



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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International Institute  
for Educational Planning

# Strengthening local actors

## The path to decentralizing education

Kenya, Lesotho, Uganda

Anton de Grauwe and  
Candy Lugaz  
with  
Tiberius Barasa,  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEO	area education officer
AIE	authority to incur expenditure
BOG	board of governors
CAO	chief administrative officer
CAT	continuous assessment test
CCT	centre coordinating tutors
CDF	constituency development fund
COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
CRE	Christian religious education
CROWNS	Community Renewed Ownership for West Nile Schools
DA	district administrator
DC	district council
DDAC	district development advisory committee
DDC	district development committee
DDP	district director of planning
DEB	district education board
DED	district education department
DEO	district education office
DHRO	district human resources officer
DIS	district inspector of schools
DQASO	district quality assurance and standards officer
DRT	district resource teacher
DSC	district service commission
DSO	district staffing officer
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EFA	Education for All



EMIS	Educational Management Information System
EO	education officer
EPDF	Education Programme Development Fund
FPE	free primary education
FTI	fast-track initiative
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrolment ratio
HRO	human resources officer
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (Kenya)
IRE	Islamic religious education
JC	Junior Certificate
JST	Joint Scheming and Testing
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KESI	Kenya Education Service Institute
LA	local authority
LASDAP	Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan
LATF	Local Authority Transfer Funds
LC5	local council chairperson
LDTC	Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
LETA	Lesotho English Teachers' Association
LGA	Local Government Act
LSMTA	Lesotho Science and Mathematics Teachers' Association
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOPS	Ministry of Public Service
NER	net enrolment ratio

*List of abbreviations*

NGO	non-governmental organization
NRM/NRA	National Resistance Movement/Army
PLE	primary leaving examinations
PPO	principal personnel officer
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTA	parents/teachers' association
PSLE	Primary School-Leaving Examination
QASO	quality assurance and standards officer
SE	secretary for education
SEO	senior education officer
SET	secondary education tuition fund
SFG	school facilities grant
SMC	school management committee
TAC	teacher advisory centre
TDMS	Teacher Development and Management System
TPC	technical planning committee
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TSD	Teaching Service Department
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	universal primary education
USE	universal secondary education

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over recent years, decentralization has become a popular reform in educational management. Many countries with different characteristics have decided to take the path of decentralization for a number of services, including education. Whatever form these reforms may take, they were implemented in the belief that decentralization would lead to a more effective administration and schools of higher quality.

However, this has not happened automatically and decentralization has created new challenges. It is therefore essential to carry out an in-depth analysis of the implementation of these policies, so as to examine their main successes and challenges, and to identify strategies for their successful implementation.

Since 2002, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has been conducting research for that purpose, with a focus on the impact of decentralization policies on local-level actors, in particular the district education office (DEO). This actor is in a position to play a strategic role in a decentralized framework, as it links with the ministry of education, schools, and the district level, and is responsible for implementing educational policy and monitoring its quality in the district.

In-depth research was conducted by IIEP in 2008–2009 in three countries of Eastern and Southern Africa with different decentralization policies, namely Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda: indeed, Kenya demonstrates a mixture of trends (deconcentration, devolution, and school autonomy), while Uganda has opted for a policy of devolution, and Lesotho for deconcentration and devolution.

The research was aimed at examining the roles and challenges of DEOs in these different contexts. It focused on four areas playing a key role in the effectiveness of this office, namely: staff management; the management of financial resources; quality monitoring; and the relationship of the DEO with the central authorities and the local administration.

The research was mainly qualitative through interviews carried out with a wide range of actors at the local level, in particular the DEO staff, school principals, and representatives of the local elected authority. The research was coordinated by IIEP and implemented in each country in collaboration with the ministries of education and national research institutions: the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR, Kenya); the National University of Lesotho; and the Makerere Institute of Social Research (Uganda).

The national teams prepared a set of 12 monographs on the DEOs (four per country) and three national syntheses. The research results were discussed during a regional policy seminar organized in February 2010, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports of Uganda.

This book analyses the main lessons learnt from this research according to the four main themes mentioned above.

Quite surprisingly, there are more commonalities than differences between these three countries. In spite of these different decentralization frameworks, the DEO plays a similar role in each case, focusing on quality monitoring and administrative tasks, and has little autonomy in its human and financial resources.

Overall, our research shows that little is done to strengthen the role of the DEO or to develop its capacities. This hampers the DEO's effectiveness to lead educational development successfully in the district and to coordinate the actions of other actors, such as local elected authorities and schools.

Several strategies are proposed to transform the DEO towards an initiative-taking decision-shaper, which include revising the mandate of DEOs, carrying out an in-depth analysis on the profile of its officers, and strengthening their capacities towards strategic planning and management.

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## INTRODUCTION

Decentralization is at present one of the most popular, if not the most popular, reform in educational management. A wide range of countries, from tiny Saint Lucia to gigantic India, from Swaziland to Sweden, have all adopted some form of decentralization in recent years. The reasons can be very different. Some reforms are based mainly on ideological arguments, in particular about the ineffectiveness of central planning and administration. Research findings about the benefits of local and community participation in decision-making and management also play a role. In some cases, disappointment with, if not desperation at, the inability of central government to implement its policies and reforms have been the main source of inspiration. In many others, political expediency – for instance, the need to respect demands for regional autonomy or a desire to break the power of teacher unions – is at the origin of the decentralization reform. Implementing a reform as vaguely defined as ‘decentralization’ in a variety of contexts has for many different reasons led to many different scenarios. What is found in most of these is the belief that decentralization, whatever form it may take, will lead to a more effective administration and schools of higher quality.

However, this has not automatically been the case and decentralization has created new challenges. At times, countries have adopted this policy while paying insufficient attention to the need to clearly redistribute authority and resources between administrative levels, without strategies to develop the capacities of local actors, and to gain the commitment of stakeholders. In some cases, this has resulted in increased disparities to the detriment of already disadvantaged areas and groups. At the same time, the ineffectiveness which characterized the central administration has at times simply been reproduced and multiplied at the local level.

This context motivated the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to carry out in-depth research on the decentralization of

education with a specific focus on the implementation of this policy. A lot has been written about decentralization, but most studies focus on the concept of decentralization, its pros and cons, its advantages and risks (useful summaries can be found in: Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema, 1983; McGinn and Welsh, 1999; Bray, 2007). When IIEP started work on this theme some 10 years ago, little research had been conducted on how local level actors in developing countries, whose effectiveness is fundamental to the success of this policy, fulfil their new responsibilities and face the challenges. There remains a crucial need to carry out field research so as to learn from the experiences of these actors. Behind this specific interest in local realities lies a broader concern: decentralization demands continued action by the state. Where decentralization has been interpreted simply as abandonment by the state, problems of disparities and lack of capacities tend to worsen. IIEP, therefore, has carried out this research so as to answer a key question – ‘What role can the state play to ensure the successful implementation of the decentralization policy?’ – and to generate knowledge to assist UNESCO Member States in developing decentralization policies for equitable and quality education.

IIEP’s research programme first looked at several countries in French-speaking West Africa (Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010). The four countries participating in this first period of research had adopted fairly similar models of decentralization and the research findings highlighted the challenges that they have in common. However, as we saw above, decentralization can take many different forms, as is visible in the terminology used to refer to specific policies (such as devolution, deconcentration, school-based management, school-based governance or delegation). These differences are not anodyne; they reflect significant policy choices about the power and autonomy of specific actors and administrative levels. Faced with such diversity of policy choices, decision-makers easily ask which decentralization model may be the best or the most effective one. While we will argue that it is impossible to respond to such a question, comparing the experiences and the realities of countries who have adopted different policies certainly makes sense and can be very enriching.



In order to respond to this concern about the relative advantages and disadvantages of decentralization models, IIEP decided to carry out a second research programme, which forms the basis of this publication. It was decided to undertake comparative research by selecting three countries in the same region that have adopted different policies, namely Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda. The risk of such a comparison is that it becomes very complex and dense if its intention is to cover all aspects of education and all levels of administration. Therefore, to make the comparison more feasible, we decided to focus on one actor present in the three countries and occupying a strategic position, namely the district education office (DEO).

As we noted above, our interest is not so much to describe and analyse the policy framework and the official rules and regulations, but to examine the realities on the ground: How are policies implemented? How do DEOs function in each country? What is the impact of the distinct decentralization policies on their role? Are the challenges they encounter different from one country to another? What initiatives do they take to overcome them?

In order to respond to these questions, detailed qualitative research is indispensable. This qualitative research focused on a few DEOs and on a limited number of crucial questions. It was undertaken through a close collaboration between national research teams, who did most of the field work, and IIEP, in charge of overall organization and coordination. The project was implemented with support from the Education Programme Development Fund (EPDF) of the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI).

The following pages comment in more detail about the four characteristics of this research programme: its comparative nature; its focus on the DEO; its qualitative character; and the selection of a few key themes.

## **A comparative analysis**

As stressed by Bray (2004: 238), if comparative education is a useful tool to better understand one's own education system while comparing it to another one, it also allows an in-depth analysis to be carried out of a specific

educational problem or phenomenon in particular contexts, and to identify useful lessons for improving educational policies and systems. Indeed, many decades ago, the argument was already made that ‘the chief value of a comparative approach to [a set of] problems lies in an analysis of the causes which have produced them, in a comparison of the differences between the various systems and the reasons underlying them, and finally, in a study of the solutions attempted’ (Kandel, 1933: xix).

While IIEP’s research on decentralization in French-speaking West-Africa focused on four countries sharing quite similar decentralization policies, the research project in Eastern and Southern Africa examined countries with different policies. The choice of Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda was guided by two main reasons: on the one hand, by the fairly similar economic and educational contexts that characterize these countries; and, on the other, by their different models of decentralization of education. In this manner we respected a key condition for undertaking quality comparative education, as mentioned by Bray, namely to select units of analysis that ‘have sufficient in common to make analysis of their difference meaningful’ (Bray, 2004: 248).

### **Three countries with similar development and educational challenges**

The research focused on one geographical region – Eastern and Southern Africa – with countries that share a similar colonial past and independence process. Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda are therefore young nations sharing quite similar economic and development challenges.

These three countries were ranked in 2009 among the countries with the lowest Medium Human Development Index (UNDP, 2009). Their gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2008 ranged from US\$453 in Uganda to US\$783 and US\$791 respectively in Kenya and Lesotho (see *Table I.1*). The population is essentially rural in all three countries (about 80 per cent of the entire population). The share of agriculture in GDP is relatively low, ranging from 12 per cent in Lesotho to 26 per cent in Kenya. GDP growth has been higher in Uganda than in the other two countries: with an average rate

of about 9 per cent between 2005 and 2008, it is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa.

*Table I.1* shows that there is an important difference in the population size of the three countries, going from 38.5 million inhabitants in Kenya to 2.02 million in Lesotho. The average annual population growth rate over the past 17 years (from 1990 to 2007) has been high in Uganda and Kenya, being close to 3 per cent, but it has decreased in Lesotho since 2005 to reach 0.5 per cent in 2008 due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. There are also disparities in life expectancy at birth among these countries: while it is about 54 years in Kenya, it is lower in Lesotho (43 years).

**Table I.1 General statistics on Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

	Kenya	Lesotho	Uganda
Population (million, 2008)	38.53	2.02	31.66
Annual population growth rate (% , 2008)	2.6	0.5	3.3
Annual population growth rate (% , 1990–2007)	2.8	1.3	3.2
% of population in rural areas (2006)	79	81	84.6
Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older)	73.6 (2000)	82.2 (2001)	73.6 (2007)
Life expectancy at birth (years, 2007)	54.1	43	53
GDP per capita (current US\$, 2008)	783	791	453
GDP growth (annual average %, 2005–2008)	5.2	4.5	8.8
Agriculture as % of GDP (2007)	26	12	24

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), n.d.; World Bank, 2009.

Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda also face similar challenges as regards the development of education. More than two-thirds of the adult population are literate in the three countries: the adult literacy rate is highest in Lesotho at about 82 per cent in 2001. Concerning access to education at the primary level, the gross enrolment ratio was more than 100 per cent in 2007 for all the three countries (*Table I.2*). It has improved over the past few years in Kenya

and Lesotho, from 91 per cent for the former in 1999 to about 112 per cent in 2007, but there was a decrease in Uganda during the same period.

**Table I.2 Evolution of gross and net enrolment ratios in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

Country	Gross enrolment ratio primary, %		Gross enrolment ratio secondary, %		Net enrolment ratio primary, %		Net enrolment ratio secondary, %	
	1999	2007	1999	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
Kenya	91	112	38	52	61	86	35	44
Lesotho	102	108	31	40	78	73	21	24
Uganda	126	117	10	23	n.a.	95	16	19

Source: UIS, n.d.; World Bank, 2009.

n.a.: not available

There has been a huge increase in secondary enrolment in all three countries in recent years. The evolution of the net enrolment ratio (NER) indicates that there was an improvement in the number of children enrolled at primary and secondary levels, except for Lesotho where the primary NER decreased from 78 per cent in 2002 to 73 per cent in 2007. This general increase in the enrolment ratio can be partly explained by the implementation of free primary education in these countries.

Table I.3 shows that in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, parity at school is well established between girls and boys in terms of enrolment ratios. The survival rate differs quite markedly, Kenya having a survival rate in Grade 5 of 83 per cent in 2006 while it was only 49 per cent for Uganda. The pupil/teacher ratio in Lesotho is 37:1, but it is more than 40:1 in the other countries, suggesting a significant stress on the capacity of the available teachers. Public education spending was 17.9 per cent of total government expenditure in 2005 in Kenya, 18.3 per cent in Uganda, but it appears that Lesotho spends more, dedicating nearly 30 per cent of its budget to education.

**Table I.3. Key educational data on Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

Category	Kenya	Lesotho	Uganda
NER in primary education, % boys (2007)	86	71	94
NER in primary education, % girls (2007)	86	74	97
Survival rate to Grade 5 (% , school year ending 2006)	83	74	49
Pupil/teacher ratio (primary, 2007)	46	37	57
Total public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (2005)	17.9	29.8	18.3 (2004)

Source: UIS, n.d.; World Bank, 2009.

### Three different models of decentralization

The last two decades have witnessed the spread of decentralization and local government reforms in Eastern and Southern Africa in general and in these three countries in particular. Decentralization has taken place not only in education, but also in other sectors such as health and rural development.

In Kenya, decentralization is a mixture of different trends: (1) deconcentration (the fairly well-staffed DEOs are the local representatives of the ministry); (2) devolution (local government exists and can take initiatives in the field of education); and (3) school autonomy (schools receive funds directly from the central government and in secondary schools teacher recruitment is partly in the hands of their boards of governors).

For a number of years Uganda has opted for a clear policy of devolution. In the education sector, this means that the DEOs are not extensions of the Ministry of Education, but form part of the district authorities and report to the district administration, not to the Ministry of Education. As in Kenya, schools receive funds from the central authorities, but these are transferred through the district.

In Lesotho, decentralization has taken the form of deconcentration, as well as devolution. The DEOs, which used to be simply inspectorates, have recently been expanded into fully fledged offices in charge of aspects

of human and financial resource management. They represent the Ministry of Education in the 10 districts. The devolution reform was launched in 1997 with the adoption of the Local Government Act. Its implementation, however, only started in 2005 after an amendment to the act. Through local elections, district councils have been set up with some autonomy in decisions concerning land use. They are expected to receive more decision-making power, including for education. A ‘district administrator’ is appointed by the government and has to ensure that national policies are implemented in that district. Here also, schools receive funds from the central level. More details are given on the history and main characteristics of these different decentralization policies in *Box 1*.

**Box 1. Main features of educational decentralization in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

***Kenya***

Local authorities (LAs) have been established in Kenya since the colonial era in order to exercise control over local communities. In 1963, the country became independent from the United Kingdom under a semi-federal constitution which was abolished one year later. Decentralization is not new in Kenya’s development initiatives. In 1966, District Development Committees (DDCs) and District Development Advisory Committees (DDAC) were set up. Even if many of the powers and functions were removed from LAs and recentralized during the 1970s, such as primary education, health and roads, successive governments have recognized that local authorities are important for the development process. In its 2003 report, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (currently the Ministry of Education) stipulated that decentralization is a priority with the objective of improving efficiency in the education sector. The recommendations were to decentralize school registration services, administration, finance, accounting services, and teacher management.

Currently, there is a mixture of different decentralization models in Kenya. For instance, there is simultaneously *deconcentration* with the presence of the local representatives of the ministry, *devolution* where local governments can take decisions in the field of educational management, and *school autonomy* with funds directly transferred from the central government.

In the education sector, the responsibilities between the different actors are organized as follows:

- At the central level, the Ministry of Education is in charge of defining policy.
- At the provincial level, the provincial education office superintends the activities of the districts on behalf of the national directorates.
- At the district level, the DEO is in charge of the coordination of educational matters in the district and implements the policies as directed by the ministry. It is also responsible for the audit of funds received at school level.
- District councils have received several responsibilities including the building, the renovation and equipment of schools, and the allocation of scholarships for pupils.
- At the school level, the school management committees for primary education and the boards of governors for secondary education are in charge of the daily management of schools. The latter are partly responsible for teacher recruitment. Schools receive funds under the Free Primary Education programme introduced in 2003.

### ***Lesotho***

Lesotho became a constitutional monarchy independent from the United Kingdom in 1966. In 1993, it adopted a new constitution that favoured the principle of local self-administration. The ongoing decentralization reform in Lesotho includes a devolution trend aimed at creating genuine district governments elected by the population, as well as by deconcentration with the establishment of DEOs.

The implementation of this reform has taken some time and it was only in 2005 that the first local election was held, after the amendment of the 1997 Local Government Act. The current government considers the introduction of local government as a 'pivotal strategy to implementing the poverty reduction strategy and thus the realization of the National Vision' (Government of Lesotho, 2004).

Concerning decentralization in the education sector, until a few years ago only Ministry of Education staff based in the district were classified as inspectors. The major change is the replacement of the district inspectorates by the DEOs, which have more responsibilities and therefore more staff. Concretely, responsibilities in education are shared between the following actors:

- At the central level, the mission of the Ministry of Education and Training is 'to develop and implement policies which ensure acquisition of functional literacy among all Basotho

and development of a productive, quality human resources base through education and training' (MOET, 2008).

- At the district level, the DEOs are in charge of the provision of quality education and must ensure access to education, the implementation of educational policy, and the management of school funds.
- The district administrators represent the central government at the local level. They are responsible for ensuring that national policies are implemented in the district. The power of district councils has been reinforced through the devolution process. They have some autonomy in decisions concerning land use and are expected to receive more decision-making power in education.
- At the school level, the management of schools and equipment is carried out by principals and teachers. The boards of governors or the school management committees are responsible for the recruitment of teachers in collaboration with the ministry.

### ***Uganda***

Uganda was declared a British Protectorate in 1860 and obtained independence from colonial rule in 1962, inheriting a semi-federal constitution. The current president, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, has been in power since January 1986 when the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/NRA) overthrew the previous government. He then introduced popular local councils to administer the country under NRM control. These councils were formalized in 1987 and the 1993 Decentralization Act established five levels of local government: village, parish, sub-county, county, and district. At the same time, primary health care and education were made the responsibility of the district.

The 1995 constitution set forth an overall framework for decentralization which was further advanced by the 1997 Local Governments Act. Only the district and sub-county levels have both political authority and power to raise revenues at the local level.

Devolution has appeared to be the main aspect of decentralized services in Uganda with the intensification of the powers of local authorities. In the education sector, responsibilities are shared between the following actors:

- At the central level, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) is responsible for defining policy and ensuring quality and achievement in primary and secondary education.
- The chief administrative officer (CAO) is the head of the district and the representative of the government at the local level; he/she ensures that national policies are respected. The district council is an elected body that develops policies at the district level. The



management of district staff, including teachers, is the responsibility of the district service commission.

- At the district level, the district education department (DED) is in charge of monitoring the quality of education, the use of funds received by schools and the implementation of policies. It reports to the local authority in the district and not to the ministry.
- At the school level, school management committees (SMCs) are composed of representatives from the foundation body of the schools, teachers, parents, local authorities in the area and the education department in the district. It is the statutory organ that governs the schools on behalf of the government. Its funds come from a conditional grant transferred from the central level, since the implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1997. Parents/teachers' associations (PTAs) also participate in the daily management of schools.

*Source:* Azfar, Livingston and Meagher, 2006; Devas and Grant, 2003; Kiyaga-Nsubuga and Onyach-Olaa, 2008; Sperfeld, 2006; Steffensen, 2006; Steiner, 2007.

### **Why compare these three countries?**

These three countries are not representative of three pure decentralization models. In reality, such pure examples do not exist. In all countries, policies are hybrid, borrowing at different times from different models and maintaining characteristics from a previous model when undertaking reform. These countries are nonetheless sufficiently different in their present policies for a comparison to be instructive: Uganda as an example of devolution; Lesotho as one of deconcentration; and Kenya as a country with growing levels of school autonomy.

As already mentioned, the objective of this comparison is not to conclude with the identification of the 'best' model that all countries should adopt, but to suggest how different models could be improved so that higher quality education might be delivered at the local level. A key objective of this research programme was to compare these different policies of decentralization according to one specific actor, namely the DEO.

### A focus on the DEO as a strategic actor

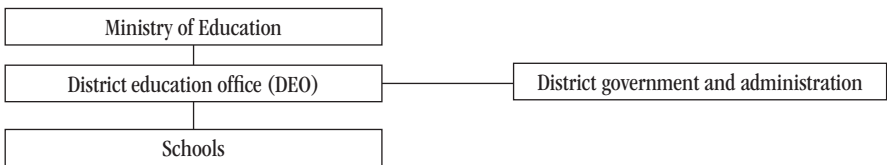
We decided to focus our research on the DEO<sup>1</sup> for three reasons. First, the DEO is in principle a key actor, an actor who occupies a pivotal position within the educational administration, in particular when decentralization policies are implemented. Second, the literature on decentralization has paid little attention so far to the DEO. This neglect on the part of researchers reflects to a large extent a similar neglect among policy-makers. Third, the position which the DEO occupies changes significantly between a deconcentration model and a devolution model. This strengthens the comparative aspect of this research. The following paragraphs comment in more detail on these elements.

Whatever model they belong to, DEOs are in a position to play a key role in a decentralization process, for different reasons.

On the one hand, the DEO links the ministry and the schools, as (1) it is responsible for implementing educational policy and monitoring educational quality; (2) it is the educational unit closest to the schools; and (3) it informs the ministry of what is going on in schools.

On the other hand, the DEO links the district level to the ministry and to the schools (*Figure I.1*).

**Figure I.1 The DEO – a strategic pivotal position in the decentralization framework**



1. In Uganda, the district education office is called the district education department. However, the term 'DEO' is used throughout this document when referring to this office in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda.

Based on this assumption, IIEP's research on decentralization was developed in order to learn from the experience of DEOs: Are they able to implement their mandate and to contribute to improved education quality in their district? Do they have the capacities and resources needed in this regard? IIEP's research thus responds to the near absence of studies on this topic.

Existing literature on DEOs in developing countries is indeed limited and those studies that exist refer mainly to their supervisory mission. IIEP in particular carried out in-depth research in this regard at the end of the 1990s and published a good number of documents on the topic (to mention among others: Carron and De Grauwe, 1997; De Grauwe, 2001*a* and *b*). Some specific attention was also given to this actor in studies which analyse the organization and functioning of a ministry of education as a whole, from central to lower administrative levels: this was the case, for instance, in Malawi (Nsaliwa and Ratsoy, 1998), Nepal (Bista and Carney, 2004), and more recently in Benin (De Grauwe *et al.*, 2009) and Ethiopia (Oulai *et al.*, 2011). The *National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration* (NIEPA) (Premi, Indiresan and Juneja, 1990) examined the training needs at this level in India. Some attention was also given by Chapman (2002: 10–11) to the roles and challenges faced by DEOs in a context of decentralization within a broader analysis on the management and efficiency of education systems in Asia, while Yekhlef and Tazi (2005) examined the role played by new actors involved in school-site supervision in Morocco, and replacing the DEO to a certain extent in this regard in the context of decentralization.

Few studies have been conducted in the field focused on the experiences of DEOs in a context of decentralization. Naidoo's (2005: 103–105) broader analysis on school autonomy in South Africa is one example examining the responsibilities of DEOs in such a context. IIEP's research in French-speaking West Africa in 2002–2004 was a response to this lack of studies (Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010). The value of the lessons learnt in the field and the conclusions for policy-making that were developed on this basis encouraged IIEP to complete the analysis through the implementation of a similar project in Eastern and Southern Africa.

One key question of this research programme was therefore the following: in these different decentralization frameworks, is the DEO in a position to play a strategic role that could contribute to the successful implementation of the decentralization policy, as well as to improved educational quality in the district?

### **Methodology: collaborating with national teams in qualitative research**

The following paragraphs explain in some detail the different steps undertaken during the research programme.

A review of the characteristics of decentralization policies in Eastern and Southern Africa was conducted before launching the research programme so as to identify countries with different models of decentralization. Discussions with UNESCO and the World Bank's regional and/or national offices, as well as with former participants of IIEP's Advanced Training Programme, helped to identify Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda as the relevant countries to focus on. Official contacts and agreements with the ministries of education of each country then allowed the project to be launched.

