

SUCCESSFUL DECENTRALIZATION: THE ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF DEOs IN KENYA

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List of abbreviations

AEO	area education officer
AIE	Authority to Incur Expenditure
BoG	board of governors
CDF	Constituency Development Funds
DDAC	District Development Advisory Committees
DDC	District Development Committees
DEB	District Education Board
DEO	District Education Office
DHRO	district human resources officer
DQASO	district quality assurance and standards officer
DSO	district staffing officer
ECD	early childhood development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPDF	Education Programme Development Fund
FPE	Free Primary Education
FSE	Free Secondary Education
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GDP	gross domestic product
GER	gross enrolment ratio
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	information and communication technology
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KESI	Kenya Education Service Institute
KNUT	Kenya National Union of Teachers
KSHS	Kenyan shillings
LA	local authorities
LATF	Local Authority Transfer Fund
MoE	Ministry of Education
NER	net enrolment ratio
NGO	non-governmental organization
QASO	quality assurance and standards officer
TAC	teacher advisory centre
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Executive summary

In recent years, decentralization has become a popular way of reforming educational management. Many countries with different characteristics have decided to take the path of decentralization in a number of areas, including education. Regardless of the form these reforms take, they are often implemented with the belief that decentralization 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. 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 identify strategies for their successful implementation.

IIEP has been conducting research for that purpose since 2002, with a focus on the impact of decentralization policies on local level actors, in particular the District Education Office (DEO). This actor is indeed in a position to play a strategic role in a decentralized framework, as it interacts with the Ministry of Education, with schools, and with the district level, and as it is responsible for implementing the education 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: Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda.

The research aimed to examine 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 with interviews carried out with a wide range of actors at local level. 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 research was implemented with the support of the Education Programme Development Fund (EPDF) of the Global Partnership for Education, formerly the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI).

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 Uganda, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports.

This book analyses the main lessons learnt from this research in Kenya. Overall, it appears that the DEO mainly plays a traditional role within the decentralization framework, for example focusing on quality monitoring through supervision visits to schools, as well as an administrative role with the management of teacher files and with the provision of education data.

The main changes in its role these past years relates to its quality monitoring task, which has been characterized by two trends: on the one hand, more attention is given to pedagogical support during supervision visits rather than on control, with the creation of quality assurance and standards officers (QASOs) who have contributed to better relationships with teachers; on the other hand, financial control overshadows the importance of quality monitoring, as auditors join QASOs during supervision visits.

Results also show that the DEO has little, if any, autonomy in the management of its staff and financial resources, which limits the effectiveness of its activities in the district.

Introduction

Decentralization is a complex set of policies, which have an impact on a plurality of actors. Different governments have implemented different models of decentralization, but mainly with the focus on increasing management autonomy for local governments, local education offices and schools. There has been much discussion about the origins of these reforms in different countries, but there has been rather little field research on their local implementation, on the constraints which local actors face and on the strategies to overcome these constraints.

There is a growing need to understand the process of decentralization with a focus on its implementation. Against this background, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) has been conducting in-depth research on this topic since 2002, with the aim of answering a key question: what role should the state play to ensure the successful implementation of the decentralization policy? Specific attention was thus given to two main actors responsible for implementing education policies and monitoring education quality at local level, namely the school and the District Education Office (DEO).

While an intensive research programme had been carried out by IIEP on these two actors in four francophone countries of West Africa in 2002–2004 (Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010), a new research programme was implemented in 2008–2009 in three Eastern and Southern African countries, characterized by different models of decentralization – Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda – so as to examine the mandate of DEOs in these different contexts and the challenges they face in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The research was coordinated by IIEP and conducted with the support of the Education Programme Development Fund (EPDF) of Global Partnership for Education (GPE), formerly the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI).

The research programme

Three countries with different models of decentralization

The three countries, Kenya, Lesotho and Uganda, were purposely chosen to be included in the research programme. The intention was to examine the differential impact of contrasting decentralization policies. Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, while being different countries, are sufficiently similar for such a comparison to make sense: their administrative structures and traditions are strongly influenced by their colonial past, which is partly shared, and they have similar economic and social challenges. However, the models of decentralization in each of these countries are varied. In Kenya, there is a mixture of trends (deconcentration, devolution and school autonomy); Uganda has opted for a policy of devolution; while Lesotho is characterized by both deconcentration and devolution. Comparing the experiences of countries with different policies contributes to identifying key conditions and lessons that can be used to improve education policies and systems. However, the purpose of this research project was not to identify the 'best' model of decentralization, but rather to detect good practices for building a better system.

