. The monitoring of schools needs to be reformed by changing the mandate of the local education office, from inspection to professional development; its focus, towards the neediest schools; and its practices, from school visits to a mixture of visits, workshops, dialogue, and networking.

Comparing the present situation to such an ideal scenario could easily lead to pessimism: actors at the local level have few resources, whatever meaning we give to that term, and those who do may be tempted to use them for their personal interest rather than for the benefit of society. This pessimism should not lead to inaction, but should rather be taken as a call for action on two fronts.

First, resources, responsibilities, and assets are not immobile; they change continuously, and governments have opportunities and obligations to influence them. Legislation, capacity development, and awareness-raising are indispensable steps in this direction. It might also be useful to review recruitment criteria and procedures in order to close the gap between actors' expected roles and their profiles.

Second, autonomy at the local level needs to be counterbalanced by an effective evaluation and accountability framework. One of the more disappointing findings of the research is that in none of the four countries have the central authorities given much attention to monitoring the actions taken at district or school level. Information about the performance of local offices or schools' use of the funds put at their disposal is scarce, if not completely lacking. This is particularly worrying when disparities are vast and decentralization might exacerbate them. Where such disparities

relate not only to financial and material resources but also to human skills, state intervention is indispensable. This intervention should take the form of a framework of accountability that provides information on changes in disparities and the needs of deconcentrated units and, at the same time, of a series of professional development activities aimed at supporting local offices and schools. Few such efforts take place, which strengthens the impression that the decentralization process is more the result of abandonment by the state than a matter of policy. When this is in fact the case, then regulating and monitoring decentralization poses serious problems.

The lack of transparency in local management of resources is probably the clearest manifestation of the difficulties of decentralization. Ensuring that rules and regulations are known to all and that parents who contribute to school financing have an explicit right to know how these funds were spent is indispensable. Training and the establishment of financial control structures are equally important. This could be part of a wider accountability framework linking the actors to whom the local office and the school are accountable – the government, other teachers and schools, pupils and parents, and the general public. But transparency and accountability may be met with serious resistance when they threaten existing power relations. It takes time to change traditions of power monopolization and overcome barriers to participation. Arguably, NGOs that work at the local level are the outsiders best placed to work for cultural transformation.

The existence of several categories of teachers is not a result of a decentralization policy, but it is surely an issue that decentralized actors need to face. The profile of the teaching force has changed considerably because of the inclusion of volunteer, contract, and community teachers. The motivation and quality of these new categories of teachers need to be addressed. The development of a transparent career plan, allowing for transition from volunteer to contract teacher to civil servant based on performance, is obviously one motivating factor; another might be the inclusion of these teachers in school-level management and decision-making. Quality improvement demands regular support from within the school and outside, some basic resources, and recruiting teachers who belong to a community, either of the school or of the locality.

A core idea runs through the preceding paragraphs: decentralization does not imply abandonment by the state, but rather a change in the

role of the state. Where its supervision and support are weak and its absence is not offset by strong local accountability, the inefficiency and sluggishness that characterized central management may be duplicated, if not multiplied, at lower levels. Decentralization is therefore neither a panacea nor a shortcut. In all countries, disparities will continue to exist. Some municipalities, districts, and schools have all they need to benefit from more autonomy, while others need support, guidance, and control. In all countries, changing social and institutional cultures takes time. This has two implications. First, decentralization is not a policy objective in itself, but a management strategy, adopted when and where centralized management is felt to be less efficient than a decentralized one and where efforts to improve its efficiency have regularly failed. Second, decentralization requires flexible implementation, with a balance between the autonomy and the specific characteristics of its beneficiaries.

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ISBN: 978-92-803-1348-2