Research teams were constituted in the three countries, led by senior researchers from national institutions: the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR, Kenya); the National University of Lesotho; and the Makerere Institute of Social Research (Uganda).<sup>2</sup> IIEP very consciously opted to work with national institutions rather than with individual consultants. Our objective was indeed to ensure that the research findings (and the capacity to undertake policy-oriented qualitative research) went beyond the individual and would be integrated within these institutions, which are in many cases in charge of training district and school-level personnel and/or of guiding policy-making.

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2. The research teams were composed of: Tiberius Barasa (IPAR, Kenya); Pulane Lefoka and Mathabo Tsepa (National University of Lesotho); Samuel Kayabwe and Wilson Asimwe (Makerere Institute of Social Research, Uganda).

At the beginning of the field research, a pilot exercise coordinated by IIEP was carried out in Lesotho to reach agreement with the national research teams on the analytical framework and research tools, and to test these through visits to two DEOs. A senior expert from IIEP also joined the Kenyan and Ugandan teams during one of their field studies.

Research focused on a limited number of districts (four in each country)<sup>3</sup> selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- In Kenya, the districts were selected according to several characteristics, including geographical and topographical criteria, population size, number of schools and economic activities.
- In Lesotho, they were selected according to population size.
- In Uganda, the criteria used were regional representation, economic and geographical factors, and the representation of newly created districts under the decentralization system.

Case studies were carried out on each of these offices during the first half of 2009. The research was primarily qualitative in nature and relied mainly on in-depth interviews with key actors. Since the objective was to learn from the experiences of DEOs on the implementation of their mandate and the challenges they faced in this regard, this was the most useful tool to collect this kind of information. Indeed, as stressed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2008: 349): ‘Interviews enable participants ... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view’. However, the evident risk of relying mainly on interviews is that we learn the subjective opinions of a few individuals.

Researchers, therefore, conducted interviews with a wide range of actors at the local level, belonging to different groups, whose points of view can be expected to be complementary and at times conflicting. These include

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3. To ensure anonymity, the names of the DEOs covered in the research were replaced with fictitious names: Mount Kenya, Mulembe, Lakeside and Safari (Kenya); Mohokare, Phuthiatsama, Senqu and Maliba-Matso (Lesotho); and Banana, Lubigi, Nile and Eastern District (Uganda).

the DEO head, supervisors, the accountant, the human resources officer, school principals and, when necessary, officers working for the local elected authority. The objective was to obtain information as complete as possible and to construct an ‘objective’ understanding of specific issues from the information received from these different sources.

A further concern about qualitative research refers to the difficulty in generalizing the results. This is, indeed, one of the limits of this research. Its purpose was to learn from the experiences of a selected number of DEOs in each of these three countries, to understand how they implement their responsibilities in a context of decentralization and the challenges they face in this regard. It did not intend to draw up a set of lessons that *should* guide the implementation of decentralization policies in any context, but rather to identify challenges that may affect such processes in different contexts and to suggest strategies that could be implemented to avoid these risks. However, the limits to generalization were compensated in various ways:

- First, it is important to keep in mind that, notwithstanding the differences between DEOs, they all function within the same administration and they are all ruled by the same regulatory framework. Our interest was precisely in the functioning of the administration and in the relevance of the rules. The focus of our research was not on the peculiarities of a specific DEO, but on how these various DEOs function within the administration and how they respond to reform.
- Second, the force of conviction of qualitative research does not lie in the number of studies, but in the level of detail and the depth with which the studies were undertaken, and in the rigour and clarity of the analytical framework. This document therefore regularly offers examples and quotes statements by specific actors; these are not meant to be anecdotes but demonstrate the validity of the analytical framework.
- Third, when relevant, this document refers to the conclusions of other studies carried out on similar topics, so as to strengthen the arguments which are based on the lessons learnt from the field, or in some cases emphasize their limits.

- Finally, the research results were presented and discussed in a regional policy seminar organized in Entebbe by IIEP, in collaboration with the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports, from 10 to 12 February 2010. Twelve countries from the region participated in this seminar, which discussed and compared the research results with the experiences faced by other countries of the region. It also offered the opportunity to discuss the implementation of decentralization policies in the region and, in particular, the roles and challenges faced by DEOs in such different contexts. This adds validity to the lessons learnt from the field in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda. The main conclusions of the research presented at the end of this volume include references to the discussions at the policy seminar.

In total, a set of 12 case studies and three national syntheses have been prepared. This constitutes a rich and valuable source of information on the implementation of decentralization policies in education and, in particular, on the roles and challenges faced by DEOs in such contexts.

### **Scope and key issues of this volume**

This book is aimed at answering the following key questions: What are the responsibilities of DEOs in different contexts of decentralization, and are they able to implement such a mandate? If not, what are the challenges they face? Do the difficulties experienced by DEOs constrain the implementation of decentralization policies and do they lead to ineffective management? And what can be done to improve the functioning of the DEOs?

Previous research and much anecdotal information indicate that, in a context of decentralization, the tasks and responsibilities of this actor increase, while little seems to be done to strengthen its competencies, to provide it with more resources or to clarify the accountability framework within which it works. While DEOs are responsible in several domains, their effectiveness in three particular fields is fundamental to the success of the governance reform: staff management; the management of financial resources; and quality

monitoring. Equally important is the nature of the relationship they succeed in developing with the central and district authorities.

This volume proceeds through five stages, examining first the mandate, the structure, the staff, and working conditions of the DEOs studied in the three countries (*Chapter 1*). *Chapter 2* then focuses on one key mission of the DEO, namely the monitoring of educational quality, with two leading questions: How is such a mandate implemented by DEOs in each country? What are the challenges they face in this regard? Specific attention is given to supervision and pedagogical support visits to schools, as well as to the use by DEOs of other tools to monitor quality, such as examination results, and school self-evaluation reports and indicators. *Chapters 3* and *4* pay particular attention to the level of resources available to DEOs and their autonomy in their use and management: *Chapter 3* focuses on financial resources, while *Chapter 4* analyses the management of its own staff and of teachers by the DEO. Finally, *Chapter 5* examines the relations of the DEO with central and local authorities, which is a key issue in the context of decentralization.

This book relies on the information given in the field from local actors who experience decentralization in their day-to-day activities. On several occasions, reference is therefore made to their quotations as mentioned in the district monographs prepared by the researchers, or to excerpts from the national syntheses.

Readers seeking a quick overview of the research conclusions can read the conclusions of each chapter, as well as the last chapter, where they will find a synthesis of the essential findings.



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## **CHAPTER 1. THE DEO: MANDATE, STRUCTURE, STAFF, AND WORKING CONDITIONS**

In a context of decentralization, the mandate of the district education office (DEO) evolves and new responsibilities are added to the already existing ones. While quality monitoring through inspection was traditionally considered a core responsibility of the DEO, now it has been placed in charge of human and financial resource management, and is expected to collaborate and communicate at district level with different actors. This change in mandate has taken place while the education system is expanding: there are more and more schools and teachers to monitor and to support. Moreover, the administration is not functioning very effectively, with more time being spent on administrative tasks, and with an increasing number of requests from the central and district authorities, as well as from the schools themselves. The overall outcome is that DEOs have more tasks of a wider diversity to fulfil.

The first issue that this chapter addresses is as follows: Is the evolution described above a common trend in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda? Or are there differences in the mandate of the DEOs? Subsequently, the chapter examines if the DEOs have the characteristics to carry out their mandate effectively: Does their organizational structure reflect this mandate? Do they have the required number of staff and do these people have the necessary competencies? Are the minimum working conditions present to undertake their tasks efficiently?

This chapter sets the overall framework for the analysis. Some issues will be examined in more depth in the following chapters, to which reference is made in the paragraphs that follow.

## **1.1 Mandate**

### *An evolution in the mandate of DEOs*

Notwithstanding the different decentralization models, the mission of the DEO is broadly similar in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, and can be summarized as follows: to implement educational policies and to achieve educational quality in the district. The absence of a significant difference between these offices can be explained in part by their historical heritage (when they were set up their main purpose was to inspect and advise schools and teachers), and in part by the fact that in all three countries the DEO is responsible for an area of comparable size containing a fairly similar number of schools. The difference lies more in their position within the educational administration: they tend to exercise the same tasks, but on behalf of different actors.

The DEO's core mandate is a traditional one, namely monitoring the quality of education. This role is implemented mainly through supervisory visits. However, there have been significant reforms in all three countries, with a strengthened focus on pedagogical support. This will be examined in more detail in *Chapter 2*.

Over recent years, the scope of the DEO's responsibilities has widened in all three countries. This applies to the sub-sectors that are under their management, as well as to specific tasks. This expansion of tasks is most evident in Lesotho. This is because until a few years ago the DEO's role was limited to inspecting primary schools and they used to be called 'district inspectorates'. New activities now include early childhood education, special education, bursaries, school feeding programmes, and taking care of orphans and vulnerable children. There is confusion and disagreement between various actors about the relationship between the DEO and the secondary schools, as reflected by the following quotations: 'This office is new to us; we don't understand their role' (Secondary school principals, Mohokare DEO

monograph, Lesotho); ‘Secondary schools are not our major concern’ (Acting senior education officer,<sup>4</sup> Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

This lack of clarity about the precise role of the DEO is fairly typical of a change process, whereby the content of a reform has not been sufficiently communicated to the various actors in the system, thus leaving space for disagreement between the school and the administration. In the case of Lesotho, the fact that the supervision systems are different for primary and secondary schools, and that the ministry’s control over secondary schools weakens with increasing distance between the school and the ministry, add to the confusion.

In Uganda, the relationship between the DEO and secondary schools also remains somewhat ambivalent. While the DEO’s focus remains on primary education, DEO staff can visit secondary schools in their district and provide them with advice, though such visits are not compulsory: ‘It has been our policy to visit secondary schools in the district. ... However, we cannot force secondary schools to implement our proposals. It is up to the ministry to ensure that our suggestions are implemented’ (District education official, Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

DEOs carry out several administrative tasks for the administration to which they belong, be it the central Ministry of Education (in Lesotho and Kenya) or the district council (in Uganda). This includes, in particular, data collection and the provision of key educational indicators. In some districts, the role of mediator between teachers and parents at the school level was also emphasized.

A key development in the three countries relates to the DEOs’ responsibilities in the control of school financial management. Indeed, with the policies of free primary education, which go hand in hand with the transfer of grants to schools, the DEOs are required to play an essential accounting role

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4. The senior education officer is the head of the DEO in Lesotho and thus equivalent to the district education officer in Uganda and Kenya.

in monitoring the use of these funds by schools. This new role is particularly important in Kenya, where several auditors have been hired at this level to fulfil this new responsibility. This takes place to some extent at the expense of the quality monitoring function of the DEO, if one considers the number of staff dedicated to this mission – as will be discussed later.

In the three countries, however, the role played by DEOs in staff management – either teachers or DEOs' officials – remains limited: they have little autonomy over their own staff and little say over school staff. This will be analysed in depth in *Chapter 3* concerning resources management.

### ***District plans***

In each country, the DEO is expected to prepare a plan, but these have different characteristics. In Lesotho, the plan simply details the activities for the coming year. In Uganda, the plan has more of a 'strategic' character as it is expected to cover three years and to be integrated with other sector plans in the district plan, after adoption by the district council. This process implies that specific activities foreseen for the education sector may not finally be integrated into the overall district plan, as the district authorities may make decisions taking into account other priorities and political considerations. In Kenya, the process is as follows:

Work plans are normally adopted from the central government, specifically from the Ministry of Education which prepares a five-year strategic plan implemented annually. The adoption of the work plan is a process, which begins at the provincial level with the province adopting its own work plan, which is then passed on to district level. Each district is expected to come up with its own work plan. The district work plan contains aspects of quality assurance; quality development; and co-curricular activities. ... Planning at the district level is coordinated by the District Director of Planning (DDP) ... [and] the actual planning ... is conducted by the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO) who receives instructions from the District Education Officer. The Area Education Officers (AEOs) adopt the district work plan while the zonal officers adopt the AEO's work plans (Lakeside DEO monograph).

The evolution in the role of the DEOs is reflected in each country in their organizational structure, as examined in the following section.

## **1.2 Structure**

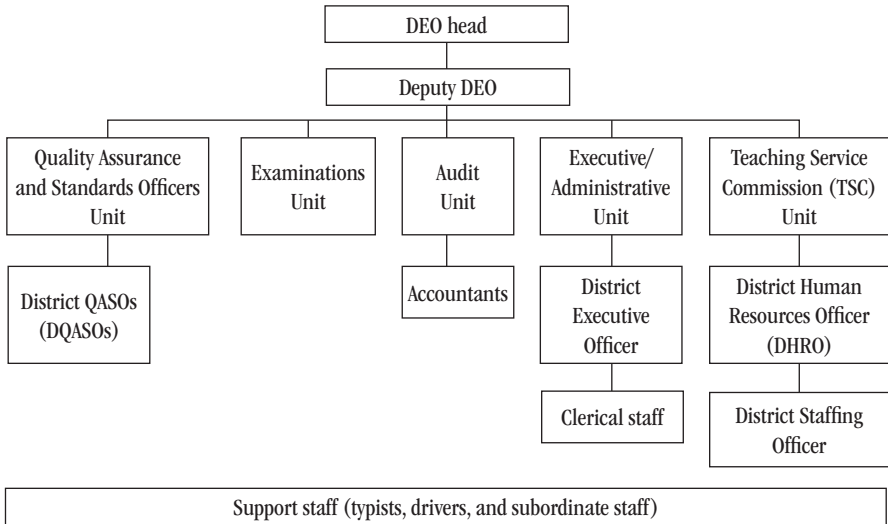
The internal structure of the DEO is fairly similar in the three countries, which is not surprising as the structure reflects their similar roles. The structure is fairly flat: the DEO is headed by a senior or district education officer (SEO in Lesotho; DEO elsewhere), who is sometimes supported by a deputy and who oversees various departments. It is interesting to point out that *Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3* presented on the following pages are based on our observations and discussions with DEO staff, as the DEO offices often did not have official figures at their disposal.

In Kenya, an organizational structure for all the DEOs was prepared by the Ministry of Education. The DEOs visited by the research team respect this structure, sometimes with some minor adaptations, but each time with five key departments, namely: the Quality and Standards Education Officers Unit; the Examination Unit; the Audit Unit; the Administrative Unit; and the Teaching Service Commission Unit (see *Figure 1.1*).

*Figure 1.2* reflects the organizational structure of DEOs in Lesotho. The office is headed by a senior education officer (SEO). Education officers (i.e. inspectors) are responsible for quality monitoring through supervision and pedagogical support visits to schools, and report directly to the SEO. Some districts have subject advisers, who are responsible for supervision and monitoring of secondary schools. However, these advisers are not represented in the diagram because they are not part of the DEO. Supervision of secondary schools used to be (and still is in some districts) a responsibility of the central ministry. The subject advisers will be placed in each district for supervision and monitoring of secondary schools, but they still report to the chief inspectorate headquartered in the ministry. Over recent years, most offices have also included units for early childhood education, school feeding programmes, and bursaries. The staff in these units report to the SEO, but

also at times to their superiors in the ministry, which, as we will see later, creates confusing lines of authority.

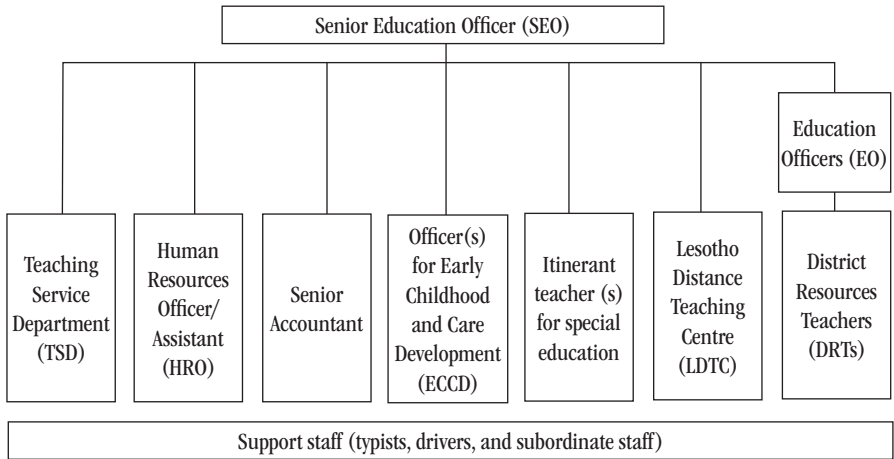
**Figure 1.1 Organizational structure of DEOs in Kenya**



Some problems were raised in Lesotho concerning the hierarchy within the structure:

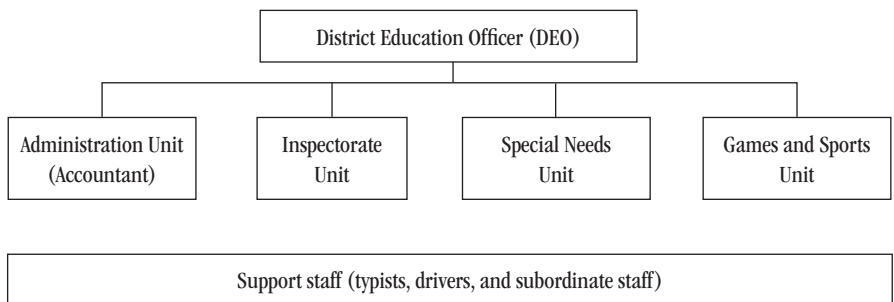
According to the acting SEO, this structure creates two problems (...) most staff under the education officers (who are the inspectors) are hierarchically lower than these Education Officers but they do not report to the education officers but directly to the SEO. This creates, according to the acting SEO, an overload of work on the shoulders of the SEO (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

**Figure 1.2 Organizational structure of DEOs in Lesotho**



In Uganda, a DEO (called ‘the district education department’ – DED) consists of four units: the Administration Unit; the Inspectorate Unit; the Special Needs Unit; and the Games and Sports Unit. The structure is headed by the district education officer (see *Figure 1.3*).

**Figure 1.3 Organizational structure of DEOs in Uganda**



In each country, efforts are made to lessen the distance between the educational administration and schools, to provide more regular support to schools – in particular through pedagogical advice – and to discharge the DEO of some administrative functions. This takes different forms: the posting of officers closer to schools or the creation of specific education units below the DEO. These are the following:

- In Kenya, each district is divided into educational divisions and zones. An AEO usually heads each division, while quality assurance and standards officers (QASO) head the zones; they are therefore called zonal QASOs. These units have administrative responsibilities and support the DEO in monitoring educational quality in their area. Teacher Advisory Centres' (TAC) tutors were also created so as to provide regular support to teachers. However, there is some confusion about their different roles as TAC tutors tend to replace zonal staff when these positions are vacant.
- In Lesotho, all districts have district resource teachers (DRTs), who are expected to work close to schools on a day-to-day basis;
- In Uganda, centre coordinating tutors (CCTs) provide pedagogical support to teachers.

In each country the structure of DEOs reflects their core mission, and the evolution in their responsibilities. We can draw the following conclusions from a comparison of the three structures:

- Quality monitoring remains central to the activities of the DEOs. Based on the terminology used, the focus is on inspection in Uganda, while in Kenya this mission appears to be broader, as emphasized by the name of the 'Quality Assurance and Standards Officers Unit'. In Lesotho, a more neutral term is used: 'education officers' (EOs). They focus on monitoring and supervision of primary education. In some offices a unit is dedicated to the monitoring of secondary education, with subject advisers. In Kenya, there is a specific unit for examinations, which can potentially complete the quality monitoring work carried out by QASOs.



- The structures reflect the broadening of the missions of DEOs: in addition to the traditional mission of quality monitoring, more tasks have been transferred to these offices. Thus, the existence of an administrative unit in Kenya and Uganda indicates the numerous tasks the offices are asked to carry out in this regard. The structures also include units dedicated to specific fields of activities, such as special needs (Lesotho and Uganda), distance education (Lesotho) or games and sports (Uganda).
- Considerable importance is given in Kenya and Lesotho to the accounting mission of the office. This is particularly true in Kenya, where the structure includes an audit unit composed of several accountants: this task has, indeed, grown in importance over recent years with the Free Primary Education policy and the direct transfer of grants to schools. This is also reflected in the fact that inspectors in Lesotho are increasingly asked to check on financial management by the school. In Uganda, there are no audit units in the DEO; they depend on the district administration. However, assistant accountants answerable to the chief finance officer in the district administration are seconded to the DEO to deal with financial management.
- In Kenya and Lesotho, the structures include units dedicated to the management of teaching staff. However, their role in management is limited, as most decisions in this area are shared between the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the schools, with the district playing mainly a facilitating and supporting role. The scenario is not exactly the same in these two countries, because of the existence of a TSC unit at district level in Kenya, which creates a more direct relationship between the DEO and the TSC. In Uganda, teacher management is handled by a District Service Commission (DSC), with little input by the DEO.
- It is interesting to note that there is no planning or statistics department in these structures. In the three countries, the post of planner does not exist as such. In Uganda, the absence of an educational planner is explained by the fact that planning for all sectors, including education, is carried out by the district planner: ‘There is no educational planner in the DEO. This is not due to a vacancy, but rather to the inexistence

of such a unit in this structure: planning for education is considered to be part of district planning as a whole and therefore it is felt that there is no need for a separate educational planner' (Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

- The result is that planning for education is performed by staff with no specific expertise in this area. This is preoccupying when DEOs are being requested to reflect on the long-term development of education in their districts.

In Phuthiatsama (Lesotho), the DEO head complained about the fact that there is no deputy DEO in the structure, in spite of her frequent demands. In Uganda, there is no position for a deputy DEO. When there is a need for an acting DEO, the officer in charge of administration fills this role. Overall, the request by these offices for a deputy head reflects the overload of tasks borne by the head of the office.

What we can notice, therefore, is that the changes in the mandate have led to some structural adaptations, but that these are not yet fully reflected in the hierarchical relationships: several staff members continue to refer to authorities other than the head of the DEO, which can lead to unclear lines of accountability.

The following chapters of this book focus respectively on quality monitoring, finance and staff management, and will therefore analyse in more depth the issues mentioned above.

### **1.3 Staff**

#### *Number of posts and vacant posts*

In Kenya, the number of posts in the DEO ranges from 20 to 33; it is about 15 in Uganda; while it is supposed to be 25 in Lesotho. The number of staff in the Lesotho DEOs experienced an important expansion after the 2005 reform, which is not without creating challenges, as is emphasized by the following statement concerning the Senqu DEO:

Although the redeployment of staff to provide services at the DEO appears to be a welcome development, the presence of these officers poses some challenges. This development has added more responsibilities and therefore challenges in the running of the office. First, the work of the SEO becomes more demanding given that she has to manage more staff with diverse services to provide. Second, in allocating resources, the DEO has to be cognizant of the presence of other programmes in the DEO and where the need arises staff has to share scarce resources such as transport (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

The movement of staff from central to district level is not yet complete in Lesotho. Not all districts work with secondary school advisers, which led some principals to complain: ‘We need subject specialists and their absence is where the problem is. There are resource people such as subject advisers in other districts; we also need them in this district’ (Secondary school principal, Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

From a general point of view, the offices appear to be well-staffed, at least on paper. The reality is, however, different as several posts in DEOs have tended to remain vacant for quite some time in the three countries. Though each country is affected by this problem, there are differences between the three concerning the type of posts, the level of vacancies and the procedures to fill vacancies. This difference is particularly significant between Kenya and Lesotho:

- In Kenya, vacancies affect mainly the post of QASO at district and zonal levels. In the Mount Kenya DEO, for instance, half of the positions foreseen for QASOs are vacant. In contrast, all the posts of auditors and of the Teaching Service Commission are filled. The situation is similar in the other districts studied. These vacancies are an indication of the difficulty of respecting school/supervisor ratios in an era of rapid expansion in the number of schools.
- In Lesotho, vacancies affect mainly those posts that have only recently been transferred from the central to the district level, such as administrative posts (human resources officers, accountants), bursary and school supply units, as well as support posts (typists, clerks, etc.).

In Uganda, there are many differences between districts as is to be expected when the creation of new posts and the renewal of contracts depend on the district budget: ‘The district wage bill does not allow us to recruit staff on these posts. According to the Principal Personal Officer (PPO) and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the central level sends us 65% of the required wage bill and the district has to find the remaining funds, but it doesn’t collect enough local revenue’ (DEO Head, Lubigi monograph, Uganda).

Such a problem of vacancies is not confined to these countries since it affects more generally countries where resources are lacking to create sufficient posts and where the public service is not as attractive an employer as other economic sectors because of the level of salaries, opportunities for career development, and working conditions. This is particularly true at decentralized levels where officers may feel isolated.

Where staff management remains highly centralized, it tends to take a long time to fill vacant posts. This was particularly deplored in Lesotho, as becomes clear from the following extracts from the Mohokare and Senqu monographs:

Filling vacancies can take a very long time, up to one or two years (Assistant human resources officer, Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho);

The problem of unfilled vacancies, as noted by the Acting SEO, has to do with the fact that allocation of positions is done at the central ministry. This means that the DEO depends on the central ministry in as far as employment is concerned, even in situations where an established post is vacant (Senqu monograph, Lesotho).