Specifically, the research aimed to:

- identify the different models of decentralization that countries in Eastern and Southern Africa have implemented;
- examine the constraints and challenges faced by DEOs under the different models;
- identify good practices and, on this basis, the strategies that could accompany decentralization policies to increase their chances of successful implementation.

A focus on the DEO

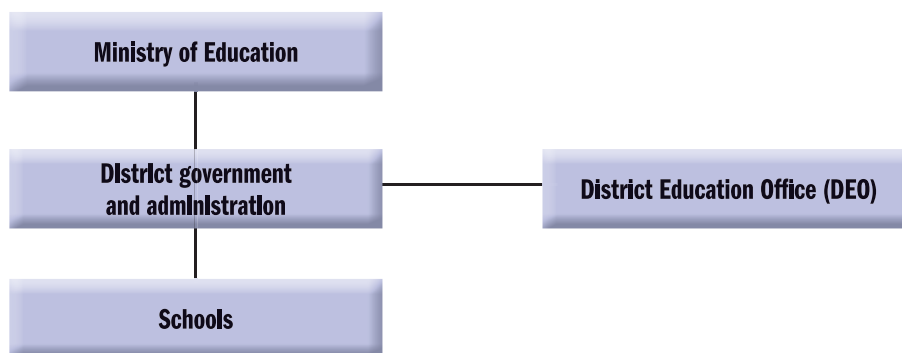
The research focuses on one actor, namely the DEO, for three specific reasons.

Firstly, the DEO is in principle a strategic actor in a decentralized context because of its position at the local level:

- It is the link between the Ministry of Education and schools; as it is the administrative unit closest to schools, it is responsible for implementing national policies and monitoring school quality while informing the ministry of what goes on in schools.
- It also links the district administration (the municipality, other district offices, etc.) to the ministry and to the schools as seen in *Figure 1*.

Secondly, most literature focusing on decentralization has paid little attention to the role of the DEO. Thirdly, the role of the DEO changes significantly between the different models of decentralization (especially between deconcentration and devolution), which strengthens the comparative aspect of this research.

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



Four key themes of analysis

While district offices are in charge of several domains, their effectiveness in three particular fields is fundamental to the success of the governance reform: staff management, management of financial resources, and quality monitoring. Their relationship with the central authorities and the local administration has an impact on its effectiveness in these three areas. The research was therefore aimed at analysing the DEO's action on these four key issues by addressing a set of questions under each theme.

The themes are as follows:

- 1. Quality monitoring:** One key task of DEOs is to monitor the quality of schools. The supervision visits are the main tool accompanied by other monitoring tools such as examinations, indicator systems, and the analysis of school evaluation reports. The effectiveness of supervision depends on several issues such as planning of work, visits to schools, reports, and follow-ups. The questions asked under this theme were as follows:
 - How do local offices monitor the quality of the education system and of the schools in their area? How effective are school supervision and support services? What information on schools and what indicators are available? How does this information guide the intervention by the local office?
- 2. Staff management.** The autonomy of the DEO in management of its own staff is a key issue in debates around decentralization. Staff management includes staff recruitment, deployment, development, and evaluation. Teacher management is also important in a decentralized context. The role of the DEO in these two fields was examined in order to respond to the following questions:

- What autonomy do heads of local offices have in the management of their own staff and in teacher management? What is the profile and what are the competencies of local education officials? What part do they play in recruitment, deployment, and evaluation of teachers?
3. **Management of financial resources.** the distribution of financial and material resources from the central level to other local levels, the availability of these resources at the local level, and the actors' autonomy in using them are core aspects of decentralization. Decentralization of financial resources management is commonly supposed to make resource utilization more efficient and appropriate.
 - What financial resources are available to local offices? What are the sources? How are central funds distributed between offices? How are district funds distributed between schools? For what purposes are these funds used and who controls their use and their impact?
 4. **Relations with national and local authorities.** While studying the role of the DEO in the decentralized system, it is important to examine the relationships between the DEO and the national and local authorities:
 - What is the role of the DEO in policy-making? How does exchange of information happen between the DEO and the ministry? What is the role of the local authority in education and what are the areas of collaboration between the local administrators and the DEO? How does the DEO collaborate with other actors in the district for education management?

Research methodology

In order to respond to the above set of questions, a research project was implemented in 2008-2009 in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of each country and national research institutions, namely: the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR) in Kenya, the National University of Lesotho, and the Makerere Institute of Social Research (Uganda).

The fieldwork was carried out in each country by a research team led by a senior researcher from the above-mentioned institutions, under the overall coordination of IIEP. In Kenya, Tiberius Barasa, from IPAR, coordinated the research.