Notwithstanding these differences in staff management, the three countries face the same two major challenges. The first one concerns the lack of resources to fill all vacancies and to have a sufficient number of staff. A consequence is the difficulty for DEOs to fulfil their missions adequately, and a work overload for the officers, as highlighted by examples given for Kenya and Lesotho in *Box 2*. What tends to happen in such cases is that the urgent tasks, generally of an administrative nature, crowd out the important

but less urgent work, which may be more pedagogical in character. In Uganda, there are variations between districts. Resource-endowed districts have all positions filled, while others do not.

**Box 2. The challenges raised by vacant posts in DEOs: examples from Kenya and Lesotho**

Given the shortage of staff, there is limited individual attention to school (Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

The SEO, whose home is in the same district, had just been transferred to another district. The decision to transfer the SEO and not replace him meant that the three EOs had to share the DEO's responsibilities amongst themselves. ... One EO was acting in the position of the SEO. The situation posed difficulties for the acting SEO. He could not fully respond to some of the questions, including qualifications held by existing staff and vacant posts (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

According to the acting SEO, the practice of redeploying officers from other districts to serve two districts leaves other offices and/or sub-sectors without professional staff. At the time of the interviews, the Senqu DEO was being served by a bursaries officer from another district. The problem with assigning two districts to one officer is ineffectiveness. The bursaries section is reported to be a highly demanding section. This means that an individual who occasionally visits another district to provide a service can never satisfy the demands of that district that he or she occasionally visits. In the acting SEO words:

The officer assists at the beginning of the year, yet people who need services do so throughout the year. There are times when we try to serve people, but because the service is not within our jurisdiction we sometimes make mistakes or find ourselves doing it with an attitude (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

*Source:* Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya; Maliba-Matso and Senqu DEO monographs, Lesotho.

A second common problem is the difficulty of attracting well-qualified staff to rural areas and retaining them. The Lesotho synthesis report concludes that: 'With the exception of the Mohokare DEO, the major challenge in all the other districts is with regard to vacancies. Apparently, because of being

in the city, the Mohokare DEO is the only district with a small number of vacancies' (Lesotho Synthesis).

Several comments were made on the problem of staff turnover due to low salaries and difficult working conditions, in particular in remote areas:

Related to the insufficient number of officers is staff turnover. This problem is associated with the fact that Maliba-Matso is a mountain district and perhaps too far from the capital city. The experience regarding staff turnover is that people apply, get employed but may serve the DEO for less than a year and leave' (Maliba-Matso DEO Monograph, Lesotho).

In a model of deconcentration, where staff members are assigned to posts by the central level, one solution to this problem could lie in special incentives for 'hardship areas', but these incentives are seldom sufficiently high to make up for the lower standard of living. In a model such as Uganda's, it is left to each district to find a solution.

### ***Staff profile***

The qualifications of the staff do not seem to pose a problem in any of the three countries. Thus:

- In Kenya, the minimum levels of educational qualification for executive officers and the QASOs are that they must be degree holders and must have taught for a minimum of three years. All QASOs have these qualifications. It was interesting to note that two DEO heads had at least a master's degree in education and the DEO head of Mulembe is pursuing a PhD. In the Safari DEO, other staff members were pursuing master's degrees. Overall, the personnel have a long teaching experience.
- In the Lubigi district, Uganda, the assistant CAO specified that:  
All staff have the necessary qualifications, at least a BEd. According to the rules, only the District Inspector of Schools (DIS) has to have a master, while this is not even the case for the DEO.

Notwithstanding the satisfactory level of qualifications, there are some complaints about the performance of staff on behalf of their superiors, as

well as the principals in some DEOs in all three countries, as the following quotes indicate:

The majority of the DEO staff is qualified and competent. Although they have been receiving promotions on merit, their performance is not satisfactory (Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

In general, the staff in the DEO is qualified with the relevant academic background and experience, but this is not reflected in their performance (Head teachers, Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

Five officers out of six that have been promoted to the office recently do not understand the set-up of primary schools, hence they are unable to give accurate and proper advice on management of schools (Head teachers, Lakeside DEO monograph, Kenya).

The comments of school principals were not only on the numbers of vacant posts, but also that the calibre of some of the education officers who were serving them was not appropriate for the primary school level. ... The secondary school principals complain about the calibre of the EOs. They may hold qualifications as secondary teachers, but the approach to sensitive issues as displayed by some of them was reported to be unacceptable' (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

The principal personnel officer emphasized that the inspectors 'have the necessary qualifications, but not always the needed skills (Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

The reasons for this ineffective performance and the ensuing dissatisfaction may lie to some extent in the lack of resources (budget, materials, staff), but three other factors probably intervene. The first is related to staff deployment: the experience, especially of some supervisory officers, does not always correspond to the tasks they are asked to carry out. Some of the comments above pointed, for instance, to the lack of primary school experience among some primary school supervisors. A second factor concerns the attitudes of some supervisory officers who show insufficient respect for school staff. A third one relates to the weakness of professional development and the near inexistence of induction and in-service training. (We will discuss this in more detail in *Chapter 3*.)

## **1.4 Working conditions**

The working conditions of DEOs vary between countries and offices:

- In Kenya, the DEO staff on the whole tend to feel that they do not have the necessary resources to function effectively.
- In Lesotho, their material resources appear to be relatively abundant, even though the situation differs slightly from one office to another, in particular when comparing an urban district, such as Mohokare, to Maliba-Matso, which is located in the mountains.
- In Uganda, the difference between offices is more significant as it depends on the resources allocated in this regard by each district: some are well-equipped, while the situation is more challenging in others, as is emphasized in *Box 3*.

In all three countries, and in all DEOs, a frequent challenge is the lack of transportation and ICT tools. This is probably the most recurring complaint among supervisory officers at district level in almost all countries. The unavailability of vehicles or motorcycles has direct implications on the efficiency of the DEO, as they are not able to carry out regular visits to schools, as indicated by the following quotation and by the examples given in *Box 3*:

One secondary school principal expressed the view that being served by one vehicle limits the number of school visits and that their cheques are delivered late because the office is not able to collect them on time because of transport. ... The principals agreed that indeed ‘transport is a problem and sometimes the education officers even have to borrow vehicles from other ministries’ (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

The lack of communication tools is equally worrying as it prevents regular communication and information exchanges with the central level, schools and other partners, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), about the DEOs’ or schools’ needs or problems. This is particularly true in remote areas and where there are long distances between districts and schools. In some offices, other key tools are lacking, such as computers or



photocopiers, which leads to a situation where officers have to make use of the schools' equipment. In one DEO in Kenya, the working conditions are particularly challenging since there is no running water.

**Box 3. DEOs with different levels of working conditions: examples from Uganda**

***Banana DEO:*** 'To a large extent, the working conditions within the education department are conducive to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in staff management and administration. For example, both the DEO and DIS have their own offices, while the school inspectors share offices, but with enough space for effective service delivery. In terms of equipment and communication tools, the DIS and DEO have well-furnished offices with modern computers. In addition, the offices have fixed telephones enabling them to communicate when the need arises. In terms of transport, the Education Department has three double-cabin pickups, two of which were not operational at the time of the study team visit due to mechanical problems. The only vehicle that was operational was being used by the DEO, leaving the school inspectors with four motorcycles (all in running order) as the only alternative means of official transport. However, these motorcycles are not regularly used by the school inspectors who, by virtue of their seniority in service and social status, do not feel comfortable riding motorbikes as a means of transport for doing field work. As a remedy to ensure that field work is done, the district administration sanctioned the use of personal cars by the inspectors in the execution of their work. These cars were purchased using loans from the district administration. To facilitate the fieldwork process, the inspectors are provided with fuel depending on the distance to be covered. Initially, the district also used to meet the cost of car repairs in case of breakdown, but this arrangement was stopped as the cost of maintaining the cars soared'.

***Eastern DEO:*** 'The district education office is located in a small building, formerly used as a residential house for a county chief. This building, of a size smaller than the building occupied by only two departments (Water and Lands) in Banana District, accommodates 15 departments including the Education Department. ... In terms of equipment and communication tools, the DEO is heavily constrained. The office has only one 10-year-old double-cabin pickup, and hardly any means of information and communication technology. However, these constraints are addressed in the Three-Year District Development Plan, which spells out the need to procure two new vehicles and four motorcycles for the education department, as well as acquiring some office equipment, including computers, printers, office furniture, stationery, etc'.

**Lubigi DEO:** 'From a general point of view, the research team observed that the material resources of the DEO are poorer than those of other district officers, such as the Chief Planning Officer, the Assistant CAO, the Principal Personnel Officer and the Secretary for Agriculture (who was acting Secretary for Education at the time of the study). Indeed, the offices of these different officers were pleasant, well furnished, with a computer and a printer in each of them. In comparison, the offices of the DEO and the assistant accountant appear to be quite old, which is surprising as they are located in what is a fairly new building. The DEO does not have a computer in her office.'

**Nile DEO:** 'All offices allocated to the core staff have enough space. Although the DEO was well furnished, most of the offices had old furniture. Apart from the DEO's office, other offices did not have telephone connections. In addition, the offices were not equipped with computers. ... The department does not have reliable transport facilities. The two motorcycles available were donated by the Community Renewed Ownership for West Nile Schools (CROWNS) project. The only vehicle available is an old four-wheel drive car used by the DEO for official duties. This is not reliable as it has a number of mechanical problems since it has been used for almost eight years. According to the DEO, the current situation is not so different from what has transpired in the last five years'.

*Source:* Eastern, Banana, Lubigi and Nile DEOs' monographs, Uganda.

Another problem raised in each country was the lack of space, for different reasons. In Lesotho, it is due to the increased number of staff working at this level since 2005, whereas in Kenya, it may be partly a consequence of the growing number of auditors. There is lack of office space in some districts in Uganda, especially among the newly created districts, whose different departments share office space.

Two specific remarks can be made for Kenya and Lesotho. First, many officers in Kenya feel that they receive fewer resources than schools, who receive funds directly from the ministry in the context of the Free Primary Education Policy. Such a comparison is fairly irrelevant, but it demonstrates a feeling of frustration about the loss of control over school funds and the limited autonomy of DEOs in managing their own resources. Second, in Lesotho, several comments were made by the actors at the field level about

some inconsistencies in the material resources allocated from the central level to DEOs, as emphasized by the following example:

The SEO concluded that because the purchases of vehicles are done at the central office, they received the model that they had not asked for. ‘When we were eventually provided with two vehicles, those were not of the type we needed as they were both ‘singles’, meaning they could only carry a driver and one official. The two vehicles are to serve all the field workers. We feel uncomfortable that we have ‘singles’ and there is only one driver for the two vehicles’ (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

## **1.5 Conclusions**

Although decentralization policies are different in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, in each country most actors consider the main role of the DEO to be one of quality monitoring, mainly through school supervision. This reflects the fact that all district education offices were originally set up to monitor the quality of schools and this traditional role has survived. In addition, the group of officers involved in quality monitoring (the supervisors) forms a fairly significant number in each office. Central authorities have not undertaken any significant steps, which demonstrates clearly their recognition of the changed role of the DEO. The overall outcome is that decentralization reforms have not yet brought about a significant change in the image of the DEO in the eyes of most actors. This, unfortunately, is reflected in the staff profile: it does not always fit with their current tasks and the new mandate of the DEO. This points to a need for staff development through pre-service and in-service training, and probably a revision of recruitment procedures and criteria. It is worth mentioning, however, that the academic profile and the experience of DEO staff in all three countries are quite good. Such a positive situation should be emphasized, as it differs from the characteristics of DEOs in some other countries and regions. In many cases, indeed, the DEO staff members are mainly composed of former teachers, who have neither qualifications nor experience in educational planning and management (see, for instance, for

examples from Benin and Ethiopia: De Grauwe and Lugaz, 2007: 120–121; De Grauwe *et al.*, 2009; and Oulai *et al.*, 2011).

There have, indeed, been certain changes or trends in the actual mandate of these offices. First, for some considerable time in Kenya and Uganda, and more recently in Lesotho, several services (e.g. for human resources, for early childhood education or for bursaries) have been moved from the central office to the district level. This is well appreciated by schools. Second, because of the transfer of funds directly to schools, the DEOs are being asked to undertake school audits in all three countries. As we will see in the following chapter, this task starts crowding out the quality-monitoring work. Third, district offices are being asked to prepare district plans. In Uganda, these three-year plans are expected to feed into the overall district plan. In Lesotho and Kenya, they have one-year plans. In both of these countries, these plans ideally should be built upon an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the DEO and of education in the district, but this is difficult to achieve because the DEOs do not have specific staff in charge of educational planning, management or statistics.

Reforms have also led to some confusion, which is not surprising: a change process tends to do so, and decentralization policies are everywhere somewhat fluid. Some staff in the DEO feel that they belong as much to a specific department of the ministry as to the DEO, which leads to somewhat conflicting lines of authority. A deeper factor concerns the possible conflict between devolution and deconcentration, between, for instance, the district administrator (DA) and the SEO in Lesotho (a topic on which we will comment later). While policy documents and acts may be clear on the roles and authority of the different actors, many of the people we interviewed were not fully aware of what the texts say. This problem seems less evident in Uganda, as the policy is more explicitly one of devolution, with the DEO clearly belonging to the district administration.

In each country, there seem to be considerable differences in staff and resource availability between DEOs. That this is the case in Uganda is not surprising as the DEOs depend on the financial strength of the districts, which differs significantly. But this is also the case – though less so – in Kenya

and Lesotho. In other words, the differences within each country seem more important than those between countries. As far as DEOs are concerned, the decentralization reforms have not led to greater resource availability nor has one model succeeded in overcoming resource constraints, as some people may have expected or hoped for. It seems that each office reflects more the level of social development of its surroundings than the financial effort by the government. And this raises the question of what is the most equitable distribution of scarce resources between offices.

All three countries also struggle with ensuring the stability of staff in the most remote regions. Regarding Uganda, Golola stressed the role played in this regard by the lack of resources of local elected authorities, which ‘limits the extent to which local leaders can motivate their staff and retain them in the now stiff competition between the public and private sectors for educated and efficient employees’, and impedes the development of ‘retraining programmes to upgrade the skills of their labour force’ (Golola, 2003: 265). The same point applies to Lesotho and to many other countries, where the national government as a whole encounters significant resource constraints and difficulties in appointing staff to such areas. The solution applied in Lesotho consists of transferring EOs from one post to another regularly. This allows all DEOs to have competent staff at times, but it is poorly appreciated by these officers themselves, making it difficult for them to develop strong relations with their schools.

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## CHAPTER 2. QUALITY MONITORING

The key task of most district education offices (DEOs) is to monitor the quality of schools. The supervision and pedagogical support service is generally the main tool used to carry out this task. The effectiveness of supervision depends on several issues: the planning of its work; the visits; the reports; and the follow-up. Other monitoring tools exist, though they are generally less used by the DEO for quality monitoring: examinations; indicator systems; and school self-evaluation reports. This chapter examines the use of these tools by DEOs in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, with specific attention to the problems they encounter in this regard, as well as to the initiatives that have been implemented in these districts to overcome them.

### 2.1 Supervision and pedagogical support

#### *Actors*

In each of the three countries, two groups of actors are involved in school supervision and support: on the one hand, the traditional control-oriented inspectors; and, on the other, the more recently created support-oriented advisers.

In Kenya, the quality and standards education officers (QASOs) are, in principle, responsible for supervision through quality control, while Teacher Advisory Centre (TAC) tutors are in charge of offering support and guidance to schools and teachers. However, owing to a shortage of QASO staff, TAC tutors tend to replace them in the field, while QASOs carry out administrative tasks for the office, and supervise secondary schools (which is also the responsibility of the provincial level). This situation is not without raising some problems, as the TAC tutors do not always have the required qualifications to supervise teachers. This situation was denounced by several primary school principals:

The role of QASOs has been taken over by the TAC tutors: the TAC tutors now inspect teachers in the name of giving advice. They are now like zonal QASOs – they come to inspect us rather than advise us (Primary school principals, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

In Lesotho, education officers (EOs) are responsible for supervising schools and teachers. They focus on primary schools. Where they exist, subject advisers are in charge of monitoring quality in secondary schools, while otherwise it is the responsibility of the central level. Education officers focus on control while district resource teachers (DRTs), who are closer to schools (being based sometimes on the school site), focus on training and pedagogical support. The distribution of tasks is well explained in the following quote from a DEO:

The DRTs provide support on teaching and learning most of the time, and advice on teachers' work and how to improve it. The EO inspection is about collecting data on the actual observations, discussing it in meetings with teachers and principals. ... The DRTs are expected to do daily visits since they are daily supervisors, also because they are at the site and they can have their own programme of activities. For the EOs, it is not possible to see each school daily (DEO Head, Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

In Uganda, inspectors carry out supervisory visits. A recent initiative has been the creation of centre coordinating tutors (CCTs), who are based closer to schools. In principle, there is one CCT per resource centre and one resource centre per sub-county. A district has on average six to eight sub-counties. They focus on pedagogical support. According to the inspectors: 'The CCTs are there mainly for training/mentoring of teachers ... CCTs, being trainers of teachers, have training skills and, when they visit schools, they are able to identify training needs. This is something special the CCTs bring to the inspectorate.'

However, because of the small number of inspectors and the proximity of CCTs to schools, CCTs are at times asked to replace inspectors even in assessing the performance targets. An assistant chief administrative officer (CAO) indicated: 'The CCTs are supposed to focus on teacher training, but

on the ground they also engage in inspection because there is a vacuum and they have to do it' (Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

With different actors involved in some form of school supervision and support, the problem of coordination crops up. One way of addressing this is by organizing joint visits. This can have additional advantages. In Kenya, visits to schools are carried out by teams so as to allow an in-depth assessment of the school: they are composed of TAC tutors, auditors and QASOs. The same happens in some districts of Uganda, with teams of associate assessors: 'This is a group of technical people composed of inspectors, retired teachers/tutors, and political leaders, etc., who come together to constitute an inspection team for the purposes of enhancing supervision so that every school can at least be visited once a term' (Uganda synthesis).

### ***Planning***

Only in Lesotho do national norms on the expected number of visits exist: according to a national rule, each EO is expected to carry out 30 supervisory visits per year, e.g. 10 full supervision and 20 aspect supervision (more details will be given later on these different types of inspection). In Kenya, this varies from one district to another as each district is expected to set its own targets. In Uganda, no norms for the number of visits were known, but in principle there should be 1 supervisor for every 40 teachers. In Uganda, DEOs plan for a number of supervisory visits to be carried out per year or per term. For instance, in the Banana DEO: 'On average, each inspector is supposed to plan 54 school visits per term, which makes a total of 162 inspection visits per year' (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

While an ideal situation would be to visit each school at least once each year, this is hardly feasible for different reasons – which will be described later. DEOs therefore select the schools to visit according to several criteria, such as examination results or conflicts at the school level. Some officers even acknowledged that they focus on nearby schools, due to the lack of adequate transport means. In Lesotho, some districts tend to focus on public schools, in part to support them in managing the funds received from the



central level. Non-government schools that still charge fees and therefore do not receive a grant from the ministry are less covered by the district, partly as a sanction because they do not follow government policy. Indeed, as explained in Mohokare:

Precisely because the school gets subventions, they need to make financial reports on their use and this intensifies the contacts between the public schools and the DEO. This is not the case for the non-government schools that can and do charge fees. For these schools, the rare times they enter in contact with the DEO is when they demand permission for an excursion or when they ask for a DEO to come and inspect a teacher who wants to be promoted (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

### ***The visit***

In all three countries, the DEO staff identified different types of supervisory visits. In Lesotho and Kenya, a distinction is made between three types of visits: (1) in case of a problem; (2) on a specific aspect; and (3) a full inspection. A group of QASOs in Kenya gave more details in this regard:

1. Investigation: after we have received a message, a letter raising a problem or accusing a head teacher or teacher. We pay a visit to investigate. We look at the records; we talk to the community; we interview people.
2. Monitoring: when there is an examination of a specific aspect, for instance facilities. The district receives funding for infrastructure, so it is a requirement that we do these visits, sometimes with the Ministry of Works. We may also monitor the number of students or the use of facilities.
3. Advisory assessment: this is a more detailed exercise. We assess curriculum implementation, financing, staffing, enrolment, physical facilities, co-curricular and so on. This is undertaken by a team including an auditor (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

In each country, specific guidelines were developed to guide the supervisory visit (see *Box 4* for more details).

The course of the visit is then more or less the same in all three countries. Schools can be informed of the visits, but this is not always the case; there

does not seem to be a rule in this regard. Supervisors first meet the head teacher, sometimes with the chair of the board or the PTA. They subsequently visit classes and observe teachers. They finally discuss with principals and teachers their observations and comments. A report is prepared and shared with the school after the visit.

**Box 4. Guidelines to conduct supervisory visits in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

***Kenya***

'The tool has sections including administration, particulars of the school, location of head teacher, address, title deeds, management and last assessment. Other sections include curriculum, physical facilities, finances, sanitation, staffing, and examinations. Attention is given to special needs of children and orphans' (QASOs, Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

***Lesotho***

'A document was developed ... known as: *Criteria for inspection and self-evaluation: A manual for inspectors, head teachers and school managers*, and is used for inspection. The EOs were trained on how to use the manual. They were responsible for training the schools' principals. The research showed that the manual was complex, caused some confusion and focused mainly on classroom supervision. As mentioned by an education officer: "This instrument has some limitations. It looks mainly at classroom instruction. It doesn't include parents' involvement or facilities. When we are in a school, it is best to look at everything, but the instrument does not allow us to do so"' (Education Officer, Mohokare DEO).

***Uganda***

'For the purposes of consistency in quality monitoring, inspectors use guidelines put in place by the Directorate of Educational Standards at the national level. A range of issues are taken into consideration. These include: teacher and pupil attendance; classroom teaching; lesson preparation by teachers; school feeding arrangements; community participation; adherence to the teachers' code of conduct; teaching and learning environment; school academic performance; school infrastructure facilities; support and supervision of teachers; resource management and administration; gender-sensitive sanitation facilities; availability of safe drinking water; implementation of a teacher scheme of service; support and supervision by head teachers; provision of physical education and sports; and identifying schools qualifying for becoming primary leaving examination (PLE) centres.

‘It is believed that these indicators are essential in improving the quality of basic education. The fact that the inspection issues are many means that not all of them are ever addressed at any one visit to a particular school. Thus, there are variations between different schools with regard to the aspects that receive attention each time there is a visit, depending on what aspects triggered the visit to a particular school’ (Uganda synthesis).

*Source:* Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya; Uganda synthesis; Lesotho synthesis and Mohokare DEO monograph.

Overall, the school staff members appreciated such visits, and regretted their lack of frequency. Over recent years, there has been an evolution in Kenya in the nature of these visits with an emphasis on support and less on control and assessment, which has led to the development of more positive relations between the supervisors and the school staff (see *Box 5* for more details). This was also stressed in Uganda, for instance in the Banana district.

### ***Reports and follow-up***

In the three countries, reports are prepared after the supervisory visits, of which copies are usually left at the school with recommendations and suggestions for improvement. In Kenya, some primary school principals however stressed that: ‘Sometimes the school doesn’t receive a report, but the QASOs will always leave a note in the logbook’ (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

In principle, additional copies of the reports are sent to a wide range of actors:

- In Kenya, ‘for a visit to a primary school, three copies of this report are given to the DEO, to the area education officer (AEO) and to the school. When a visit is made to a secondary school, seven copies are made which are given to the principal, the DEO, one district QASO, the board of governors, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and one is sent to the Permanent Secretary’ (Kenya synthesis).
- In Lesotho, a copy goes to the senior education officer (SEO) and the district administrator, as well as to the Chief Inspector Field Service at the central level.

**Box 5. From control to support: the change of attitude in school supervision in Kenya**

‘The types of visits undertaken by QASOs recently changed – their name is also recent. As emphasized by the QASOs, this change should reflect a “change of attitude” and approach. Their visits now are expected to include more discussion with teachers, the objective being to lessen their investigative dimension, though these visits continue to be carried out with a purpose of supervision and assessment of the work undertaken by teachers. Therefore, they are no longer called “inspectors”. According to one QASO, this change can be explained by the training sessions received by these officers, as well as the new report format used during the visits: “there have been many in-service training courses, even this year. There is also a new report format which helps to change the attitude. When you discuss the report with the teacher, you have to include positive points about the teacher”’ (Mount Kenya DEO monograph).

One initiative mentioned by the QASOs refers to their new ‘profile’: ‘the change from inspector to QASO has been a big change for the people with whom we work. They look at us more positively’ (Mulembe DEO monograph).

*Source:* Mount Kenya and Mulembe DEO monographs, Kenya.

- In Uganda, ‘every end of the month, all the inspectors are required to write and circulate monthly inspection reports to: the DEO; the CAO; the district council (DC); the Secretary for Education (SE); and the local council 5 chairperson (LC5). These reports are meant to inform the local authorities about the status of the performance indicators at schools, as well as inciting a feedback to the originating inspectorate units’ (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

Our studies did not verify whether the different recipients had systematically received the reports. Whatever the case may be, in the three countries the supervisory staff regretted that they do not receive any comments from the superior authorities on these reports, even when they drew attention to specific problems at the school level that should be addressed. This is not only demotivating, it also has a detrimental impact on the follow-up.

While school supervisory visits may lead to the identification of suggestions for improvements, their actual impact depends on the follow-up

given to these visits. Ideally, such follow-up activities should be undertaken by three groups of actors, as detailed below:

- First, the higher administrative authorities (mainly the Ministries of Education in Lesotho and Kenya, and the district authorities in Uganda) should take action. But, as we saw above, these authorities do not pay much attention to inspection reports.
- Second, supervisors themselves could be expected to undertake follow-up visits, but these are far from systematically undertaken. In Lesotho a group of secondary school principals emphasized that: ‘There is no follow-up taken except if one happens to meet with an individual inspector in town. They tend to inquire on progress made since the last visit’ (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho). There are different reasons for this situation. First, it is evident that the supervisory staff is overloaded with other tasks and does not have enough resources (staff and transport means) to carry out these visits. Another equally important reason is that the inspectors do not have the authority to undertake certain actions and do not have control over the actors who may have that authority.
- Third, the school staff should organize its own follow-up activities. Regularly, supervisors’ recommendations are addressed to the school management committees (SMC) or boards of governors (BOG), but according to some inspectors: ‘The response which we get to our recommendations depends partly on the level of understanding by the SMC/BOG. Sometimes there is little response’ (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho). A solution is therefore to rely on field officers, such as DRTs in Lesotho, to follow up with the schools. The ideal solution is probably one whereby all school stakeholders – principals, teachers, and the SMC – work together to implement the supervisory recommendations, as is the case in the following school in Lesotho:

The principal may organize a follow-up action plan and meetings. In my school, teachers have shown a positive reaction in a situation in which the principal follows up on a visit that took place in

the school. I shared the follow-up action plan with the school management committee. I also addressed the teachers who may have been identified as needing help and discuss possible action to remedy a problem (Primary school principal, Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

### ***Problems faced***

A key problem faced in all three countries is the irregularity of school visits on the part of the supervisors. Several school principals complained of the fact that their school had not been visited for several years. An extreme example came from a secondary school principal in Lesotho: ‘There is an interval of 14 years since they [inspectors] last visited my school – from 1994 to 2008’ (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho). Many other principals pointed to the scarcity of visits (rarely more than twice a year) as a major weakness of the supervision system.

Four main elements can explain this situation. First, the shortage of supervisory staff. As already emphasized, the DEOs studied in the three countries suffer from vacant posts. This affects supervisory staff in particular. Even in those cases where all the supervisory posts are filled, there are not enough of them to cover all the schools and teachers in the district. In one Uganda DEO, for instance: ‘The norms used to be: 1 inspector for 40 schools. Currently, each inspector has on average 170 schools and the number of schools grows’ (Principal Personnel Officer, Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda). In other words, the expansion in the number of schools and teachers has not been accompanied by a similar expansion in the number of supervisors.

Second, the long distances which separate schools from DEOs in some areas make school visits difficult and rare. For instance, in one mountainous district in Lesotho: ‘Since most of the schools are not accessible by road, DEOs have to use horses and donkeys as a mode of transport to reach the most difficult schools’ (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho). Remote and isolated schools are regularly those which need supervision most and receive it least.

Third, the supervision staff is overloaded with many other tasks, particularly administrative tasks and preparing replies to requests from the central level. This is the case in all three countries. In some districts of Uganda, administrative tasks occupy half of the school inspectors' time. This problem was particularly emphasized by a senior education officer in Lesotho:

We plan; the plans tend to be affected by numerous activities that we engage in, most of which will not be reflected in our plan. For example, we get to help the Minister respond to questions raised in Parliament by members of the House. As soon as a question is sent to the DEO we have to put aside a planned activity and investigate a matter and send a response immediately. Some of the requests are directly from the Ministry of Education itself. During one research team's visit, the Ministry had just instructed the DEO to collect information on the school feeding programme and to forward it to the central office (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

And finally, supervisory staff are constrained by a lack of adequate resources, in particular transport, to carry out these visits. Supervisory staff in Kenya felt that this is related to their lack of autonomy in managing their funds: The QASOs felt that the 'authority to incur expenditure' (AIE), as currently controlled by the DEO, does not benefit them, as they are not allocated any funds. The DEO also manages their allowances and for them to access the funds they need to convince the DEO that they really need the money. The QASOs remarked: 'This is too much bureaucracy; the DEO has too much power and acts on his own discretion. Instead, they would like to have their own AIE and control their allowances' (Lakeside DEO monograph, Kenya).

In Uganda, the scarcity of funds which district authorities assigned to supervision led the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to create a special fund, at the request of the Ministry of Education, in which monies are transferred directly from the ministry to the district inspectors and are only to be used for school supervision. This is a recent initiative, well appreciated by these inspectors, but it is not yet clear what impact this has had on the regularity of visits (see *Box 6*). On this subject, some inspectors indicate difficulties and complain that the funds arrive with delays, and when

they do arrive they are not enough to allow all the schools in the district to be visited.

**Box 6. Initiatives to strengthen the monitoring of educational quality in Uganda**

***Involvement of other actors in quality monitoring***

‘Mindful of the importance of inspection with regard to quality education and mindful of the shortage of inspectors to cover all schools, it was found necessary in all districts to engage area CCTs and head teachers in quality monitoring of schools. As trainers/mentors of teachers, CCTs have training skills and when they visit schools they are able to identify teacher-training needs, which is something special the CCTs bring to the inspectorate. In addition, because of the small number of inspectors and the proximity of CCTs to schools (one CCT per resource centre and one resource centre per sub-county), CCTs seem to complement inspectors in assessing performance targets. Hence, CCTs are now fully recognized as providing both supportive and quality-control services in primary schools falling under their areas of operation.

‘Supervision undertaken by head teachers also constitutes a complementary key instrument for quality monitoring. Under this initiative, head teachers undertake joint peer supervision visits (regularity varies between districts), which involve sharing of experiences and learning from each other.

‘In addition to involving CCTs and head teachers in quality monitoring, another alternative intervention pursued by districts is that of “associate assessors”. This is a group of technical people composed of inspectors, retired teachers/tutors, and political leaders, etc., who come together to constitute an inspection team for the purposes of enhancing supervision so that every school can be visited at least once a term. All the three supervision initiatives (engagement of CCTs, head teachers and associate assessors) are formally recognized and coordinated by district education departments to which regular inspection reports are submitted, just like the traditional district inspectorate units do.’

***Transfer of funds to the supervision unit***

‘For the purposes of facilitating timely inspection visits, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development started sending funds for school inspection direct to the district inspector of schools (rather than channelling them through the district administration) beginning in the second quarter of financial year 2008/2009. This new approach was intended to cut down bureaucratic delays in disbursing funds to inspectorate units, and these are the very funds accessed by “associate assessors” to undertake team supervisory visits’.

*Source:* Uganda synthesis.



### ***Initiatives***

In more and more countries, supervision and pedagogical support are not the sole responsibility of the supervisory staff within the DEO. For a number of years, these tasks have been shared with other actors who have been introduced for two main reasons: (1) to increase the effectiveness of supervision through a separation between the tasks of control and support; and (2) to bring supervision closer to where the action is taking place, that is to say to the school itself.

Indeed, such experiences are found in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda where two groups are now involved in school supervision, the first focusing more on control and the second more on advice. *Box 6* comments in detail on the involvement of centre-coordinating tutors. A fairly similar scenario exists in Kenya with the reliance on TAC tutors in supervisory work, and in Lesotho through the DRTs. All of these three groups are based closer to the schools than the DEO staff.

However, these initiatives are not themselves without challenges. Indeed, if the involvement of advisers and similar personnel in quality control appears as a potential solution to face the lack of staff and time in carrying out supervisory visits, at least four challenges have to be overcome.

First, specific attention should be given to the profile of these actors and their training: they generally have been recruited to play an advisory rather than a supervisory role. Indeed, some principals in Kenya and Lesotho denounced the fact that these people do not always have the required profile and qualifications for supervisory work and thus lack legitimacy among school staff:

Primary school principals consider that the TAC tutors do not have the adequate profile for the post, which leads to frustration when assessed by these officers (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

Probably additional staff would improve the situation, that is, by employing resource persons, such as subject specialists based in the districts. Such inspectors should be experienced ex-principals, for example, not these

youngsters who just graduated from the university with no experience at all. Imagine one of your former students because he/she holds a first degree coming to inspect your school. They have no experiences. Theirs is to make a show off and their attitude is not appropriate at all (Secondary school principal, Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

Second, it is essential that all the actors involved in quality monitoring regularly share information on their visits and activities in schools, so as to prevent any conflicting or confusing situations and to prevent overlap. Third, because of their involvement in supervisory work, CCTs, TAC tutors and similar personnel spend less time on what is supposed to be their core task and the reason for their existence, namely advising and supporting teachers. It is of little benefit to the system that these staff members give up an important task which they do well, to dedicate time to a task for which they are not well prepared. Finally, these actors will only be able to make an impact if they themselves are provided with the necessary resources to fulfil their tasks.

## **2.2 Other monitoring tools**

School supervision is only one of the tools to monitor the quality of education. In principle, other tools exist – the examination system, the indicator systems and school self-evaluation reports – all of which provide potentially rich information on the quality of schools and the achievement of students. In many countries, however, two problems can be observed: first, these three tools are seldom used by local level administrations to monitor schools; and second, there is little, if any, relationship between these tools and the supervision system.

The picture is to a certain extent similar and also somewhat different for the DEOs in the three countries in this study. What is similar is that the DEOs have at their disposal examination results and indicators to monitor educational quality in their districts and that schools are increasingly expected to undertake some form of self-evaluation. Another similarity is that there seems to be little reliance on indicators or on self-evaluation reports to carry out an in-depth analysis of educational quality or to guide supervisory visits.

What is different from a number of other countries – and what is a positive point to emphasize – is that the analysis of examination results is used by many DEOs to assess quality and to select the schools to visit. The following paragraphs discuss these findings in more detail.

### ***Examination results***

Examination results are used as an indicator of the level of quality in schools, and therefore help to identify the schools that face problems and need support. For this purpose in Kenya, DEOs use the results of the continuous assessment tests (CAT), as well as the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). In Lesotho at primary level, it is the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) and the Joint Scheming and Testing (JST), and at secondary school level the Junior Certificate Examinations and the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC). In Uganda, DEOs analyse the results of the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

The DEOs in Lesotho described how they use examination results to monitor educational quality in their district and to identify the schools that need support (see *Box 7*). As the quotes and examples in *Box 7* demonstrate, district offices can undertake various steps after the administration of examinations and the tallying of the results. While not all DEOs follow a systematic process, they undertake one or more of the following steps:

- an analysis of results in order to rank the schools;
- a meeting of all the principals to share the results with them and to discuss the overall performance, as well as those of specific schools;
- a decision to focus supervision and pedagogical support visits on the schools with the lowest results and those which have done significantly worse than preceding years;
- the organization of special workshops to support low-performing teachers and schools, at times in cooperation with other units, such as specific subject teachers' associations;

- the provision of incentives (such as special awards) to the best performing schools or to schools who made great gains.

**Box 7. The use of examination results to monitor educational quality at the district level in Lesotho**

‘The DEO regards the issue of examination achievement very seriously. Analysis of examination results in both internal tests, especially those that are held in centres at the district level and external examinations at the end of each level of education (the primary school-leaving examinations (PSLE), the Junior Certificate (JC) Examinations, and the Cambridge Overseas Examinations (COSC)) is considered a critical element for monitoring the quality of the education system in the district.

‘The seriousness of this issue is illustrated by the steps taken after the external examination results have been publicized. Meetings are held between the DEO and the concerned stakeholders, particularly the principals of both primary and secondary schools in the district. Although meetings for these two levels are held at different times, the purpose of the meetings is to provide the principals with an opportunity to critically analyse the performance of their schools in external examinations and to think about what they might do to improve the situation. These reflective meetings sometimes require the DEO to organize workshops aimed at helping principals and teachers to share experiences, adopt good practices, find solutions to identified problems, and decide on the way forward.

‘All the interviewees indicated that workshops aimed at helping teachers to address identified problems and at communicating the outcome of examinations are very helpful. At the secondary school level, the work of the DEO is supplemented by subject associations, such as the Lesotho Science and Mathematics Teachers’ Association (LSMTA) and the Lesotho English Teachers’ Association (LETA). These associations hold workshops for teachers focusing on tackling problems that teachers experience.

‘To show how seriously DEOs consider achievement in examinations, the SEO has initiated a form of incentive for both teachers and students. According to the SEO: ‘Our practice is to hold an award ceremony in which we honour students with trophies. This year the award ceremony will be held on 24 April. This date is made to coincide with the Education for All (EFA) week. The award ceremony is a big celebration and this will be our fourth year since the idea was introduced in the district. I started it in 2005 when I first assumed office in this district.’ The idea is applauded by principals of primary and secondary schools and the subject advisers’ (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘It is incumbent upon the DEO to always undertake an analysis of students’ performance at various levels of the school system. The analysis is undertaken at national, district and at school level. One of the secondary school principals commented as follows:

Teachers at school level collect the learners’ data and analyse them for individual teachers’ consumption. Schools have the opportunity to discuss the analysis report with the education officers.

The education officer confirmed that:

the data that show how schools perform in the Joint Scheming and Testing is used by the DEO to plan supervision visits for schools. Schools that do not perform well in the tests are given spot-check inspections within two weeks after the reopening of schools at the beginning of a new school year’ (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

*Source:* Phuthiatsama and Maliba-Matso DEOs monographs, Lesotho.

### ***Educational indicators***

Teachers and principals regularly fill in forms at the school level (such as the yearly school census) and provide statistical reports that are addressed to DEOs or, through the DEO, to the ministry. However, discussion with DEOs and principals demonstrates that this statistical information is not used as a quality monitoring tool. Indeed, as emphasized in Lesotho, the discussions with primary school principals showed their concern that ‘although the DEO collects data from schools, they were doubtful that education officers analyse data and engage in follow-up activities’ (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho). On several occasions, principals in all three countries complained they do not receive any feedback on the forms they fill in.

There are different reasons for this. First, the post of educational planner or statistician does not exist in the DEO structure and, as a result, there is no professional within the DEO with the specific task and the capacity for data analysis. While in Uganda the post of planner exists at the district level, these are not educational planners and they do not directly work with educational data.

Second, education officers do not see the potential usefulness of these data, and rely mainly on examination results as the main indicator of educational quality at school level. Third, the district officials do not receive any support from the planners and managers within the ministry of education to help them with such analysis, nor do they receive feedback from the ministry, for instance in the form of summary district indicator reports. In Uganda, this may be explained by the fact that DEOs do not belong to the ministry's administration, but this point does not apply to Kenya and Lesotho, where a generalized lack of awareness of the usefulness of such indicators at district level may be at stake. Therefore, forms are completed covering the numbers of students, teachers and also teacher qualification, but they are not used as an indicator of educational quality. In one case, the following comment was made: 'These data are probably more used to inform other district staff or visitors than as a monitoring instrument' (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

### ***School self-evaluation***

Schools are asked to prepare a school plan in Kenya and Lesotho. This is linked to the transfer of grants from the ministry directly to the schools, within the framework of the Free Primary Education Policy. Schools need to foresee how they will use these grants, and to be accountable in this regard. The process ideally includes all school-level actors, so as to allow for a broad discussion on the strengths and challenges of the school, and to identify activities to be carried out in a given time. The process of preparing a school plan and examples of activities foreseen in these plans were well explained in Lesotho by the principals themselves. *Box 8* presents some of these comments. However, the principals' comments demonstrate two different and rather contrasting interpretations of the concept of a school plan. Some principals refer to a development plan, a document highlighting some of the school's challenges and what the school actors can do about them. Others refer to a plan of activities, listing planned field trips, meetings, extra-curricular activities and so on.

**Box 8. Preparation of a school plan: comments from primary school principals in Lesotho**

‘In my school I sit with teachers according to their subject areas. After meeting with members of staff we critique each other’s programme. Then we draw up a school plan which is a compilation of each grade’s plan. We submit the consolidated school plan to the DEO. The DEO will advise us about things/activities that are not part of educational policy so that we do not include those. We then finalize our plans. For example, if we indicate that we plan to engage in income generating activities, the office will show that it’s against the policy of the Ministry of Education and Training and will therefore not approve’ (Primary school principal, Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘We developed our own action plan, studied the current situation and agreed on the percentage for passing a grade. We also had plans on admission of students who may be transferring from other schools. We decided to give an English test to each child transferring to our school. We then decided to focus on a subject in which the school performed most poorly’ (Primary school principal, Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘After the DEO introduced us to the action plan idea, we studied the Standard 7 results. We then followed steps that were proposed by the DEO. We held a meeting at the end of the year in which we discussed performance at the PSLE. The analysis helps us to focus more on subjects in which performance was poor and we do so every year. We do not send the report to the DEO, but it’s there on our classroom walls’ (Primary school principal, Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘There is an action plan in the school. It facilitates allocation of time for various school activities, including extra curricula. Teachers know what to do at a given time. Parents too are informed about the school action plan’ (Primary school principal, Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘The school has an action plan and a copy of the plan is normally sent to the DEO. It helps us plan for normal school activities, including extra-mural activities. The practice is that failure to submit the plan has serious implications for the school. For example, the school may not undertake a field trip unless the DEO has been informed through such a plan’ (Primary school principal, Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

*Source:* Phuthiatsama, Senqu and Maliba-Matos DEOs monographs, Lesotho.

The DEO trains the school actors to prepare such plans, though secondary school principals complained that they did not benefit from such training in Lesotho. However, in spite of the fact that they receive a copy of these plans, DEOs do not analyse them and use them as an indicator of school quality. As with indicators, it seems that they are not aware of the potential utility of such plans in their analysis of educational quality in their districts.

Another kind of evaluation carried out by schools was in use in Uganda. One district has developed a form to be used by principals for teacher observation and evaluation, and had organized some training for its principals on using the form. The inspectors, when visiting schools, check how many such observations the principal has undertaken and how well the form has been completed. The initiative is interesting, although the form itself is very much a checklist where the principal ticks boxes that could lead to a fairly mechanistic approach.

### **2.3 Conclusions**

A key task for the DEO is that of monitoring the implementation of national policies and the quality of schools and teachers. In principle, in all three countries, the structures and the tools are in place for effective quality monitoring. The fact that there are few differences between these three countries, notwithstanding the different decentralization models, can be explained in various ways: (1) this is a long-standing task in each country and traditions have been built up, which refer to similar practices; (2) this is considered an intensely professional task, which involves few contentious decisions and which policy-makers tend to leave to the professionals; and (3) the DEOs have always had some autonomy in the implementation of this task.

The management reforms have therefore not had much of an impact in this area. Or to be more precise, the differences between the three countries do not relate to the nature of the work but more to the actor for whom this work is being undertaken: the national ministry in Kenya and Lesotho and the district authorities in Uganda. However, in all three countries, supervisory



staff, whatever their official position may be, continue to refer to the ministry's policies and instructions.

The overall picture concerning the implementation of quality monitoring is mixed in all three countries. On the one hand, the offices have several supervisors (inspectors in Uganda, QASOs in Kenya and education officers in Lesotho), and have some of the basic instruments, such as evaluation forms and report formats, including at times some developed by the district itself. There have been some fairly successful reforms to move away from an authoritarian approach to a more participatory and support-oriented one. However, for a variety of practical reasons (lack of transport, expansion in number of schools, overload of administrative work), the field implementation is very irregular and many schools and teachers are rarely visited. These practical problems reflect a more strategic one, namely a conflict between the quality monitoring mandate, which is very demanding (supervisors are expected to control and support all schools and all teachers), and their resources (which are limited). Such situations are not unique to Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda. Many other countries experience comparable problems, as was demonstrated by the in-depth research carried out by IIEP and others in several regions and countries.<sup>5</sup> In response to this, DEOs have developed different strategies.

First, in all three countries, the mandate of the supervision service has been separated into two fields: on the one hand, control exercised by the supervisors; on the other hand, advice and support offered by fairly recently created staff: the CCT in Uganda; the TAC tutors in Kenya; and the DRT in Lesotho. However, an unfortunate trend is developing: since supervisors no longer have the time and the resources to visit schools regularly, they ask the advisory staff to do so. As a result, these advisers spend less time on what they are good at and what they are employed for (advice), and more time on

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5. We may mention, among others: Calvo Ponton *et al.*, 2002; Carron and De Grauwe, 1997: 21–36; Carron, De Grauwe and Govinda, 1998; De Grauwe, 2001a: 135–145; De Grauwe *et al.*, 2005: 7–9; Gaziel, 1979; Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010: 62–63; Perera, 1997.

control, a task for which they do not necessarily have the right profile. This is not to the liking of the teachers; nor does it seem a good use of scarce human resources.

Second, there is recently greater emphasis on the role of the school principals in teacher supervision and support, and some mechanisms are put in place to allow for peer supervision between principals and for school self-supervision. This can take the form of asking schools to prepare improvement plans. However, many schools have difficulty in participating in such processes as they lack the necessary expertise. Moreover, when and where schools and principals do participate, the supervisors do not seem to pay much attention to these plans. A third strategy consists of relying on other quality monitoring tools, which are less resource-demanding, such as examination results or educational management information systems (EMIS). This is indeed being done, though not everywhere. The best example comes from Lesotho, where district offices tend to analyse examination results to identify which schools to supervise and in order to organize specific training sessions. But, beyond examination results, other indicators, which could also be informative, are not used in the districts which we visited. This is partly because no personnel exist with the skills and the specific task to do so, but also because the central ministry, which has data on each district, does not send such information to them. As a result, in all of the districts visited there is little awareness about the potential usefulness of educational indicators to monitor schools and to guide the supervisory activities.

Quality monitoring by the DEOs in the three countries faces two new threats. First, because of the direct transfer of funds to schools, supervisors are asked, when they visit schools, to carry out some financial checking. This is unfortunate as it perverts the relationship between the schools and their supervisors, whose principal task is to provide pedagogical supervision, not financial control. This could be particularly problematic in Lesotho, where there is no auditing corps at the district level. A second threat is that the strengthening of the schools through the resources they have received and the resulting financial autonomy may have weakened the role of the DEO in

guiding schools and in ensuring exchanges between schools. This, at least, is a feeling mentioned by several DEO staff members in all three countries, but it is a contentious aspect. Evidently, when the supervisors' main interest is one of controlling schools, the financial dependence of schools on the DEOs may help supervisors in exercising such control. But the lack of such a hierarchical relationship when schools no longer depend on the DEO for their financing may help in setting up a more balanced relationship whereby school staff members are more willing to pay attention to the supervisors' advice, not because of the power they represent but because of the usefulness of their advice.

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## CHAPTER 3. THE MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

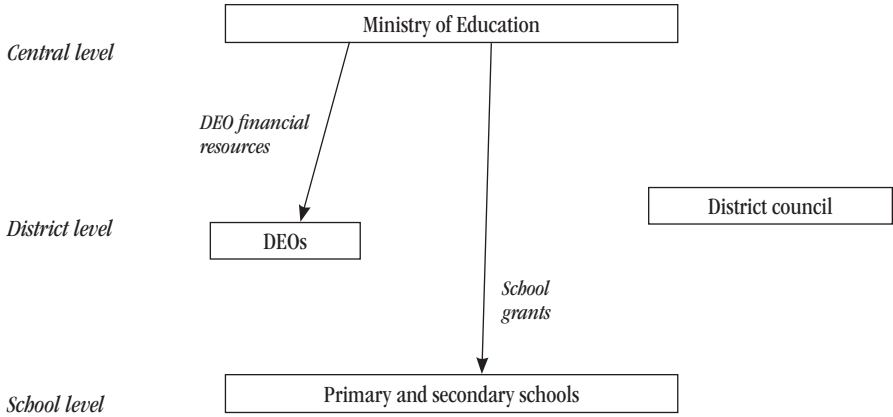
To function effectively, district offices need financial resources. However, the simple availability of resources does not guarantee their effective use. The effective use of funds for the improvement of education depends on various factors, including the financial transfer mechanisms, the criteria for the distribution of funds among the district education office (DEOs) and among schools, the nature of decision-making on their use, and the control of their use.

### 3.1 The transfer of resources

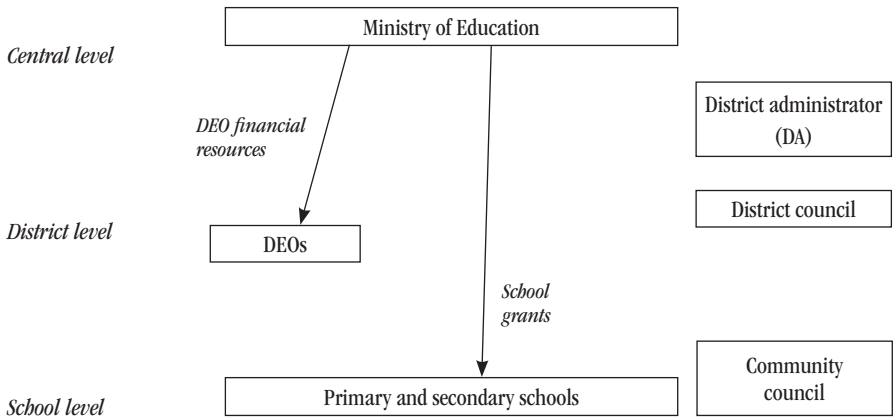
There are fairly important differences in the allocation of financial resources to DEOs and schools between, on the one hand, Kenya and Lesotho, and, on the other, Uganda, as shown by *Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3* below. The overall framework is as follows:

- Concerning the allocation of funds to DEOs:
  - In Kenya and Lesotho, funds are transferred directly to the DEOs for their own functioning, accompanied by more or less tight budget lines.
  - In Uganda, the funds go from the central government to the district administration, which transfers them to the DEO. They may be complemented by resources from the district council. This kind of mechanism characterizes countries with a devolution model of decentralization.
- Concerning the allocation of funds to the schools: in each country, schools receive funds from the central administration, in the framework of the Free Primary Education Policy. This is quite a recent trend which characterizes different countries in the region and around the world. The mechanisms of resource allocation differ between the three countries: in Kenya and Lesotho, the funds are transferred directly to the schools; while in Uganda they transit through the district administration and then the DEO, which transfers them to the schools.