Four DEOs were studied respectively in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda, selected based on various criteria as outlined below:

1. In Kenya, the districts were selected based on several characteristics including geographical and topographical, population size, number of schools, and economic activities.
2. Districts in Lesotho were selected based on population size.
3. In Uganda, the criteria used were regional representation, economic and geographical factors, and the representation of newly created districts under the decentralization system.

The research was primarily qualitative, consisting of in-depth interviews with key actors. These included the DEO Head, supervisors, accountants, human resources officers, school principals and teachers, and locally elected officers/councilors. The objective of interviewing a wide range of people was to get as complete information as possible on the mandate of the DEO and the challenges it faces in a context of decentralization. The research provides quantitative data wherever possible to validate some arguments.

A pilot exercise was organized by IIEP in Lesotho in November 2008, gathering the three national research teams. The objective was to test the analytical framework and research tools through field visits to DEOs.

The field visits were then carried out in each country during the first half of 2009. An IIEP expert joined the Kenyan research team during its visit to the Mount Kenya DEO.

Monographs were drafted by the research teams on each DEO. A total of 12 monographs and three national syntheses, as well as one comparative regional analysis (De Grauwe and Lugaz, 2011) were prepared on this basis and discussed during the Uganda regional Policy Seminar organized by IIEP, in collaboration with the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports, from 10 to 12 February 2010.

This booklet

This document analyses the information collected in Kenya through the field visits conducted in the Mulembe, Safari, Mount Kenya, and Lakeside DEOs¹. After this introduction, *Chapter 1* presents the profile of the country and of the four districts studied within this research, while *Chapter 2* synthesizes the lessons learnt concerning the mandate and challenges faced by DEOs in this country.

1. The names of the DEOs visited by the researchers have been changed with fictitious names to maintain anonymity.

1. Presentation of Kenya and of the four DEOs studied during the research

1.1 Presentation of Kenya

General information

Being a relatively vast country, Kenya has been divided into eight provinces, which are further subdivided into districts. While climate varies from tropical along the coast to arid in the interior, the Kenyan Highlands comprise one of the most successful agricultural production regions in Africa.

Kenya ranked among the countries with lowest Medium Human Development Index in 2009 and with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 783 in 2008. The population in the country is essentially rural and the share of agriculture in the GDP in 2007 was 26 per cent, which is relatively low. The population growth rate has been high in the last 17 years, close to 3 per cent, with a population size of about 38.5 million in 2008 (Table 1).

Table 1. General statistics on Kenya

Population (million, 2008)	38.53
Annual population growth rate % (2008)	2.6
Annual population growth rate (1990–2007)	2.8
Population in rural areas, in % (2006)	79
Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and older)	73.6 (2000)
Life expectancy at birth (years) (2007)	54.1
GDP per capita (current USD) (2008)	783
GDP growth (annual average %, 2005–2008)	5.2
Agriculture % of GDP (2007)	26

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), No date; World Bank, 2009.

Education system

Kenya's education system consists of early childhood education, primary, secondary and college. Children aged 6/7 to 13/14 attend primary school at the end of which they sit the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), which determines those who will proceed to secondary school, and those who will undertake vocational training. Those who proceed to secondary level must pass the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), the national examination at the end of their last year – which determines those proceeding to university or other professional training or employment.

In January 2003, the Government of Kenya announced the introduction of free primary education; this policy had a huge impact on enrolment rates, which increased from 91% in 1999 to 112% in 2007 for primary and 38 % to 52% for secondary in gross figures (Table 2).

Table 2. Gross and net enrolment ratios (GER and NER) in primary and secondary schools in Kenya, 1999–2007; 2002–2007

Gross enrolment ratio primary (GER), %		Gross enrolment ratio secondary (GER), %		Net enrolment ratio primary (NER), %		Net enrolment ratio secondary (NER), %	
1999	2007	1999	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
91	112	38	52	61	86	35	44

Source: UIS, No date; World Bank, 2009.

Gender parity in school is well established with 86% of both boys and girls enrolled in primary education in 2007 (Table 3). However the pupil/teacher ratio in Kenya is 46, which suggests a significant stress on the capacity of available teachers and resources.

Table 3. Key education statistics in Kenya

NER in primary education, % boys (2007)	86
NER in primary education, % girls (2007)	86
Survival rate % to grade 5 (school year ending in 2006)	83
Pupil/Teacher ratio (primary) (2007)	46
Total Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure in 2005	17.9

Source: UIS, No date; World Bank, 2009.

As shown in Table 3, public education spending in Kenya was only 17.9% of total government expenditure in 2005, which is not a considerable amount. However, it is also worth mentioning that Kenya receives support from the Global Partnership for Education (formerly Fast-Track Initiative, FTI), which aims at supporting countries which have demonstrated serious commitment to achieving primary completion by 2015.