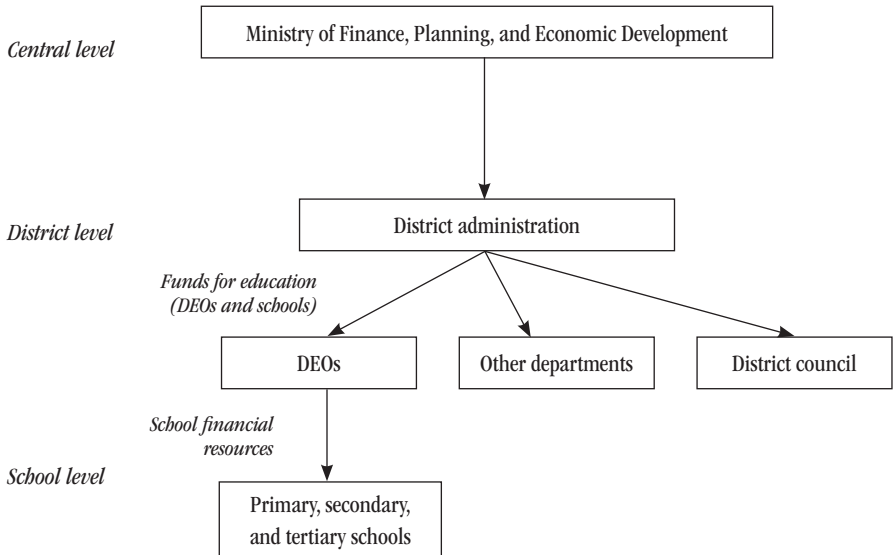
**Figure 3.1 The transfer of financial resources to DEOs and schools in Kenya**



**Figure 3.2 The transfer of financial resources to DEOs and schools in Lesotho**



**Figure 3.3 The transfer of financial resources to DEOs and schools in Uganda**



It is important to note that in Uganda, in spite of the transfer of funds through the district administration and the autonomy of the districts, the funds allocated for education cannot be used for any other purpose, which is different from other sector departments at district level:

Unlike other departments whose funding from the centre is subject to the Fiscal Decentralisation Strategy, whereby a certain percentage of the total amount allocated to the department is cut off and deposited in a district joint collection account from where it is redistributed by the district local council, funds earmarked for the education department (according to the guidelines) are never diverted to other uses by the district local council (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

This restriction may be considered contrary to a policy of devolution, as it limits the autonomy of the district. However, it does indicate the government's recognition of the importance of education.

The following sections further examine the financing mechanisms and, in particular, the criteria for the allocation of funds, the decision-making process at the DEO and school level, the use of the funds and the monitoring procedures, as well as the problems faced by financial management at both levels. Specific attention will be given to the role played by DEOs in these processes.

## **3.2 The DEO's financial resources**

### ***Budget composition and definition***

As explained earlier, in the three countries DEOs receive their budget from the central government, either directly in Kenya and Lesotho, or through the district administration in Uganda. In Lesotho, the Mohokare District indicated that it has also received subsidies from local businesses to finance some activities, such as the 'Education for All' week.

In Kenya and Lesotho, the budget of each district depends on its size, for example on the number of schools and pupils. It is expected to cover the running costs of the office, the purchase of equipment (computers, furniture, stationery, etc.), and operational activities. In Lesotho, the funds also support the implementation of school feeding programmes, in particular to pay the caterers.

In Uganda, the budget for the DEO consists of funds for the office and funds for the schools. There are two sources of funds:

- Funds from the central government, with a distinction between:
  - A conditional grant, which includes funds for Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Secondary Education (USE), the School Facilities Grant (SFG), and salaries for primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers. Most of these funds are destined for the schools.

- The unconditional grant, which constitutes funds for payment of wages for the DEO staff, as well as for the operational activities of the office.
- Funds from the district council, the amount of which varies between districts.

In addition, recently the Ministry of Education has decided to send some funds directly to the DEOs (without passing through the district administrator [DA]), which must be used for inspection purposes only.

The involvement of the DEO staff in the budget preparation process is quite different from country to country, but there are also differences affecting DEOs within each country. In Lesotho, the DEO staff ‘draws up its own budget and forwards it to the ministry headquarters which consolidates the ministry’s budget and subsequently submits it to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. ... A budget “item may be honoured as it is, be reduced or the office may be asked to revise it” (Senior accountant)’ (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho). Within the DEO, budget preparation may be carried out exclusively by the senior education officer (SEO) or may involve a more participatory process. There are no specific rules on who has to be involved in the budget preparation, and the levels of participation and transparency therefore depend mainly on the personality of the SEO.

In Kenya, some DEO heads complained that they are not asked to prepare a budget proposal, and that they are not even consulted before the budget is sent to them. Such a situation leads to inconsistencies in the budget allocations, with more funds assigned to one post of expenditure and less to others that may be more in need, as is emphasized by the following example:

Our budget is from the ministry – it is not our own. We do not prepare a budget – the ministry decides. I don’t know what formula they use. It would be better if we were asked to prepare a budget; it would be closer to our needs. ... What we consider a priority is not necessarily theirs. For instance, transport. This is calculated on the basis of headquarters’ parameters, but they do not take into account that we also need to arrange transport for the zonal officers (DEO Head, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).



In Uganda, the process consists of a series of budget meetings generally characterized by significant participation, and leading to an image of transparency which the officers appreciate.

The lack of resources for the DEOs was already discussed when we examined their working conditions. In two Kenyan DEOs, the school principals accepted to finance some of the DEO's activities, such as transport during supervision visits, as they do not have enough resources of their own. In Uganda, the availability of resources differs significantly between districts, more so than in the other two countries. However, as we will see, in all three countries the problem is not only one of insufficient resources, but also lack of autonomy in managing these funds.

In Lesotho, the budget of the DEOs studied increased significantly during the past two years, as a consequence of the transfer of more staff and activities to this level (see *Table 3.1*).

**Table 3.1 Total budget by DEOs in Lesotho (in local currency [maloti])**

Name of district	Total budget for the years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 fiscal years	
	2008/2009 fiscal year	2009/2010 fiscal year
	actual expenditure	approved
Phuthiatsama	1,904,520	2,472,153
Mohokare	1,853,645	3,069,260
Senqu	1,491,830	2,191,361
Maliba-Matso	1,458,857	2,175,541

*Source:* Lesotho synthesis.

### ***Autonomy in the use of the budget***

From a general point of view, the DEOs appear to have little autonomy in the use of their budget, with slight variations among the countries. In Kenya, the budget is received with tight and strict budget lines; it is impossible to use the funds of one budget line for expenditure on another:

We received 107,000 Sh for three months fuel, which is not enough. We received too much for electricity and, in order not to have to return money, we paid too much to the electricity board this year. ... The budget comes from the ministry in the form of AIE's: "authority to incur expenditure". ... The AIEs are assigned to specific votes, e.g. electricity, purchase of office equipment. We cannot change this except through a lengthy procedure, via the Permanent Secretary. ... I have from time to time had to return some money to the exchequer, very little but still I had wished that it was available on another budget line (DEO Head, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

In Lesotho, the budgets also arrive with specific funds assigned to different lines, but DEOs enjoy autonomy and have some leeway, though limited, in using their finances, as shown by the following quote from a district accountant: 'We can transfer funds from one department to another and from some lines to others, but some lines (e.g. salaries) are protected. To do so, the SEO writes a letter to finance. This is quite a simple procedure, which does not take much time' (Senior accountant, Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

In Uganda, funds that are assigned to the DEO from the centre constitute the unconditional grants used for payment of the district staff's wages, as well as the office's operational activities. The DEO's autonomy in the use of these funds is quite limited, being constrained by the guidelines developed by central ministries in the use of funds, and by the district work plan. There are cases where the unconditional grant from the centre may not be enough even to cover the wages, and has to be supplemented by the district's local revenue.

### ***The decision-making process inside the DEO***

As seen in *Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 (Chapter 1)*, in each office the structure comprises an accountant, who is in principle responsible for managing the funds of the office, in collaboration with the DEO head. Collaboration about such a sensitive matter as finances is not always smooth and conflicts have been known between the head, who has overall authority, and the accountant, who has a specific mandate in these matters. In Lesotho, in several districts the role of the accountant appears to be almost symbolic, reduced to that of

a supporting role for the DEO head, who takes all financial decisions (see *Box 9* for more details). Such a situation may become problematic when it promotes a lack of transparency in the management of DEO funds and when it may arouse suspicion from other staff members towards the DEO head.

**Box 9. Conflicts of authority on financial decision-making process in Lesotho**

‘The senior accountant, on his part, felt that theoretically the DEO, in making decisions on financial matters, should do so in collaboration with the office of the senior accountant, but that in practice this is not the case. Instead, “the SEO makes all the decisions although there are set procedures that govern decision-making on financial resources”’ (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘According to the SEO, internal decision-making on financial resources within the DEO is her responsibility. She remarked: “the responsibility is in the hands of the SEO. The SEO has to decide and the other officers may not even be aware of the decisions made. Yes, the SEO does have autonomy in this regard.” Her claims could not be validated due to the absence of an officer in the finance unit’ (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

‘A message of discomfort was expressed by the senior accountant whose observation seems to suggest that, in practice, the SEO makes decisions alone. She emphasized that she does not “even know how much we (the DEO) are allocated. That happens because the SEO does not involve me in the budgeting process.” Current practice is that the SEO is the only representative from the DEO who participates in budget meetings. The senior accountant indicated that the previous budget (2008/2009) was not adequate for the budgetary period. It would seem that the tendency in budget meetings is to eliminate some of the budgeted-for items. Failure to consult or involve the senior accountant in the sector-wide budget meetings that are held in the head office seems to impact negatively on the use of funds’ (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

*Source:* Phuthiatsama, Senqu and Maliba-Matso DEOs’ monographs, Lesotho.

### **3.3 School financial resources**

In the three countries, schools receive funds to cover their day-to-day activities in the framework of the Free Primary Education Policy. As explained before, they receive these funds directly from the central level in Kenya and Lesotho,

while in Uganda these funds transit through the district administration and the DEO before reaching the school accounts.

### ***Funds***

In Kenya, several types of funds are sent to schools: the Free Primary Education Fund (FPE), the Secondary Education Tuition Fund (SET), and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) come from the government, while the Local Authority Transfer Funds (LATF), through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP), come from the local authorities – although these funds are initially allocated to these authorities by the central government. The first two funds are aimed at covering the fees that had previously been paid by parents until the adoption of the school fee abolition policy. The CDF aims, among other things, at financing school projects. The LASDAP is based on community projects and needs, and the LATF can cover bursaries to needy students or pay salaries for the early childhood development teachers. Under the FPE:

Each school receives 1,020 Ksh per primary school pupil (about US\$13.5). In secondary schools, the government gives 10,265 Ksh per student, and boarding schools get about 28,600 Ksh per pupil (but this varies from one school to another): 10,600 Ksh from the government and 18,000 Ksh from the parents (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

Apart from these common funds sent to all schools, the ministry sends other funds to selected schools. However, our discussions showed that not all school heads are well informed about these different school funds and their specific origins, make-up and purposes, and little information was collected about this during the interviews.

In Lesotho, schools receive a utility grant from the central level which is about M8 (about US\$1) per child per school year. Several schools – non governmental and private schools – that have decided to continue to charge fees do not receive this grant.

Schools receive two different funds in Uganda: the School Facilities Grant (SFG), which is a conditional grant mainly used for the construction of classrooms, and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Grant, which consists of the allocation of Ushs100,000 per school per month (US\$52.5) for nine months, and of Ushs480 (equivalent to US\$0.26) per pupil per month.

In Kenya, schools can therefore have a relatively high budget at their disposal if one considers the different funds that they can potentially receive from the different sources mentioned above. In Uganda and Lesotho, the amounts received at school level are somewhat less important, although still significant. This led some district education officers in Kenya to conclude that schools benefited more from decentralization than did the DEO.

### ***Management at school level***

The management of these funds relies on school principals and school management committees. The existence of such committees is an explicit prerequisite for the reception of funds by schools in Kenya. In all three countries, the process of management of funds at school level relies mainly on the principal, and the management committee or board, as the following quotes demonstrate:

Head teachers are supposed to prepare work plans and budgets for approval by the school management committees (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

Head teachers and principals oversee the overall management of funds disbursed to schools. They sit in committees established by ministerial directive for the purposes of managing school funds. ... The signatories to the school accounts in primary schools are the head teacher, the chairman of the school management committee and the school treasurer. In secondary schools, the signatories are the chairman of the board of governors (BOG), the treasurer, the principal and one more person (Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

The level of autonomy of schools in the use of these funds differs. In Kenya, the funds are transferred with specific headings ('vote heads') – e.g. tuition, administration, electricity and water, personal emolument,

repairs and maintenance – and schools are not allowed to move money from one vote head to another. Some principals complained about the inadequacy of these funds, which do not cover other needs, such as school uniforms, books or food, and of their lack of flexibility. In Uganda, the funds are transferred with similarly strict guidelines.

The guidelines are less binding in Lesotho, as the following quotes exemplify:

What is expected of the schools is that the principals should use the funds for the development and maintenance projects. For example, funding could be used to establish a school's gardening project. The important point to note is that, according to the SEO, 'the money should be for the benefit of the child' (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

Once the fund has been deposited into a school account, the principals have absolute powers to use it following their own budgets and aligning themselves with the stipulated regulations. In essence, the principals are not required to be consulting with any education officer on the day-to-day utilization of the fund (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

### ***Control***

Our research did not examine how schools use the funds and to what extent decision-making is transparent within schools. Evidently, there are concerns in each country on how schools manage these funds and there are therefore strict controls on the use of these funds. In both Kenya and Uganda, audit services have been set up at the district level and systematic audit visits are organized, while in all three countries schools are requested to prepare financial reports that are examined at the district level. The staff of the DEO therefore plays a key role in controlling the use of funds transferred to schools from the central level. The importance of this task (districts want to avoid at all costs the accusation of condoning the mismanagement of funds) and the time it consumes lead some districts to disregard other missions, such as quality monitoring.

*Box 10* examines the role played by DEOs in controlling the use of funds in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda. The box illustrates the confusion of

roles for the supervisory staff in Kenya – the quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs) – who are, when visiting schools, expected to control financial management at the same time. This is potentially detrimental to the relationship between supervisors and school staff, which ideally should be one of mutual trust. Financial auditors exist, but their number may be too small to cover all schools regularly and, as a result, QASOs are mobilized for this task. This seems to be less the case in Uganda, where the auditors are helped by transparency mechanisms, such as the public posting of school budgets. It is also less the case in Lesotho, somewhat surprisingly, as there are no auditors in the DEO. But this absence of auditing precisely arouses concern in some DEOs.

**Box 10. Controlling the use of funds sent to schools: experiences from Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

***Kenya***

‘The government disburses funds in votes, and schools are supposed to comply with the regulations and principles for using the funds. The QASOs are supposed to monitor the use of these funds against the outlined guidelines. They usually do this by assessing the books of accounts through the assistance of an auditor. The reports the QASOs prepared after the school assessment contain a section on how school funds have been expended. The Ministry of Education sent guidelines to all schools on how the education funds should be used and managed in schools. ... The district auditors conduct audits of the books of accounts of schools in the district’ (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

‘Our role as auditors: to check whether funds are well utilized, in respect with the ministry guidelines and to check whether the procurement process has been done in a transparent manner. For the lower classes, we also go and check if parents collected the books, the materials and if they signed for it. We therefore monitor finances and record-keeping’ (District auditor).

‘Once a year all the books have to be audited. There may be complaints and then the auditors may have to visit the school’ (DEO).

‘The auditing takes place in the office: the secondary schools and the primary boarding schools have to bring all their books, in big boxes, sometimes more than one box per year. For the other primary schools, we do it in a few centralized places outside of the office. Sometimes,

the auditors go to the school, not on the basis of specific criteria but, for instance, when there are allegations' (District auditor).

'The audit of a big school can take two weeks; for a small school, half a week. But if the books are not well kept or written this may take longer. When the QASOs go to school for an assessment programme, their report is not complete if there is not a financial audit. Our component is part of this report' (District auditor, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

### ***Lesotho***

'The new development is that money is deposited into the schools' banking accounts. However, there are no auditing facilities at the school level. According to the senior accountant: "There is no format on how schools should report" – a practice which is against financial regulations' (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

'Schools have to account by way of submitting reports at the end of the government's financial year. According to one of the government school principals: "The financial report covers income and expenditure. The expenditure should be supported by the receipts from suppliers. There will be no future subventions until the principal has provided the financial report for the previous year. Although, in practice, the books are not audited, there are regulations on how money should be utilized. The regulations can be obtained from the supervisor of government schools". ... Even though there are control mechanisms in place, one of the personnel at the DEO expressed concern over the fact that auditing of funds does not seem to be a common feature in this DEO, a discrepancy that is not acceptable in the accounting discipline' (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

### ***Uganda***

'As for the management of the capacitation grant (the per-pupil grant to schools), and of the funds allocated to schools, [the DEO] indicated that: "The head teachers keep accounts. The auditors go to the school; they visit all the schools three times a year. Schools should use their capacitation grants along certain guidelines: so much for such and so on. The auditors also check on the respect of these guidelines. The political authorities may go to schools and see what is being done. The Education Secretary is on the Education Committee and will monitor the use of funds. If the auditors' report notes misuse of funds, there will definitely be action: the person responsible is called in to explain. Misuse of funds at the school level is very rare; sometimes there is none during a whole year. The funds are so small that it is not worth misusing them'" (Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

*Source:* Safari and Mount Kenya DEOs monographs, Kenya; Phuthiatsama and Maliba-Matso DEOs monographs, Lesotho; Waksio DEO monograph, Uganda.



### ***Problems faced***

Managing funds, which in some cases represent considerable sums of money, is not an easy task for principals and school management committees, even more so when they have not been trained for this task. While some training sessions were organized in some districts, they were not really sufficient to support schools in this task. Training was quite prevalent when the policy of transferring grants to schools was first introduced, and at that time much financial support was provided by international agencies, but in recent years much less training has been provided and newly appointed principals are regularly without any training in financial management. This is particularly worrying when important amounts of funds are sent to schools, and when the principals will be held accountable on their management. The lack of support from the DEO was particularly criticized in this regard. *Box 11* comments in more depth on the lack of capacity of school actors in managing these funds.

**Box 11. The lack of capacity of school actors to manage funds in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda**

***Kenya***

‘The work is becoming more difficult, because head teachers are less well prepared. In 2005, we did a national training for head teachers, but since then the government has not repeated this and the attrition rate among head teachers is high. The newly appointed heads have not been trained. Instead of auditing, we sometimes have to start training. If records are not well kept, it is difficult to assess transparency’ (District auditor). ...

‘The financial auditors were very active immediately after the FPE (Free Primary Education), but they only undertake some informal training now. As a result, some of us have never received any training in financial management’ (Primary school principal). ...

‘The DEO does not play a big role in this financial management process. The circulars come from the ministry. The DEO checks if you are strictly using the funds according to the vote heads. They are not coming to support us; they come for fault-finding on financial issues. Sometimes the relationship with the DEO is not cordial because they come and check on our accounts, but we don’t have an accountant to help us’ (Primary school principal, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

***Lesotho***

‘Both the SEO and the senior accountant share the view that principals lack skills for accounting. The DEO has witnessed cases whereby funds were allocated to non-existent students, which indicates the need for close monitoring and the establishment of proper accounting systems’ (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

***Uganda***

‘Most of the head teachers lack both record-keeping skills and financial management capacity, which partly contribute to poor financial accountabilities. One respondent made the remark that: “When head teachers get appointed in administrative positions, it is just assumed that they have some elementary knowledge in handling accounts, but the current generation of head teachers does not have any training in management skills. In any school we have visited, I have never seen a workplan or a budget. What they keep is just a shopping list.” This remark was substantiated by one of the head teachers as follows: “We have not been taken through the financial management course to enhance our skills in financial management. All the head teachers who joined teaching after the expiry of TDMS (the Teacher Development and Management System) in 2002 lack this type of training. Hence there is a lot of trial and error.” Regardless of this challenge, the district has never undertaken any initiative to ensure effective management of funds at the school level, nor has the Ministry of Education ever considered the allocation of a grant for this activity, despite the fact that “training and retraining of teachers” is one of the powers retained by the central government’ (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

*Source:* Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya; Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho; Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda.

In Lesotho, the reception of funds depends on the preparation of a financial report by the school. This is particularly demanding for schools, and not without contradictions, as demonstrated by the following example:

Schools are aware that failure to submit a good quality report means that the subvention for the following year may not be released. The SEO revealed that there has been a case where ‘a school forfeited the utility grant for that year and the subsequent year’, during which it did not account. It would seem that failure on the part of schools to submit financial reports in time has serious implications, particularly for the children who are the beneficiaries (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

In response to this, the ministry has developed guidelines for financial management and the DEO provides training for school principals.

Other problems faced by schools are related to the delays with which they receive these funds. Such a situation has been denounced in a number of cases. In Uganda, it was suggested that the funds be transferred directly to school accounts, instead of transiting through the district administration and DEO, so as to make the process quicker.

The introduction of FPE is not appreciated by all actors. In particular, school principals regularly made somewhat critical comments. One point raised is the fact that FPE has led to less parental interest. The comment by a principal in Kenya summarizes well this first point: ‘Since FPE, the parents have moved away; we rely on the money received from the government’ (Principal, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

Other principals felt that the financial support received from the government did not make up for the loss in parental funding. This was the main reason given by principals of non-governmental schools in Lesotho for their refusal to follow the fee-free policy. This is a complex and contentious debate that goes beyond this study on decentralization.

However, in spite of these challenges, the transfer of funds to schools is highly appreciated by almost all actors encountered in all three countries. Interestingly, not only head teachers expressed their appreciation with a policy which strengthens their financial autonomy. Many DEO officials also mentioned a number of advantages, some of them pointed out by one DEO head in Kenya:

This funding was well appreciated both politically and educationally. The funds go directly from the ministry to the schools. Before, the funds were collected at the school level and at times money disappeared. ... When money used to come to the DEO, e.g. for bursaries, there were long queues here and people were complaining about misuse of funds. So it's good that some of these funds are transferred to schools (DEO head, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

### **3.4 Conclusions**

The way in which resources are assigned to the DEOs differs between Kenya and Lesotho, where they come directly from the ministry, and Uganda, where they go from the central government to the district authorities, who then distribute them among the different sections. However, when examining and comparing the situation of these three countries, a first impression is one of similarity rather than difference: DEOs are not much involved in the preparation of their own budgets and they have little autonomy in the management and use of the funds.

Previous research carried out on the same topic by IIEP in West Africa arrived at a similar conclusion and commented on its negative consequences. The risk is indeed one of situations where DEOs cannot adapt their budget to their needs, which therefore constrains their efficiency (De Grauwe *et al.*, 2005: 10).

The scenario, though, is not the same everywhere. This conclusion is most true for Kenya: DEOs do not participate at all in the preparation of their own budgets. The overall amount and its use (through its distribution over specific budget lines) are decided at the central level. Because of the complexity of transferring between budget lines, some districts are obliged to spend on issues that they do not need, while being unable to spend on what they do need! This obviously leads to complaints on behalf of DEO heads. DEOs have a greater say in Lesotho: the district staff prepares budget requests, which may not be fully responded to, but they reflect better what the district needs. In addition, changing budget lines is easier than in Kenya.

One may have expected a different situation in Uganda because of the devolution policy, but, somewhat surprisingly, the scenario is fairly similar. DEO funds come from two sources: most come from the central government in the form of conditional grants, which are clearly earmarked. Many of these have to be distributed to the sub-districts. A second source of income is the district revenue. The share of this revenue in the total DEO budget differs, as a decision on this amount is taken by the district authorities. In the districts

which we studied, it is small – on average only about 10 per cent. Again, the DEO does not have much autonomy in their use. Because of the importance of the clearly earmarked funds coming from the central level, the scenario in Uganda – as far as the DEO is concerned – resembles that of Lesotho and Kenya. This situation would be different if more local revenue was directed to education. There are two main reasons why such a small share of local funds goes to education: the political authorities identify other priorities, including quite evidently the payment of salaries to district employees. The availability of central funds for education is used as an argument to dedicate local revenue to other sectors.

Many of the people we interviewed (though less so in Kenya) did not identify this lack of autonomy in financial management as a serious constraint, and understood the need for the central level to circumscribe local autonomy, especially in the use of funds. There may nevertheless be a problem: when DEOs have little autonomy in the use of funds, they may not feel much responsibility for their effective use and, therefore, there may not be an incentive towards effectiveness. The question then becomes: what is the right balance between central control and district autonomy? This will depend, among other things, on the trust expressed in DEO staff, on their skills, and on the importance a country assigns to an effective DEO structure. These factors, however, should not be taken as given and unchangeable. National policies can, and arguably should, focus on strengthening skills and building leadership and autonomy within the district offices so that their autonomy in the use of financial resources can grow. The very limited training opportunities and the small number of staff with a clear professional profile in financial management are not helpful in this regard.

Probably the most important reform in the area of financial management concerns the direct transfer of funds to schools, who can use them with some autonomy. All three countries have introduced this recently, mainly in response to the Fee-Free Education Initiative, with some differences: in Lesotho and Kenya the funds go directly to schools; in Uganda they pass through the DEO. This has had an utterly unintended effect: from the point of view

of DEO staff, schools have benefited more from decentralization than the DEO. The funds going to schools are indeed relatively important (e.g. about US\$13 per primary school pupil in Kenya). Even though DEOs appear to be well-placed to control the use of these funds, this adds to their traditional tasks and they tend to spend a lot of time on controlling and auditing the use of school funds. School principals understand this, but they feel that this control is not sufficiently accompanied by support in the form of guidelines and training. Some training was undertaken for school leaders a few years ago, but in recent years these efforts have slowed down. A stronger investment in such support (which is now apparent in Lesotho, for instance) could lead to less time spent on auditing. What seems certain is that auditing alone will never be sufficient to ensure that funds are well spent.

The discussion on financial decentralization to schools raises several other important issues, such as: the criteria for distribution among schools; the use of funds by the schools; or the control mechanisms at the school level. Our research did not examine these factors as our focus was on the DEO. One comment which some principals in all three countries made concerns the impact of free primary education on parental interest: many consider that parents now show less interest in the school's well-being than they used to, because they no longer fund school activities themselves. This is, of course, an opinion more than a statement of fact, and it may be partly inspired by the principals' dissatisfaction on the limits on their authority to request funds. Most actors, however, appreciated this reform, as it seems to allow for more spending on student instructional materials. It seems, therefore, that this policy, which was introduced fairly recently and was somewhat contentious, has gained significant acceptance.

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## CHAPTER 4. STAFF MANAGEMENT

The autonomy of the district education office (DEO) in the management of its own staff, as well as in teacher management, is a key issue in debates around decentralization. An analysis of staff management covers several questions, which have been grouped into three areas: recruitment and deployment processes; staff evaluation; and staff development. The following sections examine these questions separately for DEO staff and for teachers. The discussions on teacher management only examine the role played by the DEO. As that role is small, this section is fairly short.

The management of the DEO staff in a context of decentralization is analysed against a background concerned about two matters. First, when more responsibilities are transferred to the DEO, the professionalism of its staff becomes a key issue. Do present staff management practices allow for the development of such professionalism? Second, decentralization implies a stronger role by the DEO, including in the management of its own staff. What is the role played by DEOs in this regard and what are the challenges they face?

### 4.1 DEO staff management

#### *Recruitment*

In each of the three countries, the recruitment of DEO staff is decided by outside agencies: by the central Ministry of Education and the Public Service Commission in Kenya and Lesotho; and by the District Service Commission (DSC) in Uganda. These two scenarios have two different purposes: in the former case, it is mainly intended that the central level should keep control; in the latter case, it is meant to reinforce the accountability of civil servants to the local authorities. However, even in Uganda, central control over the recruitment process endures because of the existence of centrally defined criteria and guidelines. In this framework, the role of the DEO heads is either

very limited, as in Uganda. or non-existent, as in Lesotho. In Uganda, the DEOs identify needs and can give some technical advice to the DSC. Their influence is somewhat greater mainly because the DEO is closer to where the decisions are made. *Box 12* details the processes followed in Lesotho and Uganda in this regard.

**Box 12. The recruitment of DEO staff: a centralized mechanism in Lesotho versus a district responsibility in Uganda**

***Lesotho***

‘The recruitment, appointment and deployment of DEO staff remains centralized in all aspects. The number of posts is decided by the head office. The posts are identified and advertised by the Department for Human Resources within the central ministry, which also lays down the specifications. The shortlist is made by the same department. The interviews are carried out by the Public Service Commission. The senior education officer (SEO) and the other staff are not at all involved. This is true for the post of SEO and for posts within the DEO’ (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

***Uganda***

‘The DSC is fully responsible for advertisement and recruitment of staff for the DEO, just like for other departments in the district. First and foremost, it is the responsibility of the district education officer to declare vacant positions, which he submits to the chief administrative officer (CAO), who in turn submits the vacancies to the DSC for advertisement, after which successful applicants are shortlisted and invited for interviews. Following the interviews, the DSC forwards the successful candidates to the CAO, who in return authorizes the personnel officer to appoint and post on behalf of the CAO. The district education officer has no direct role to play in recruitment and appointment, but he is every now and then called upon to give technical support to the DSC’ (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

*Source:* Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho; Banana DEO monograph, Uganda.

Putting the recruitment process in the hands of a commission rather than an individual and ensuring some form of central control is intended to lead to a transparent and well-regulated process, which respects minimum criteria and fair competition. However, from the point of view of the DEOs, it has two major disadvantages.



First, it tends to be more time-consuming. The control over DEO staff management by ‘outsiders’ (at the district or at central level) inevitably passes through a number of procedures which lengthen the process.

Second, comments have been made about the inadequacy and rigidity of recruitment criteria for DEO posts – senior positions or lower ones – which are generally formulated for the country as a whole, without necessarily taking into account the specific characteristics of certain districts. This adds to the difficulty of recruiting an officer quickly with the relevant qualifications and experience for the post, and therefore results in long vacancies. This is true even in Uganda, where it could be expected that more consideration is given to the district characteristics. But, precisely to avoid undue influence by district authorities, the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS) has tightened the minimum qualification requirements for most senior positions. The following example shows that this can lead to potential and worthy applicants failing to qualify for vacant positions:

During the most recent advertisement for the position of district education officer, both applicants had masters’ degrees in education (the position requires just a first degree in education, plus a diploma in education management and administration). One was at a U5 salary scale while the other was at U3, with both competing for the post of district education officer, which is at a higher (U1) salary scale. Although both had the necessary academic qualifications, the one at U5 was disqualified because, according to the guidelines, it was not possible for someone at U5 to compete for a position at U1 as it would mean jumping three salary scales in between. Hence, only one competitor was left in the race, which was not acceptable for transparency reasons as it would appear as if the situation had been stage-managed to favour the remaining applicant. Accordingly, it was decided to re-advertise the vacancy and, while this happened some months ago, this has not yet taken place for financial reasons (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

This situation leads several DEO heads to complain about their low level of involvement in the recruitment of their staff, which leads to some frustration, as expressed in the following quotes:

I need to be involved because as a district education officer, there are some competencies I need and nobody else on the panel knows them. ... For example, I need a secretary who has both data entry and data processing skills, in addition to word processing. But you get allocated a secretary who knows only 'WORD' ... and you have to take her for a course. This could not have happened if I was involved (DEO Head, Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

For the DEO personnel, Nairobi decides. I don't have any say (DEO Head, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

### ***Staff evaluation***

In all three countries, the evaluation of DEO staff follows a standard procedure developed at national level for all public servants and using standard evaluation forms. The head of office and her/his officers agree at the beginning of the year on targets for each officer, of which they examine their achievement at the end of the year. Though some officers considered that it is not easy to set these targets – 'we decide on the targets through guesswork' (Officer, Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho) – such a process of staff evaluation is highly appreciated in the three countries as it allows for a discussion between each officer and his or her superior on their work, achievements and potential problems faced. This is a source of motivation for staff.

In Lesotho, this form of staff evaluation is more recent than in Uganda and Kenya. Evaluation used to be less transparent:

In the past, government used a confidential reporting system for the purposes of staff evaluation. This strategy has since been revised due to the fact that it had a number of limitations. One of the DEO members who participated in the interview had this to say about staff evaluation: 'In the confidential report the superior reports on the subordinates and the subordinates would never know what the superior said about him/her. The confidential report mode of evaluating staff performance has since been replaced by performance appraisal management.' This new mode of evaluating staff allows for an appraisee to be part of the evaluation. Both the appraiser and the appraisee have the opportunity to discuss their views on an individual being evaluated or appraised. Procedurally,

discussions are held prior to completing the performance appraisal form. The discussions mainly cover the extent to which an officer performs or undertakes his or her responsibilities as is expected (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

Lesotho encounters a specific problem: officers working in other sections than inspection complained of being evaluated by the DEO head, who is an inspector, and not by somebody with specific expertise in their field, and who therefore understands the nature and the difficulties of their work. From their point of view, the DEO does not have the technical background to assess their work. The cause of this problem is related to the recent reform whereby staff members working in different areas have been transferred to the DEO, which continues to be headed by an inspector. This could be overcome through a change in the profile of the DEO head, which should fit more with the generalist profile of the office.

Once completed, the evaluation forms are sent to the central or district administration. However, one important challenge, which was expressed by several staff members in all three countries, is that their results are seldom taken into account for promotion, which leads to frustration. Some officers therefore concluded the following: ‘Appraisal is merely routine work, because there are no promotions and salary increases’ (Executive Officer and QASOs, Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

DEO heads are evaluated by the central or district administration in a similar manner to their DEO staff. Few comments were made in this regard, except in one district in Lesotho where staff came up with an innovative proposal, namely for the DEO head be evaluated by his own staff, who are considered the best placed for this task (Senqu DEO Monograph, Lesotho). No information was given in the studies on the reaction of the DEO head to this situation.

### ***Staff development***

In principle, the evaluation of an officer’s work performance should lead to an assessment of professional development needs and subsequently to the

setting up of professional development programmes. However, the actual implementation of this scenario depends very much on who is responsible for the design and implementation of capacity development programmes, and therefore on their priorities and financial resources. The situation is somewhat different in each of the three countries:

- In Kenya, education staff training is the responsibility principally of the Kenya Education Service Institute (KESI) and other central level agencies and programmes.
- In Lesotho, each DEO prepares a plan and a budget for staff training, which is proposed to the central ministry.
- In Uganda, the district authorities develop programmes which cover all sectors including education (see the experience of the Lubigi District in *Box 13*).

Each of these three scenarios encounters some problems. In Kenya, the relevance of the training and its adaptation to the specific needs of district officers is not evident as the programmes are standard ones, offered by central level agencies. There are in any case few financial resources dedicated to such training. In Lesotho, the DEO proposals are generally not fully implemented because of the lack of funds at central level. What DEO staff members are upset about is not so much the limited funds, but their lack of information about why some demands for training are funded and others not. In Uganda, there is competition for funds between different departments, of which education is only one. 'Overall, lack of staff development training programmes is due to the limited resource envelope at the disposal of the district local government in light of other competing training needs like training of the administrative and finance staff who were given priority' (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda). In several districts, the selection of what shall be funded does not seem to be based on a comparison of the different needs, but rather on the obligation to satisfy every department to a certain extent in order to avoid jealousy.

**Box 13. Capacity-building programme for district level staff: experience from one district in Uganda**

The district receives a capacity-building grant from the central level. The principal personnel officer gave comprehensive information in this regard:

Our capacity building grant is about 172 million Sh. It used to be higher, but went down. But this has to be used for all political leaders down to villages, all staff and teachers. Out of 172 million Sh, about 4 million is planned to be used for education this year. The biggest amount goes to the training of sub-county chiefs and heads of department, for whom about 50 per cent of the budget is used. And quite a lot goes to the training of political leaders.

The funds for education in recent years have been used, for instance, for school management committees (SMCs). There is certainly a need also for capacity development for DEO staff, e.g. on proper report writing for inspectors, on counselling in cases of discipline, so that they can be solved without being brought to the attention of the CAO.

Before deciding on the use of these funds, we do a needs assessment. People identify their priorities. We have three questionnaires: for individual needs; for department needs; for institutional needs. These are collected during March–April. We analyse these and prepare priority lists. And the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) meeting (in which all heads of departments are present) decides on the actual use.

There are opportunities for further training. All our sub-county chiefs have gone for further training and we also trained 40 parish chiefs.

*Source:* Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda.

When workshops are organized, they are generally well-appreciated. Officers' interest in personal development is also visible in the fact that some staff in all three countries have taken advantage of the possibility of attending courses that they have paid for themselves.

On the whole, in all three countries the main conclusion to draw from the above is that a long-term sustained programme of staff development does not exist. Whatever staff development exists, it consists of short and haphazardly organized courses, which are not developed in response to an analysis of

needs, but are based on what the different organizers can offer. Few, if any, efforts are made to ensure that the staff who have benefited from training will use their newly acquired skills and knowledge on the job.

## **4.2 Teaching staff management**

The management, and in particular the recruitment and deployment, of teachers is a contested domain of decision-making in nearly every country. Decisions over the nomination of teachers are an important source of power because of the sheer number of jobs involved in what is generally a sluggish national job market. From an educational point of view, teachers are the main resource for any school system, and finding the most appropriate management practices is important for the quality of the schools and the system.

In all three countries, as we will see, there are disagreements and discussions about who should be the main decision-maker in teacher management. Our main interest is in the role (or lack of it) of the DEO and how this impacts on the DEO's authority. In several domains (such as teacher evaluation and professional development), the DEO is not much involved and these sections are therefore brief.

### ***Recruitment and transfers***

#### ***(a) Recruitment***

DEOs play a minor role in teachers' recruitment in Lesotho and Uganda, and their participation is only slightly more important in Kenya, though here also their responsibility is shared with other actors.

In Lesotho, responsibility for the recruitment process lies mainly with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) at district level, with the Teaching Service Department in the ministry and with school management committees (SMCs). The process starts with the identification of the need for a teacher, through the application of the norms for pupil/teacher ratios. It continues as follows, according to an assistant human resources officer (HRO):

A post is advertised with requirements; people apply to the SMC, which interviews the candidates. I help them develop the interview questions and with the analysis of the interviews. In government schools, I sit on the recruitment interview panel, but I don't talk. In church schools, I am absent. The SMC then recommends a shortlist to the TSC. We, in the DEO, may assess the various candidates and afterwards the TSC takes over. If our assessment of a teacher is negative, that can stop the process or it can slow it down, but if the SMC insists on the same teacher, they can keep him or her on the shortlist for recommendation to the TSC (Assistant HRO, Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

In other words, the role of the DEO in this process, through its human resource officer, is purely supportive or, to quote some officers, limited to 'official paper work' (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho) or 'preliminary work to facilitate the work of those with powers to decide' (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho). The DEO's role is thus minor in government schools and nearly nil in non-government schools, where the SMCs are the key actors.

In Uganda, the recruitment of primary schoolteachers follows the same process as that of DEO staff:

The DEO identifies vacant positions, which he or she submits to the CAO who, in turn, makes a submission to the DSC for advertisement, after which successful applicants are short listed and invited for interviews. Following the interviews, the DSC forwards the successful candidates to the CAO who, in return, authorizes the personnel officer to appoint (on probation for two years) and post on his behalf. In all these processes, DEOs have no direct role to play, but they are every now and then called upon to give technical support to the DSC, as and when felt necessary (Uganda synthesis).

The DEO has thus no decision-making power and its influence on the recruitment process depends more on personal characteristics and relationships than on any officially recognized expertise.

For Ugandan secondary teachers, the process of recruitment is still a central responsibility and district authorities, including DEOs, are not involved.

In Kenya, however, the DEO's involvement is slightly more important, as the DEO head or a representative sits on recruitment panels at primary and secondary levels. She/he is therefore able to participate in the decision-making process, although the overall process remains managed by others, mainly the district education board for primary teachers and the TSC for secondary teachers. *Box 14* presents in more detail the role played by the DEO in this regard. DEO staff members are required to attend the recruitment meetings that take place at the district or the school level to check if the TSC rules are respected. There is an important difference in Kenya between the recruitment of primary teachers, which has been decentralized to the district, and that of secondary teachers, which remains under the control of the central TSC (although the recruitment panel meets at the school). However, the decentralization of primary teacher recruitment did not increase the involvement of the DEO.

The discussions on the role of the DEO in teacher management (and recruitment in particular) turn mainly around two questions: What should the role and the level of involvement of the DEO be? And how centralized or decentralized should the process be?

In each of the three countries, the answer to the first question at this moment is that DEOs only play a minor role. Not surprisingly, the DEOs are unhappy with this and they make the point that, because they are close to the schools, they are in a better position to know their needs and allocate adequate staff to them. This was emphasized in the following statement: 'Notwithstanding the established guidelines for the recruitment of staff, teachers and head teachers, one respondent felt that the DEO should always be involved as it may be possible for the DSC to make wrong selections that would have been avoided had the DEO been involved' (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

Several principals also expressed dissatisfaction with their own lack of involvement: 'I asked for a Christian religious education (CRE) teacher but I was given an Islamic religious education (IRE) teacher, yet my school



does not offer IRE, so I had to introduce IRE in my school so that I could accommodate this teacher' (Head teacher, Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

**Box 14. Involvement of the DEO in the teachers' recruitment process in Kenya**

The DEO intervenes 'by capturing data on the shortages of staff using the assessment reports. The data and information are then passed on to the TSC, which advertises vacancies. The district education officer is a member of the panel that conducts the recruitment exercise. In primary schools, the district education officer is the secretary to the district education board, which conducts the recruitment, while in secondary schools, he/she is a member of the board that conducts recruitment. The QASOs represent the DEO in different recruitment panels, not as QASOs but as representatives of the DEO to ensure fairness in the recruitment' (Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

'For secondary schools, recruitment committees are usually composed of three members of the school's board of governors, the principal, the deputy principal, the head of department related to the subject for which the teacher is sought, the district education officer and one QASO. In recruitment, the TSC makes the decision; the DEO can only award up to 5 marks out of 100. The remaining 95 marks are awarded by the TSC' (Lakeside DEO monograph, Kenya).

'Overall, many decisions about primary teacher management are taken at the district level, where the most important responsibilities (recruitment, nomination) are in the hands of the district education board (DEB), with the DEO playing an advisory role and handling some less crucial management issues through the district staffing officer (transfers for instance). The DEB is concerned more than the DEO with district interests. The TSC oversees the whole process, but intervenes little' (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

*Source:* Mulembe, Lakeside and Mount Kenya DEOs' monographs, Kenya.

In Uganda, several DEO officers add a second argument: they are convinced that their professional expertise puts them in a stronger position than the non-technical staff in the district administration or the members of the DSC. They feel that district administrators and DSC members do not have an adequate profile and are not sufficiently aware of educational matters to be responsible for teachers' recruitment:

The present teacher recruitment policy is not appropriate – it needs to be changed. I think that teachers should be recruited by the DEO and not the DSC. ... My sitting on the DSC interview panel isn't enough. ... Before decentralization, the DEOs were doing the recruitment and deployment and everything was OK. ... The members of the DSC are not well informed about education; hence we get unqualified teachers recruited. ... Right now we are suffering the consequence of decentralization (DEO Head, Lubigi DEO, Uganda synthesis).

Not everybody agrees with DEO staff. Those who tend to play an important role in the present process are fairly satisfied. In Uganda, many in the district administration feel that the process is running smoothly, that the DEO opinions are well respected and that there are few conflicts between DEOs and the DSC. In Kenya, one district staffing officer among others actually complained about the necessity to consult the DEO in the recruitment of primary schoolteachers, stating that it creates more bureaucracy and slows down the procedure: 'staff dependency on the DEO slows down the process as every key decision has to be taken in consultation with the DEO. The current reporting procedure that involves both the DEO and the TSC is cumbersome and needs to be reviewed' (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

Apart from the necessity, or not, of involving the DEO in this process, a second question concerns the need for decentralization. The debate is complex because in both Kenya and Uganda the decentralization of such decisions to the district level has been accompanied by a move away from a central TSC to a DSC, with staff that is less technical and seemingly more easily influenced by local politics. Three complaints were made about this decentralized formula. First, in Uganda (and to a somewhat less extent in Kenya, where the DSC's role is less important) the risk of politicization was raised. Indeed, as explained by one principal personal officer (PPO):

The DSC is in principle independent. But its members are appointed by the Council, on the nomination by the Executive Committee and approved by the Public Service Commission (PSC). Some members leak information and, as such, they allow politicians to enter into the process (PPO, Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

A district staffing officer (DSO) in Kenya similarly recommended that there is a need to make the staffing office independent, so as to be free from interference by politicians and other state actors.

A second concern, regularly expressed in Uganda, is the risk that the DSC will systematically prefer candidates from that district rather than those from outside, even if the latter are better qualified. This could lead to lower quality, to disparities between districts (with the more remote districts having more difficulty in attracting good teachers) and to a segmentation of the country. A third point links up to what was already mentioned above – the lack of respect for the technical expertise of the DEO by the district. DEOs feel that their technical and professional input into the teacher management process is given less importance than under the previous more centralized system, which can lead to a feeling of frustration.

*(b) Transfers*

In some cases, the DEO plays a more important role in the transfer of teachers. This is the case in Kenya, where the DSO systematically consults the DEO head before making recommendations to the TSC. The scenario is different in Uganda where it was stressed that:

Even for the transfer of teachers, DEOs do not have full autonomy as political interference of local leaders through school management committees is inevitable. Equally important, DEOs cannot make transfer decisions on their own without consulting the CAOs or the principal personnel officers (PPOs) for approval (Uganda synthesis).

DEO heads feel that their lack of involvement makes for more bureaucracy and risks leading to posts being vacant for a long time:

Teacher transfer is another area where we feel that change is needed. We learn from inspection reports that teachers pose problems and we want them to shift, but this has to pass through the PPO and a lot of bureaucracy. The same problem is faced with teacher payment: teachers can be recruited, but it may take a long time before they are paid. Teachers' payroll should also come back to this office. I am at the mercy of other departments (DEO Head, Lubigi DEO monograph, Uganda).

### ***Evaluation***

The regular appraisal of teachers is carried out by their direct superior, the principal or head teacher. The appraisal process, in principle, involves a discussion between the head teachers and the teachers themselves. This is seen as a positive point, as it contributes to raising the morale of teachers and their motivation. Several elements are taken into account in the evaluation:

The form has a section that should be completed by the head teacher who draws on his or her experience and knowledge of the teacher. The head teacher draws on the knowledge of internal inspection by looking at: the work covered and mean scores; subjects panel reports given in regard to curriculum; forms completed by student prefects showing the subject covered in class; and reports from parents (Head teachers, Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

Such forms are transferred to the central or district administration, and can be used for promotion purposes. Head teachers and DEO staff do not have decision-making powers in this regard. In Lesotho, such standardized forms do not yet exist.

In all three countries, the DEO only intervenes in the teacher evaluation process (as distinct from teacher inspection) when a teacher applies for promotion, generally to the post of principal:

There is no appraising scheme for teachers. It is only in situations where a teacher applies for promotion to the level of principal that the office is involved; otherwise it is a principal's office that is involved in the evaluation of teachers although not formally (DEO Head, Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

They make recommendations that they forward to the Teaching Service Department. Here again, their involvement is quite limited.

In one district in Kenya, local communities are asked to assess principals. This developed with the transfer of funds to schools, and takes place as follows:

Local communities are also asked to evaluate the principals, and they do this through annual meetings with parents/teachers associations and board meetings. When communities do not have a positive image of the principal, they usually request the DEO and the Ministry of Education to transfer the principal. In such cases, the DEO and the ministry have no option but to effect the transfer. ... Most principals expressed dissatisfaction with the community's involvement in their evaluation. They cited cases where parents do not know principals and lack knowledge of how funds are managed in schools and, in such cases, principals are blamed for misappropriation of funds. Although principals are evaluated annually, they do not get feedback and recommendations based on the evaluations (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

### ***Teachers' and principals' development***

The research allowed us to become familiar with the view that principals and DEO staff have about teacher development practices, as they experience them. The picture is probably not complete as this was in no way the focus of the research and we did not interview teachers, but principals and DEO staff. The insights are nonetheless enriching.

In Kenya, training programmes for teachers are delivered by different types of actors:

- KESI, although these training provisions were considered by officers as 'very rare', as stressed in the Safari DEO.
- The central Ministry of Education, as emphasized in the Safari DEO monograph: 'the MoE called for induction courses in Mombasa for three days on financial management. The principals concurred that training is relevant to their work, but it is not done adequately. The MoE occasionally supports training when it has surplus money at the end of its financial year.'
- Quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs), who organize seminars for teachers and heads of schools, based on their schools' assessment. 'In 2008, QASOs organized a workshop on curriculum

development, which was funded by Oxford publishers for teachers' (Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).

- Teacher advisory centre (TAC) tutors may also deliver training sessions for teachers.
- The district human resources officer (DHRO) at the DEO is also involved in teacher development. 'After recruiting teachers for schools, the DHRO conducts induction in different areas within the district for all newly recruited teachers before posting them in their specific schools. During the induction, education policy issues are discussed, including the code of regulation for teachers' (DHRO, Mulembe DEO monograph, Kenya).
- School principals, by organizing seminars for teachers based on the schools' resources, sponsoring teachers for seminars and refresher courses by using tuition funds and local transport travel funds (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

Teachers and principals complained, however, that these training programmes remain 'sporadic – there is no organized schedule' (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya). In the Mount Kenya DEO: 'Most head teachers agree that they did not receive much training since 2006. Reference was made to one more recent course, in which only 15 of 280 head teachers participated' (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).'

The secondary school principals encountered in this district complained in particular about the lack of involvement of the DEO in their professional development: 'When teachers are in need of additional training, we may go to the principals' association rather than to the DEO. The role of the DEO is to coordinate and maybe to help find funders.'

In Lesotho, 'the only mode of teachers' and principals' professional development is through workshops. "They are held during the June and the December vacations, and they focus on several areas including core teaching subjects, administration, financial management, HIV/AIDS and life-skills education" (EO and SEO, Senqu DEO)' (Lesotho synthesis).

Teachers may also decide to go for further training on their own initiative and based on their own resources.

In Uganda, teacher development used to take place under a programme called 'TDMS' (Teacher Development Management System), which was closed in 2002. This programme was well appreciated as it 'used to conduct intensive training programmes for head teachers in management skills for a duration of one month' (Technocrat, Banana DEO monograph, Uganda). As stressed concerning the Eastern District: 'When the TDMS was operational, head teachers were imparted with skills in management of records, financial management, administration skills, and leadership skills' (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

Since the end of this programme, teachers and principals only attend a few days of training, which was considered inadequate by most actors encountered during the study. In fact, these training programmes may not even have taken place, which would explain, therefore, the situation in the Eastern DEO where 'it was reported that teachers have not had a chance to attend refresher in-service training courses, implying that many of them lack new learning and teaching methods, which keep changing all the time, especially given the fact that some of the teachers had been trained 20–30 years back' (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda). Overall, head teachers were considered as seriously lacking in management skills, including the skills to write school development plans. As commented by one technocrat,

You get someone from a classroom to become a head teacher without giving him an induction. Head teachers need a simple management course on how to make school development plans and budgets; and also need training in curriculum management, school governance, personnel management, educational management, and financial management. Head teachers are given funds, but they lack skills to manage them. They adopt trial and error techniques (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

In the three countries, the lack of funds and of coordination for teacher development mostly explains the insufficiencies of these training programmes.

### **4.3 Conclusions**

This chapter examined the role played by the DEO in the management respectively of DEO staff and of teachers. With regard to DEO staff, there is a significant difference between Lesotho and Kenya, where management decisions remain centralized, and Uganda, where the district service commission takes these decisions. The evident implication is that in Uganda local influence on the selection of staff is stronger and that local considerations play a bigger role. However, this difference is less explicit than it may at first appear because in all three countries decisions regarding recruitment, appointment, promotion and the like of public servants remain regulated through central guidelines. Another similarity, which is particularly important for the DEO and has similar implications for the functioning of the office in all three countries, concerns the role played by the DEO itself. Indeed, in all three countries, the head or senior staff of the DEO are not much involved in staff management. DEO heads expressed some frustration at their lack of influence in this process and refer to inappropriate staff nominations and time-consuming processes as an argument in favour of their stronger involvement. Other actors, however, refer to the advantages of the existing policy, such as greater transparency because of the greater number of stakeholders who have a role to play and the respect of minimum national criteria, while pointing at the risk of a process which may be too strongly influenced by one or a few individuals.

Two other aspects of DEO staff management are arguably more preoccupying and they are found in all three countries. First, there is a weak relationship between staff evaluation and appraisal on the one hand, and staff career progression and development on the other. As a result, appraisal seems to have little impact on performance. Such a situation is not specific to these three countries and research undertaken in other countries, such as Benin and Ethiopia (De Grauwe *et al.*, 2009; Oulai *et al.*, 2011), highlighted the same findings. Nor is this situation unique to African countries or even to educational staff. Linking performance and rewards in terms of career development is a challenge for the public service as a whole in many countries



(see, for instance, Bangura and Larbi, 2006). However, the fact that in these three countries there is a separation between the appraisal process (which is undertaken by the DEO head) and decision-making on career development (in which the DEO head has no involvement) adds to this disconnection. The appraisal process itself is undergoing change and is becoming more participatory and transparent – something well appreciated by staff members, while some frustration with its lack of impact remains.

A second concern relates to the scarce involvement of the DEO leadership in the professional development of its own staff. The scenarios concerning staff development are quite different. In Lesotho, for instance, the central ministry decides on all matters in this regard, the district staff not being well aware of the basis on which decisions are made. In Uganda, district authorities decide on the use of the funds that the central level makes available, but there is a temptation for the district to distribute funds equally among various sectors (and to direct some towards the political decision-makers) with little reference to a genuine needs assessment and without much consultation (for instance, with the DEO). In Kenya, the existence of an institute with a specific mandate in professional development of the educational administration is an important asset, but its financial difficulties and the limited involvement of DEO staff help explain its lack of visibility at the district level. While an argument can be made to keep staff recruitment and promotion decisions out of the hands of the DEO, it is more difficult to use the same argument when it concerns staff development, where the intended beneficiaries and the office head are probably best placed to make these decisions.

As a result, DEO staff development programmes are weakly developed in all three countries. This becomes a particular concern when office mandates are changing and staff members are in need of upgrading. DEO officials are interested in strengthening their skills and many take private initiatives to further their education. There is evidently no guarantee that the sum of their individual choices is what the office needs most.

When it comes to teacher management, the studies show a variety of situations. These differ from country to country and, within each country, also differ between primary and secondary schools, and between government and the various types of non-governmental schools. One common element is that the DEO's role in teaching staff management is limited to an advisory role, as in Kenya, or sometimes simply a secretarial support role, as in Lesotho. The debate here is rather similar to that on the role of the DEO heads in the management of their own staff. DEO heads feel that their proximity to the schools and their professional competence should give them a much stronger input as it would help soften political pressure. Others feel that allowing the DEO the only say in this matter would give too much authority to an individual, while including the DEO as an additional actor could slow down the process.

The most significant difference between the three countries relates to the level of centralization of the teacher management process. To simplify matters, two different scenarios exist: (1) primary schoolteachers in Uganda and Kenya are now recruited by district-level commissions or boards; and (2) primary school teachers in Lesotho and secondary schoolteachers in all three countries are still recruited by central commissions. Neither of these scenarios is ideal. Uganda's experience, when teacher management was transferred from the central level, including the TSC, to the district level, more precisely to the district service commission, is instructive. This transfer may have had two advantages: first, the procedures are somewhat swifter; second, staff stability is higher, as beforehand people were assigned to locations which they wanted to avoid, while now teachers apply directly to the districts where they are looking for employment. According to several interviewees, however, this has created two related problems. On the one hand, there is intense political influence on the process, though this depends to some extent on the personalities of the various actors. This leads one study on decentralization in Uganda to conclude that 'recruitment of personnel at district level is based on know-who rather than on know-how' (Murembe, Mokhawa and Sebudubudu, 2005: 97) – a point also mentioned in our research.

On the other hand, there has been a ‘district-ization’ of teacher recruitment: the district service commission gives preference to candidates from the district even over better qualified candidates from outside the district. In both Kenya and Uganda, the DEO felt that its technical and professional input into the teacher management process is given less importance than under the previous more centralized system. In other words, the decentralization towards the district level has weakened the professionals at the district level to the benefit of the political actors at that level.

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## **CHAPTER 5. RELATIONS WITH CENTRAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The relations of the district education office (DEO) with central and local authorities, such as municipalities and district councils, are what distinguish one decentralized model from another. As these three countries are characterized by different decentralization policies, it is not surprising that significant differences can be found in this regard.

### **5.1 Relations with the central level**

In the three countries, different scenarios reflect the relationship of the DEO with the central level, as follows.

#### *Kenya*

The financial and staff resources of the DEO are allocated by the central level and, as we saw earlier, the DEO has little autonomy in their management. The DEO forms part of the ministry's administration and, although it has existed for some considerable time as a full-fledged office, several units of the DEO are accountable to their directorates at the central level. This is the case of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) staff and quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs):

The QASOs belong to the directorate of quality assurance in the ministry, while the DEO belongs to a different directorate. However, this does not create many problems or conflicts. The deputy QASO gave one example: a circular mentioned that the assessment reports need to be signed by the DEO, while another circular says that the person who does the visit should sign. What is done now is to have two signatures (Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

The offices send reports on their activities to the central authorities, in particular concerning school visits and specific problems faced at this level,

but seldom receive feedback on these reports. Some officers even stressed that, when relevant, they sometimes contact other ministries which react more quickly to their requests and comments:

While the Ministry of Education is slow to respond to recommendations, other ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water are quick to respond to recommendations that are specific to their ministries. For instance, if the QASOs recommended that the school should have water, the request for water is sent to the Ministry of Water directly and the ministry takes action (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

In other words, although the office and the ministry belong to the same administration, the communication and contacts between them are in some cases poor. As a result, the DEOs also have the feeling that they contribute little to national policy-making.

### ***Lesotho***

The scenario in Lesotho is now similar to Kenya: the DEO's financial and staff resources are allocated from the central level, with little autonomy by the DEO in their management. The DEO forms part of the ministry's administration and, while originally an inspection office, it was transformed into a full administrative office some years ago. Although the DEO is now headed by a senior education officer (SEO), and no longer by a chief inspector, some education officers remain accountable to the central ministry and, due to the relatively recent nature of the deconcentration process, some officers in the DEO continue to feel that they belong to their respective departments in the ministry as much as, if not more than, to the DEO itself. This has the advantage that there are more regular communications with the Ministry of Education than in Kenya. This situation, however, is not without raising challenges, as was stressed in the case of the Mohokare DEO:

The accountant said: 'I have two superiors: administratively, it is the SEO; functionally, it is the financial controller in the ministry'. The accountant feels that the second person is much better placed to assess his work, as the SEO has no expertise in financial matters. From the discussions with the assistant human resources officer, it became clear that she has,

to some extent, three bosses: the SEO (who appraises her); the head of the department of HR in headquarters (though she points out that she does not have much contact with this direction); and the HR officer of the Teaching Service Department (TSD). The last relationship is not a formal one, but it seems to be the most regular and fruitful one for this particular officer: the fact that much of her work deals with teachers and that the TSD is based in the building next to the DEO facilitate this relationship. The implications of these dual lines of command are, on the one hand, a certain amount of confusion among staff of the DEO and, on the other hand, a continued reference among many staff members to the central level personnel, which could represent an impediment to a policy of decentralization (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

The fact that the DEO head does not have the technical profile needed to supervise all the DEO staff effectively helps to explain this situation. However, it is not simply a matter of profile, but also of organization and the force of traditional lines of control. Indeed, the SEO has the relevant profile to lead and monitor the secondary school subject advisers, who nonetheless continue referring to the central ministry, with some unwelcome effects on the office's functioning. In Phuthiatsama, for instance: 'The subject advisers feel they are isolated since their section is still centralized. They still communicate directly with their senior officer at the head office' (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

Several communication channels exist between the DEO and the central level, mainly through meetings which are organized monthly and gather all 10 DEO heads:

The SEOs meet on a monthly basis. In these meetings, which are organized by the Field Services Directorate of the ministry, they share experiences and also have an opportunity to advise each other. Therefore, these meetings provide information on current developments. The SEO confirmed that he 'finds attending these meetings useful because we have an opportunity to submit quarterly reports to the Chief Education Officer Field Services. The reports include SEOs' activities, common concerns, how problems were tackled and sometimes training may be offered' (Maliba-Matso DEO monograph, Lesotho).

An important link between the district, including the DEO, and the central government are the district administrators (DAs): appointed by the central government, they are its representative at district level. In addition, they are expected to lead the ‘district government’ which includes all sectors. Their position, though, is ambivalent on two accounts: they are expected to promote devolution, while being accountable to the central authorities and not to the district population; and they should coordinate the sectoral offices (including education), but the staff members of these offices belong to the sector ministries and not to the district administration.

The existence of the DA allows central control over the decisions made at district level to be reinforced. It also leads in some districts to improved communication between both levels. However, this is not systematically the case; indeed, the frequency and quality of the relations between the DEO and the DA differ from one district to another, as shown in *Box 15*. An important factor in this regard is the location of the district. The authority of the DA is more contested in the district offices that are located physically close to the ministry. In the same way, the sentiment by DEO staff of belonging to the ministry is particularly strong in districts located close to the ministry and seems to diminish with growing distance from that point. This demonstrates that the situation at the local level depends as much on the national regulatory framework as on a set of personal relationships and physical factors on the ground.

### *Uganda*

Because of the policy of devolution, the DEO staff members in Uganda do not belong to the ministry’s administration, but to the district, and there are fewer relations with the central level than in the two other countries. Some officers, indeed, specified that they do not communicate with the ministry directly, unless with a specific problem and, even in such a situation, they do not receive feedback from the ministry, as emphasized by the following statement:

The Ministry of Education (MOE) does not get to know our problems. Emergency problems, like sanitation issues, have to wait for the next financial year, as there is no way the MoE could come in for help. ... We should hold regional review meetings so that we are kept abreast of issues in the ministry, but this never happens (District Education Official, Bukedea District).

**Box 15. The relationships between the District Administrator (DA) and the DEO: diverse experiences in Lesotho**

***Good relations, frequent communication in the Phuthiatsama District***

‘The DA, on his part, saw the relationship with local government as articulated in the Local Government Act of 1997 (as amended in 2005). In this regard, the DA represents the interest of central government at the district level because it coordinates all government departments. It follows, therefore, that all public officers are responsible to the DA through their immediate supervisors based in the district. The DA emphasized that his office and that of his colleagues in all the districts are regarded as “central pillars of the central government, meaning that each and every activity that takes place in the district, even if planned from the central government offices, has to be communicated through the DA’s office”.

‘Therefore, the DA plays a significant role in the education sector at the district level. On the one hand, all education-related matters are communicated through the office of the DA. On the other, the DA is well informed about developments in the education sector, including infrastructure, the contributions of community councils on educational matters, the school-feeding programmes, disputes emanating from the school-feeding programme and how they are resolved. The DA pointed out that he is aware of two education-related projects going on in the district.

‘The DA allocates land for the construction of schools and does so through the Land Management Committee, which looks after land issues, such as the allocation for school sites. The DA’s office ensures proper planning is taken into consideration as the land is allocated. Procedurally, the DA offices ensure that technical expertise is provided by different departments, such as the Land-use Planner, the Surveyor, the Physical Planner and the Environmentalist, before land can be allocated’ (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).



***Limited involvement of the DA in education due to the geographical location of the district: the case of Mohokare***

'All actors emphasized the point that the Mohokare District is different from other districts because of its proximity to the central government and ministries. According to the acting SEO, "in the other districts, the DA is like the Prime Minister of the district. He may even ask to use a car and we have to give it. This is different here, where the minister is more important because the ministry is so close".

'The DA sees two main explanations for the present lack of collaboration. First, strong resistance on behalf of the parent ministries: "the biggest handicap is that the parent ministries won't let go of power. Power means people. These ministries have to understand that we are in a decentralization process. Assets and resources should be transferred." Second, the fact that in this district the various district offices are dispersed and are not located on the same site. The DA feels that his lack of control is related in part to the fact that some departments (including education) are not close to this office' (Mohokare DEO monograph, Lesotho).

***An involvement reduced to an administrative oversight: the Senqu District***

'The DA admitted that his role in education is limited. The understanding is that the DA is responsible to the Ministry of Local Government and not to that of Education. This point of view clearly indicates that the DA's position is at the level of central government. He admitted: "My role is to make sure that the central government policies are implemented. I am responsible to the central government"' (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

*Source:* Phuthiatsama, Mohokare and Senqu DEO's monographs, Lesotho.

The relative lack of contact between the DEOs and the Ministry of Education should not be understood as a complete absence of the central authorities at the district level. The central government is represented through the chief administrative officer (CAO), which it appoints. The role of CAOs is to ensure that central level policies for all sectors, including education, are respected by district authorities. They play a role similar to the DA in Lesotho. A few years ago, a decision was made to appoint the CAOs directly by the government rather than by the District Service Commission (DSC), so as to strengthen their feelings of accountability towards the central level. This was seen as a movement of recentralization by the Uganda Government,

within the continued search for the right balance between central regulation and local autonomy.

A few comments can be made based on these experiences and the lessons learnt from the previous chapters. When district officers are part of the educational administration, as is the case in Kenya and Lesotho, it may seem logical that key issues related to the management of staff and financial resources continue to rely mainly on the central ministry. This leads to some frustration among DEO heads. It should have the advantage, however, of creating a sense of belonging to one and the same administration with a common vision and mandate. But the lack of outreach by the central ministry and the irregularity of common meetings lead to feelings of isolation, especially when DEOs receive little feedback and support from the central administration.

Concern with the isolation of DEOs and with their lack of relationships with each other and with the ministry is also very present in Uganda. In this case, it is more the result of the devolution policy itself, which has severed the relationships of accountability, control and support between the DEO and the ministry.

Whatever the decentralization scenario, therefore, in each of these three countries there is concern with the lack of regular and helpful communication between the district and the central level, something which is requested by most of the officers encountered during the study.

It could be argued that the difficulties to set up a constructive relationship between the central ministry and the DEOs are to some extent linked to diverse, and even contradictory, interpretations of the decentralization framework by the actors working at central and local levels. This is demonstrated by the contestation on the role of the DA in Lesotho and by the following quote on Uganda:

While the district education offices would want to have a linkage with the MoES [Ministry of Education and Sports], the latter would want the education departments to be fully answerable to the districts as spelt out

under the decentralization framework of the Local Government Act of 1997. Although decentralization means districts being autonomous, the district education officials expressed a wish that there ought to be regular meetings between districts and the parent ministry (MoES). This could, for instance, be organized through mid-term regional review meetings, organized by the MoES and attended by all DEOs – this would indeed be an opportunity for DEOs to share experience and learn from each other (National synthesis, Uganda).

## **5.2 Relations with local authorities**

The level of involvement of local elected authorities in education differs between the three countries. This has a strong impact on the relationships between local authorities and DEOs.

### ***Responsibilities of the local elected authorities in education***

In Kenya, the local authority (Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan [LASDAP] and Local Authority Transfer Funds [LATF]) contributes to education by allocating funds to schools and pupils (see *Chapter 3* for more details). It can contribute to school construction, rehabilitation and equipment, finance community projects, pay the salary of early childhood development teachers or provide bursaries to pupils. District councillors are also members of the district education board committees, which includes the DEO head, and representatives of churches and of school principals. As such, they participate in the discussions related to teacher recruitment and appointment. The DEO staff members we met were generally well informed about the role played by local authorities, although some commented on the little support they received.

In Lesotho, the setting up of district councils is fairly recent (the devolution reform was launched in 1997 with the Local Government Act, but its implementation only started in 2005 after an amendment to the Act). To many of the people with whom we had discussions during the field studies, their responsibilities in education are not clear. Many knew little about the functioning of these councils. This is true even for some district

administrators, although their lack of interest could also be explained by the fact that they consider district councils to be possible future competitors. Indeed, as mentioned in the Mohokare district:

The DA was not well informed about [the district councils'] specific tasks ('I think they have something to do with education') and could not be clearer. In the discussion with DEO staff, these councils were nearly not mentioned and the acting SEO confirmed not to know anything about the district council. One interviewee explained: 'We don't get much support from local government. Local government is in its infancy. The local councils are only just being put in place (Mohokare DEO monograph).

In Uganda, the involvement of the district council is evidently much more important than in the other two countries, as the DEO is part of the district administration, which is governed by the district council. They allocate resources to education so as to complete the grants received from the central level and, through the DSC, they recruit and appoint DEO staff and teachers. As already discussed, the education plan prepared by the DEO is discussed at district level and integrated with the plans from the other sectors into a district development plan.

### ***Collaboration with the DEO***

When many different actors are involved in educational governance, their collaboration is particularly important. Such collaboration between the DEO and local elected authorities varies between the three countries. In Lesotho it is still low, owing to the recent set-up of structures at local level. The responsibility of coordinating the programmes and projects of the different sectoral offices, including the DEO, lies in Lesotho with the DA:

There are structures in place that allow for full participation and collaboration at the district level. The DA has established committees, such as development committee and the district level disaster management committee. The DEO is a member of both committees. The development committee in particular allows for information dissemination from all government sectors. According to the SEO: 'The development committee is where all the ministries present their plans and discuss how

each ministry's plan contributes towards improvement of the district (Phuthiatsama DEO monograph, Lesotho).

Several officers emphasized the importance of such meetings and the exchange of information between all sectors at the local level, and highlighted the role played by the DA in this regard. This collaboration benefits all sectors. The success of this collaboration, however, is not guaranteed by the simple existence of the DA and the creation of some structures and, as we saw above, it is quite different from one district to another. In one district in Lesotho, the relationship between the DA and the DEO head is difficult. The DA feels that the heads of the various sectoral offices do not respect his authority, while the DEO head is of the opinion that at times the DA imposes tasks upon her staff which are in no way related to education.

Many officials we met – in the DEOs as well as in the district council and administration – recognize the importance of good collaboration. This is emphasized by the research team in Senqu:

There are two reasons why collaboration between the local authorities, such as the district councils and the DEO, are important. First, according to the SEO, the district committee needs the input of education on almost all issues, given that this is a sector with more educated people. Therefore, the DEO is represented in almost all of the district council's activities. Second, to implement most of its plans, the education sector depends on the district development committees, comprising the chiefs, district councils and community members. The DEO, for instance, has to consult with the council for the allocation of land. The acting SEO disclosed that the district council may finance some schools' projects. It would seem that collaboration between these two ministries at the district level is very important (Senqu DEO monograph, Lesotho).

In Kenya, as indicated before, members of the district council and the DEO have the opportunity to meet and sit at the same table through their common membership of the district education board (DEB). However, this collaboration is not always smooth, in spite of the existence of such a mechanism. This concerns, in particular, key educational decisions, such as teacher management, which are taken by the DEB. If, in principle, the

involvement of different local actors in this process is a positive element, since it could ensure transparency and a representation of key local-level actors on an equal basis, it is not without raising some concerns. Several officers complained about the high level of interference of politicians within this process, which is exercised through their participation in these discussions as well as through other means:

The staffing position is usually interfered with by politicians who dictate when certain teachers are to be transferred or where they should be relocated. The DSO (District Staffing Officer) indicated, 'I cannot manage this issue because the politicians have strong use of the media, especially electronic and print media, in defending themselves and advancing their interests to the extent of using the media to threaten those who oppose their decisions and resist their influence'. ... The DSO recommended that there is a need to make the staffing office independent, free from interference by politicians and other state actors (Safari DEO monograph, Kenya).

In some cases, local elected authorities do not even consult or inform the DEO on key issues, such as the creation of a school or the allocation of funds to schools:

We did not inform the DEO about classroom construction. We call a meeting with the parents who help us decide. We do not see the need for a consultation with the DEO. There are no regular meetings between the mayor and the DEO. However, when they call us, we are available (Mayor, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

The DEO participates in identifying the schools that the authorities want to fund. 'However, when the local authorities get funds, they do not invite stakeholders to come and inform them how much to donate to schools, but they decide on their own which schools get the funding, and how much they get, and this leads to double funding of these schools' (Deputy DEO). The head teachers proposed that: 'There is need for a centralized disbursing committee so that when local authorities donate funds, they do so through this committee to avoid double funding' (Head teachers, Lakeside DEO monograph, Kenya).

In order to avoid conflicts with the local politicians, the educational professionals at times exercise some form of self-censorship:

As long as we do not recruit teachers from outside the district, they don't make noise. But sometimes they will try to interfere, though here it does not happen. As we have done the recruitment now for a number of years, we know what the politicians want, so we present them with what they want (District Staffing Officer, Mount Kenya DEO monograph, Kenya).

In Uganda, as the DEO forms part of the district administration, collaboration between the educational authorities and local politicians is systematic and therefore much closer: the DEO submits its plan to the district council, and participates in meetings held at the district level. As stressed in Banana, the fact that the district education office is located in the same building as the district authorities facilitates this collaboration:

Unlike two other study districts where the political leaders occupy a separate building from that of the technocrats, Banana District is unique in that politicians and technocrats operate under the same roof without any distinct division between political and technical wings. For instance, the office of the DEO (technocrat) is directly opposite the office for the Secretary for Education (political leader), and both officials share a receptionist who doubles as a stenographer (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

However, the collaboration is not always without conflicts and, as in Kenya, power struggles tend to focus on teacher recruitment and posting:

For technical issues where political leaders have personal interests, they tend to exert some political influence, even when it means interfering with sound technical decisions, according to one interviewee. For example, for both appointment and transfer of teachers/head teachers, it was noted that political interference may not be completely ruled out as long as it is in the best interests of the political leaders – that somehow, they tend to influence decisions of the DSC and CAO with regard to whom to appoint or transfer where and when (Eastern DEO monograph, Uganda).

It seems therefore that both scenarios described above are unsatisfactory. Where local authorities play a limited role in education, there are complaints about the absence of collaboration and the lack of support. Where the local authorities are involved, in many cases the education officials raise concerns about undue political influence on educational decisions. These challenges

are not unique to these countries and form part of almost any decentralization process, which is characterized at the same time by deconcentration and devolution.

The existence of smooth collaboration between the DEO and the local elected authorities depends on the awareness of local politicians about the importance of education, which can be the result of an intensive collaboration on an equal basis with education professionals in the DEO. The research team in Uganda, based on their analysis of a specific district where relationships are harmonious, concludes as follows:

Both the technocrats and political leaders talked to reported an interactive teamwork at the district level between technocrats and political leaders. This is partly attributed to the fact that the district chairperson has a background in educational management, which makes him take a keen interest in playing both political and advisory roles to the department. Another factor that also contributes to the harmonious coexistence between the Education Department's technocrats and the political leadership is the fact that most of the district councillors are retired teachers with vast experience in educational management issues. Hence, their support is not only political, but also technical (Banana DEO monograph, Uganda).

However, a decentralization policy cannot be constructed on the somewhat coincidental characteristics of the individuals responsible for its implementation. There is a need for the setting up of information and consultative mechanisms, with the representation of different local-level actors and a well-defined framework of responsibilities known by everyone, so as to prevent the over-representation of some of them in the decision-making process. It also requires new working relationships, which may be easier to set up if training and awareness-raising sessions have been organized beforehand. However, training alone seldom changes attitudes, especially when these are the reflection of power struggles. There is most probably also a need for national regulation to counterbalance the power of local politicians.



### **5.3 Conclusions**

In a context of decentralization, the DEO can potentially be a key actor at the local level: it belongs at the same time to the corps of educational professionals responsible for implementing the educational policy defined by the ministry, and also forms part of the district authorities who should ensure that all government policies and programmes come together at the local level. It is, therefore, in a position to play a pivotal role in the relationships between the central and the local levels, and between the ministry of education and the district authorities, which could potentially contribute to the successful implementation of the decentralization policy and have a positive impact on educational quality.

Its success in playing this role depends, however, on the characteristics of its relationships with the central ministry on the one hand and with the district authorities on the other. Its relationships with the central ministry of education can be viewed from several perspectives: the resources it receives from the ministry to fulfil its mission; the support in its day-to-day activities; its participation in the national education policy; and the communication flows with the central authorities. In this regard, interesting lessons can be learnt from the experiences of the DEOs studied in Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda.

First, and as has already been discussed, the DEO has little leeway in the management of the resources it receives from the government, either directly from the ministry in Kenya and Lesotho or through the district administration in Uganda. Although its level of autonomy varies between countries, it remains weak in all three countries and the DEO is not permitted to use its resources strategically to focus on what it considers to be most important.

Second, it appears that the DEO is left rather alone in the implementation of its day-to-day activities. This could be interpreted as a form of autonomy, but may also be the result of a lack of interest. While the DEO shares its plans as well as reports of activities with the upper levels of the education administration, it seldom receives feedback from them. This can be explained by the fact that the central ministry, as well as other actors, consider that the

DEO has, in principle, the professional expertise to carry out the activities that have traditionally been under its responsibility, in particular school supervision. In addition, such activities do not carry many risks. DEOs are therefore trusted to undertake the successful implementation of their activities, and little attention is paid by the education ministry to their work. However, as noticed during the studies carried out in Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda, this creates a feeling of frustration among most DEO staff, and increases their isolation within the system.

Third, there are few well-functioning mechanisms that allow the DEO to participate in the preparation of educational policy, except to some extent in Lesotho where the DEO heads attend regular meetings with the central level. The DEOs appreciate such opportunities as they feel that they are listened to concerning the challenges they face in their day-to-day activities and that they are involved in the preparation of the educational policy. There is less such communication and involvement in Kenya and Uganda, which contributes further to feelings of isolation by the DEO. This is particularly true in Uganda where, paradoxically, while the DEOs belong to the district administration and not anymore to the central ministry, they regret the lack of communication with the ministry level itself, which defines the policy they are required to implement and monitor. Nor do they have the opportunity to share their experiences with educational professionals and experts from other DEOs.

It appears, therefore, that the relationship between the DEO and the central ministry is ambivalent. While the responsibilities of the DEO increase in a context of decentralization, the central level does not grant it the status it requires to facilitate the successful implementation of the decentralization policy.

Our studies also examined the collaboration within the district between the elected district authorities, the representatives of central government (the DA in Lesotho and the CAO in Uganda) and the DEO. Such collaboration seems to work well where specific mechanisms have been set up and where

the elected authorities recognize and appreciate the professional expertise of the DEO, partly because of their own involvement in education.

However, collaboration within the district is not always smooth – for a number of reasons. The lack of recognition by the ministry of education itself of the professional strength of the DEO evidently weakens it in its discussions with district authorities, thus leaving more leeway for political arguments. There is also some lack of clarity about the roles and authorities of the different actors. This is most evident in Lesotho, where the reforms are recent and, while efforts were made to inform the staff, various officials were confused, for instance, about the precise nature of the relationship between the DA and the SEO, and between the DA and the district council. In Uganda, the CAO also occupies a somewhat ambivalent position, being a direct representative of the central government as well as the head of the district administration. Such confusion, however, is at times the reflection of genuine conflicts between various strands of the reform. In Lesotho, for instance, the devolution process has strengthened the district councils as well as the DA, while the deconcentration process has created DEOs who refer more to the central ministry than to any district authority. This situation is again not unique to the countries we have studied, as the following comment by Oyugi based on a general study on sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates: ‘Each of the organs operating at the local level cherishes its own autonomy. ... Vertical coordination rather than horizontal cooperation is the norm. ... Many departments operate in isolation and even withhold information from district development committees’ (Oyugi, 2008: 11).

Conflicts between actors are to some extent unavoidable because decisions about authority over issues, such as staff and financial management, are intimately political decisions. Indeed, an earlier study on decentralization in Uganda pointed out that: ‘Some of the problems between civil servants and politicians at the local level stem from their different perceptions of local government. The civil servants see themselves as professionals who try to follow procedures. On the other hand, politicians want things done their own way’ (Makara, 2000: 86). Such conflicts can, however, be constrained. The

search for a mutually beneficial collaboration at the district level may therefore require a good understanding by all actors of their respective roles through information and communication campaigns, the development of collaborative mechanisms and, above all, a balance between central guidance and district autonomy, which is intrinsically difficult to find.

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## CONCLUSIONS

### Main findings

Every research exercise starts off with a number of explicit and/or implicit hypotheses. Two explicit hypotheses guided this research work. First, the implementation of decentralization will encounter diverse challenges according to the 'model' of decentralization that a country adopts. We therefore examined three countries with different decentralization policies. While it was impossible within the same region to find three countries each with a 'pure' policy ('pure' meaning having adopted one model only, be it deconcentration, devolution or school-based management), the differences between Uganda, which adopted a policy of devolution many years ago, Lesotho, which is an example of deconcentration, and Kenya, where schools have more autonomy than in Uganda or Lesotho, are sufficiently different for such a comparison to be workable.

A second hypothesis related to the role of the district education office (DEO). We consider this office to be pivotal in the implementation of decentralization. It is the representative of the ministry of education, which is closest to the schools and therefore crucial to the relationship between the schools and the ministry (which is evidently important when implementing decentralization). It is also the education office within the district and thus in regular contact with other district authorities. Our hypothesis was as follows: the crucial role played by the DEO is recognized by the other actors in the system, and in particular by the central ministry and the district authorities, and policies and strategies will be defined in order to strengthen its overall position. A recent study of improving education systems by McKinsey and Co. has highlighted the importance of a mediating layer such as the DEO:

As the school systems we studied have progressed on their improvement journey, they seem to have increasingly come to rely upon a 'mediating layer' that acts between the centre and the schools. This mediating layer

sustains improvement by providing three things of importance to the system: targeted hands-on support to schools, a buffer between the schools and the centre, and a channel to share and integrate improvements across schools (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010: 28).

The purpose of this research is not only to prove or disprove these hypotheses. It also has a number of policy-oriented objectives: to learn about the challenges that the three countries encounter in implementing decentralization; to learn about successful experiences; and to identify strategies that could help overcome these challenges. This concluding chapter will, therefore, after having reviewed the main findings of the research work, end with a series of policy suggestions. These reflect not only the findings, but also the discussions at a policy seminar in Entebbe (Uganda) in February 2010. We organized this seminar, in collaboration with the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports, with the precise purpose of examining the research findings with policy-makers from Eastern and Southern Africa.

***A first surprise: more commonalities than differences***

Research can bring up surprising findings and this has been true for this work. A first surprise was that there were much fewer differences than could be expected between the three countries. The existence of different models of decentralization has not led to very distinct realities in the field, at least not as far as the DEO is concerned. The mandate of the DEO has remained very similar in all three countries. Their main role is considered to be one of monitoring the quality of schools and teachers through school supervision. In addition, they exercise a number of administrative tasks, for instance, related to examinations and many others of little strategic significance but which are considered helpful by schools and teachers. Their autonomy in managing financial and human resources within the district is limited in all three countries – a point that we will discuss in more detail later. The organizational chart of the DEO is quite similar in Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda, reflecting the similarity in mandate and tasks.

There are also similarities in the changes that have occurred in recent years in and around the DEO in these three countries. Three changes are worth mentioning. First, everywhere, district offices are expected to prepare a plan which is more than a simple plan of activities, but reflects some thinking about challenges for district educational development and priorities. Such plans do not exist everywhere – they seem to be in a minority – but the demand is present.

Second, more and more time is taken up by a task that has only recently cropped up, namely the control of the ways in which schools spend the grants they receive from the government. These grants have only existed for a few years, as they have been introduced to replace the school fees formerly paid by parents, which have now been officially abolished. The use of these grants by schools is a matter of concern everywhere, as it is the first time that principals have had such autonomy in the management of government funds and as many of them are relatively unprepared for this task. In both Kenya and Uganda, a special team of auditors has been created but, in addition, everywhere supervisors who visit schools much more than the auditors do are supposed to pay attention to financial management during their school visits. This is obviously not the main role of supervisors and it may have two unintended impacts: first, the time spent on financial control cannot be used for pedagogical support and control, which is the role for which supervisors are better prepared; second, discussions of financial matters may not be the most appropriate setting to bring school staff and supervisors closer together in a trustworthy relationship.

A third change – or rather a set of changes – found in all three countries relates precisely to the area of school supervision. Several reforms have been underway in this area, aimed at improving the impact of supervision on schools: the setting up of specific groups of professionals in charge of advice and guidance (as distinct from control, which remains the task of supervisors); a more explicit reliance on the school principals as the most immediate school and teacher supervisors; and the reliance on other quality monitoring tools – examination results in particular.

The potential of these reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of school monitoring has been demonstrated in many countries, but their implementation is not without challenges. The main difficulty has been that, because of the shortage of visits by supervisors, the more recently created advisory corps has been obliged to take over some of the supervisory work, which is not really their official function. This is not to deny, however, that, compared to some 10 years ago, the overall supervisory scenario has moved towards a stronger attention to support, a move which is well appreciated by school staff.

***A second surprise: the DEO, a neglected actor***

Arguably the most important similarity – and the second major surprise – is that in all three countries the DEO plays a less important role than could have been expected in countries going through a decentralization reform. In the three countries, the role of the DEO has not moved much beyond school supervision and some administrative tasks. In contradiction of our second hypothesis, the increased importance of an active DEO, as a key element between ministry and schools and as the guarantor of the successful implementation of national policies, is not recognized. This is demonstrated by the continued limits to the autonomy of the DEO.

This is true first when we examine financial management. Although there are some differences between the three countries, the situation generally is that DEOs almost have no participation in the definition of their own budgets, and that they have little leeway in the use of these budgets. Their autonomy is equally limited when it comes to the management of the DEO staff: the heads of the office do not play a role in the recruitment of their own staff and have little sanctioning power over their staff.

It is always difficult to get the balance between central control and local autonomy right, and this balance evidently depends on the competence of the local actors. Therefore, putting limits on the autonomy of the DEO may be justified or even necessary. The present scenario, however, seems to leave the DEO with nearly no say in affairs, including over matters for which they are



surely best placed to make decisions, such as staff development for instance. Nor does the present scenario allow the DEO staff to influence national policy-making. Although they are in charge of implementing policies, they are seldom asked to comment on policy proposals or to participate in policy debates. In all three countries, the DEOs appear rather isolated from the rest of the educational administration. This can be expected in Uganda, but it seems unfortunately also to be the case in Kenya and to a lesser extent in Lesotho, where relationships between the ministry and the DEOs are fairly weak.

The situation of the DEO becomes thus somewhat paradoxical: they are being asked to think strategically and to develop medium-term plans, but they are not given any control over their financial and human resources, and therefore cannot organize these in relation to what they perceive to be their priorities and needed strategies.

*A first question: why do DEOs have little autonomy?*

This brings up the question: why do DEOs have so little autonomy in all three countries? Our research points at two sets of explanations. First, there is little recognition by the administration (the Ministry of Education in Kenya and Lesotho, or the district government in Uganda) of the potentially crucial role that the DEO plays within a decentralization reform. The image of the DEO as an office mainly in charge of school supervision and some administrative work is not contested. Few efforts are made by the ministry to transform the image of the DEO. For instance, no specific posts have been created for an educational planner or a statistician within the DEO. While this would not on its own change much, it would be an indication of the fact that the authorities wanted DEOs to take planning initiatives. In a similar manner, it could be possible to assign to each DEO a budget for staff development, which it can manage in an autonomous manner.

A second set of explanations refers to the powers of different actors and their unwillingness to give up making decisions about matters that strengthen their already existing power base. Decisions about teacher recruitment and

the use of budgets are important sources of power. At present, in each of the three countries, there are other actors much more powerful than the DEO staff. In Lesotho and Kenya, central level decision-makers and school governing boards or management committees (which represent the school proprietors) are in such positions of authority. In Uganda, the district political leadership and the central government are the powerful actors. Authorities who hold power do not selflessly give this up. The lack of recognition of the DEO's potential importance evidently weakens the DEO in negotiations with local actors and contributes to keeping the present distribution of authority.

***A second question: why so few differences between countries?***

Another question remains: why does our research on the DEO demonstrate so few differences between the three countries, although they have adopted distinct decentralization policies? Several factors offer clarification. First, the DEO everywhere started off as an extension of the ministry mainly in charge of school and teacher supervision. This image of the DEO has survived in all three countries and continues to be reflected in the staff profile. Second, whatever the decentralization model adopted, much action by the DEO remains constricted and circumscribed by central ministry guidelines and interventions. This is quite evidently the case in Kenya and Lesotho (as the DEOs form part of the ministry), but also in Uganda. The recent decision in Uganda to send funds for school inspection directly to the DEOs is a good illustration: the principle of devolution should allow the districts to assign funds as they wish, in function of their priorities and therefore to decide not to fund, for instance, school inspections. From this point of view, the ministry's 'protection' of funding for school inspection goes against the spirit of devolution (and it could have had unintended effects, as district authorities feel less inclined to finance education because of the promise of central funding). There is also, of course, a more positive interpretation of this move, namely as a result of the ministry's concern with the quality of school supervision, but this does not invalidate that the intervention strengthens central control.

A third clarification lies in the fact that none of the three countries has adopted a pure decentralization model. In Lesotho, while there is a strand of deconcentration, there is also a trend of devolution (with the creation of local councils) and some level of school autonomy. In Kenya, these three strands of a decentralization policy are also present. The position of the DEO in Uganda is certainly significantly different, and the autonomy of the district authorities is stronger than elsewhere, but it is tempered by some centralization, as is shown by the recent decision for the district's chief administrative officer to be appointed by the president rather than elected in the district.

A fourth factor to explain the similarity in realities between these three countries concerns the strong impact that external factors have had when compared to national policies. These external factors are of two types. First, the characteristics of the local context which surrounds the DEO (and in particular the local level of development) weigh heavier than national policies. This explains why it is very difficult in all three countries, whatever strategies are implemented, to attract qualified staff to remote rural regions. It also explains why, in all three countries and in Uganda in particular, local politics tend to have a stronger influence than national policies on staff management decisions. In Lesotho, the success of the district administrator to build a district government depends more on local factors (including the distance from the central ministries and the existence of a common building) than on the policy framework.

A second type of external factor is of an international nature: reforms that are at present popular among international agencies are influencing in a similar manner the three countries, as we saw above concerning the reforms in school supervision. To rephrase these two points: the state in these countries has relatively weak regulatory power, which allows local and international actors to have stronger influence. The weakness of the central state also opens space for strong individuals to take initiatives. This explains, for instance, why in some cases the DEO has some influence on the local scene, where the personality of the head of the DEO is strong and he or she has been able to develop intimate relationships with local politicians and a strong network.

The characteristics of the individual then become more important than the policy framework.

***Stronger and weaker actors***

Our analysis so far has shown a scenario of little difference between the three countries and of relatively little change in the position of the DEO. As a summary, this is correct – but also incomplete. There have been changes, some of which are quite significant. However, our analysis shows that these changes have been of greater benefit to other actors than to the DEO. One of the most significant innovations in all three countries has been the transfer of grants directly to the schools, which they can use with a certain amount of autonomy. The implementation and impact of this policy is a complex matter, but at present in all three countries in the mind of most actors this move has strengthened the position of school actors and has weakened that of the DEO. In itself, this cannot be a condemnation of this policy, but the fact that it contributes to an already strong perception that the role and importance of the DEO are marginal is a worrying development.

Another group that has benefitted more than the DEOs from decentralization is the local politicians. This is particularly evident when it comes to recruitment decisions for administrative and teaching staff. When these are decentralized to the districts (as is the case in Uganda and for some staff in Kenya), the influence of the local politicians on these decisions is much stronger than that of the DEO, and fairly easily circumvents whatever national regulations may exist. Local politicians' control over posts in the public service strengthens their power and, because little is done by the national authorities to strengthen the technical legitimacy of the DEO in their possible conflicts with the local political leaders, the DEO is not in a position to restrain the exercise of this power. This is less of a challenge in Lesotho, because the local authorities until recently had no role to play in education and recent reforms have only marginally changed this.

In spite of the differences in decentralization policies, and although levels of autonomy of the DEO also differ slightly in some areas, and although there is a difference in the identity of who controls the DEO (the Ministry of Education in Kenya and Lesotho; the district authorities in Uganda), globally our research shows that the DEO does not play a major role in policy formulation and strategic planning (this role is limited everywhere).

### **Policy implications**

This conclusion brings us back to our earlier finding: none of the three countries has undertaken profound efforts to strengthen the role and competencies of the DEO. When the research findings and conclusions were discussed at the policy seminar in Entebbe in February 2010, the consensus among policy-makers was that there is a need for a shift in the image of the DEO among administrators and schools. At present, the DEO is seen as a reactive administration, implementing tasks defined by others and with little control over its financial or human resources. There is a need to move away from this image to that of the DEO as an initiative-taking strategically thinking decision-shaper. This transformation has an important number of implications and needs to take into account what is the correct balance between central regulation and local autonomy. The following paragraphs comment on these two sets of considerations.

The success of any policy of decentralization depends on getting a number of balances right. However, there are no firm rules on what is a ‘correct’ balance. The level of local autonomy depends very much on the competence and professionalism of local actors. There are interconnections between several sets of balances:

- the balance between local autonomy and central regulation;
- the balance between technical expertise and political arguments;
- the balance between the professionalism, the accountability, and the autonomy of actors;
- and the balance between the mandate and the resources of actors.

At present, the DEOs are given little autonomy mainly because – so the argument goes – they do not have the resources and the professional competencies to handle such autonomy effectively. But this reasoning is circular: few resources are given and little professional development is undertaken because DEOs cannot act autonomously, and they are given little autonomy because they have few resources and capacities. However, the result is that the balance between local autonomy and central regulation becomes distorted to the advantage of the latter (in Kenya and Lesotho in particular), and that technical expertise loses out against political arguments (in particular in Uganda). The weak position of the DEO also means that it is nearly impossible to impose any form of accountability upon the DEO: when DEOs do not perform effectively, they can easily and convincingly point at the limits on their autonomy and their resources as reasons for their refusal to be held accountable over educational development in their district. – a matter over which they have little, if any, control. The transformation of the DEO into a more autonomous group of professionals can lead to a better balance between these different factors. This, however, has a series of implications.

Before considering these implications, it is useful to mention that a few basic elements are in place on which to construct a stronger district office. The DEOs we encountered generally had sufficient staff, many of whom have good qualifications. While their level of resources can be improved, there were few cases where DEOs encountered very serious resource constraints. In several districts, a number of quality monitoring tools exist (such as standard forms), which make for a more effective supervisory process. Several districts have also started preparing plans and a certain culture of forward planning is developing. Perhaps most important of all, there is a belief among most of our interviewees in the value of decentralization, because it allows for greater involvement by a larger number of people in education. This belief is tempered, however, by the conviction that much still needs to be done for the policy to achieve its acclaimed objectives.

A first set of implications concerns the level of autonomy that DEOs should be given. The complaints of DEO staff in this regard were not so

much related to financial matters as to staff management issues. Evidently, the complaints of a specific group are not sufficient reason to change policies. There are good arguments, however, to strengthen the DEO's autonomy in a number of areas which have a direct impact on the effective functioning of the office, for which DEO senior staff members have the necessary information and for which, with some guidance and training, they have the necessary skills. This leads to the following suggestions:

- that DEOs are more deeply involved in the preparation of their own budget;
- that DEOs have more flexibility in the use of this budget;
- that the heads of the DEOs have greater involvement in the selection of their own staff, which will facilitate the creation of a common vision;
- and, especially, that they have greater autonomy in the professional development of their staff.

A second set of implications is related to what could be called a number of preconditions for the successful strengthening of the DEO. The most important, as suggested also by the participants in the policy seminar, are as follows:

- There is a need for greater clarity on the posts and profiles of the staff in the DEO. A well-functioning DEO needs a strong head and the recruitment profile and procedures should guide the selection of a competent district 'leader'. One could imagine, for instance, asking all candidates to present a brief district plan or to participate in a role play on how to motivate school principals. Within the DEO staff, there may be a need to create a specific post for an educational planner.
- The capacities of the DEO will need strengthening. While many DEO staff members have good qualifications, their specific expertise in areas such as supervision and management needs further improvement. However, capacity development is more than training. There is also a need, for instance, to create posts which attract the appropriate staff, to offer such staff regular guidance and support, and to evaluate their

work in such a manner that it helps them improve their performance. The purpose is to turn DEO staff into genuine professionals.

When the above-mentioned decisions are transferred to the DEOs and when the office's staff and capacities are strengthened, it should become easier for them to prepare a genuine strategic plan which is based on an analysis of the situation of the district and identifies priorities. Such a plan could feed into the ministry's overall strategic plan and/or into a district development plan. At the same time, when DEO staff start thinking in a more critical manner on the challenges which their district and its schools face, they can become more useful participants in national policy formulation.

It will then also become easier to demand accountability from the DEO. The existence of a district education plan can become a tool for such accountability: its development and level of implementation and the support which the DEO gives to schools and teachers can become criteria to assess their performance and offer incentives for improvement. Accountability may not have to be only upwards: towards the central administration. It may also need to be downwards: towards the schools. The schools and teachers are, indeed, expected to be the ultimate beneficiaries of the actions by the DEO. It should not be impossible – though it may not be evident – to ask that schools participate in assessing the performance of their DEO, for instance by evaluating the support they receive. This may be even more of a necessity when the relations between the district office and the ministry are weak or indirect, as is the case in Uganda where the DEO is part of the district administration.

The more active participation of the DEO in national policy-making and its stronger involvement in policy implementation and monitoring will not succeed without some buy-in or compensation from the other actors, in particular the central and district authorities. Such compensation may not be fully voluntary. It may have to be enforced through the creation of collaborative mechanisms. These can consist, for instance, of discussion fora on national policies in which all district staff members participate, or a



more systematic involvement of the heads of the DEOs in certain stages of the policy formulation process. Organizing such collaborations is especially important at district level, where at present there is some confusion about the precise roles and responsibilities of the DEO and the other district actors, in particular in Lesotho. It is not only a matter though of clarifying respective roles. This seems quite clear in Uganda, for instance, where the DEO is part of the district administration and where their contacts are regular, but where local politicians hold the upper hand.

The challenge of the decentralization reform in these three countries is finally one of redistributing power and authority. While political commitment is indispensable, this commitment must be reflected in actual strategies to strengthen certain actors, including the DEO, and deepen control over others.

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Many countries have taken the path of decentralization in recent years, for different motives but with the common objective of a more effective education system and improved quality. However, decentralization has created new challenges. In order to better understand these challenges, and to identify strategies for successful implementation, it is essential to analyse the implementation of this policy at the local level.

IIEP implemented a research project in three countries of Eastern and Southern Africa with different decentralization policies – Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda. It focused on the District Education Office (DEO), which is in a position to play a strategic role at the local level in the implementation of the decentralization policy, as it links with the ministry of education, schools, and the district-level authorities. Four main themes central to the effectiveness of DEOs were considered: quality monitoring, human and financial resources management, and the relations of the DEO with central and local authorities.

This book analyses the main lessons learned from this research, with specific attention given to the commonalities and differences observed in the three countries. Two findings came as a surprise. First, there are fewer differences between these countries than their diverse policies would lead one to expect. Second, little is being done to strengthen the role of the DEO or develop its capacities, thus hampering effective implementation of decentralization. The conclusion proposes a set of policy suggestions to transform the DEO into an initiative-taking decision-shaper.

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