Decentralization policy in Kenya

Local authorities (LAs) have been established in Kenya during the colonial era, in order to impose control over local communities. In 1963, the country gained its independence from England, under a semi federal constitution, which was abolished one year later.

Decentralization is not new to Kenya's development initiatives. In 1966, District Development Committees (DDC) and District Development Advisory Committees (DDAC) were set up. Even if many of the powers and functions, such as primary education, health, and roads, were removed from LAs and centralized during the 1970s, successive governments have recognized that local authorities are important for the development process. In 2003, another step was taken towards the decentralization of education. 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 place in Kenya. Simultaneously, there is deconcentration, with the presence of local Ministry of Education (MoE) representatives; devolution, where local governments can take decisions in the field of education management; and school autonomy, with funds directly transferred to schools from central governments.

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

- At the central level, the MoE 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 education matters in the district and implements the policies as directed by the MoE. It is also responsible for the audit of funds received at the school level.
- District councils have received several responsibilities regarding education, among which are building, renovation, and equipment of schools and the allocation of scholarships for pupils.
- At school level, the school management committees for the primary level and the boards of governors (BoG) for the secondary level are in charge of the daily management of schools. The latter is partly responsible for teacher recruitment.

1.2 The DEOs studied during this research

Four DEOs have been studied in Kenya in the framework of this research: Lakeside, Mount Kenya, Mulembe and Safari.

The four districts studied are located in different provinces, and have different topography, population size, number of schools, and economic activities. Both Mount Kenya and Lakeside Districts have good agricultural and fishing production and are among the districts which are the least affected by absolute poverty in Kenya. However, Safari and Mulembe Districts are increasingly facing challenges linked to poverty, agricultural stagnation, and high population growth rates.

The four districts differ in terms of their number of schools and students, as well as in the success rates in the schooling system. Most of the districts have a higher number of public schools than private ones. There has also been an increase in enrolment rates in most districts; for example, in Mount Kenya, the GER has increased from 93.3 in 2002 to 102.6 in 2007. While most of the rise in enrolment rates has been attributed to the provision of free primary education (FPE), one of the major challenges to education provision lies in the growing poverty present in most districts.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 represent the state of primary and secondary schools respectively for the four districts. Figures have been obtained during the course of interviews with the DEO and data obtained from the office. The data are mostly from 2008 records.

Table 4. Number of primary and secondary schools in the four districts, 2007–2008

District	Number of public primary schools	Number of private primary schools
Lakeside	128	3
Mount Kenya	186	120
Mulumbé	158	15
Safari	265	n.a.

n.a.: not available.

Source: District monographs of Kenya.

Table 5. Primary school statistics from the four districts, 2007–2008

District	Number of primary schools	Total number of students enrolled	% of boys	% of girls	GER
Lakeside	131	41,999	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mount Kenya	306	111,356	49.8%	50.2%	102.6
Mulumbé	173	65,755	n.a.	n.a.	104.0
Safari	265	12,999	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

n.a.: not available.

Source: District monographs of Kenya.

Table 6. Secondary school statistics from the four districts, 2007–2008

District	Number of secondary schools	Total number of students enrolled	% of boys	% of girls	GER
Lakeside	24	6,723	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Mount Kenya	n.a.	29,291	44.5%	55.5%	—
Mulumbé*	49	16,716	n.a.	n.a.	60.0
Safari	36	8,318	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

n.a.: not available.

*2009 data.

Source: District monographs of Kenya.

Each district is divided into educational divisions and zones. In Lakeside District, there are currently three divisions and seven zones. Mount Kenya District is composed of four divisions and 11 zones; in Mulembe District there are currently three divisions and eight zones; and Safari District is divided into eight divisions and 12 zones. An area education officer (AEO) usually heads each division, while quality assurance and standard officers (QASO) head the zones.

The next chapter analyses the main lessons learnt during the research on the functions of the DEO, specifically focusing on staff and financial management, quality monitoring, and the relationship of the DEO with national and local authorities.

2. Roles and challenges of DEOs in Kenya: Main lessons learned from the research

This section presents the main lessons learned from the research conducted in four district education offices (DEOs) in Kenya. The chapter begins with a brief presentation of the structure, role, and functions of the DEO. It then analyses the main mandate and the challenges faced by the DEO in the context of decentralization of education in four main areas:

- quality monitoring,
- staff management,
- financial management,
- relations with local and national authorities.

Finally, the conclusion presents an overview of the responsibilities and difficulties experienced by the DEO with the implementation of decentralization policies in Kenya.

2.1 Presentation of the DEO

Structure of the DEO²

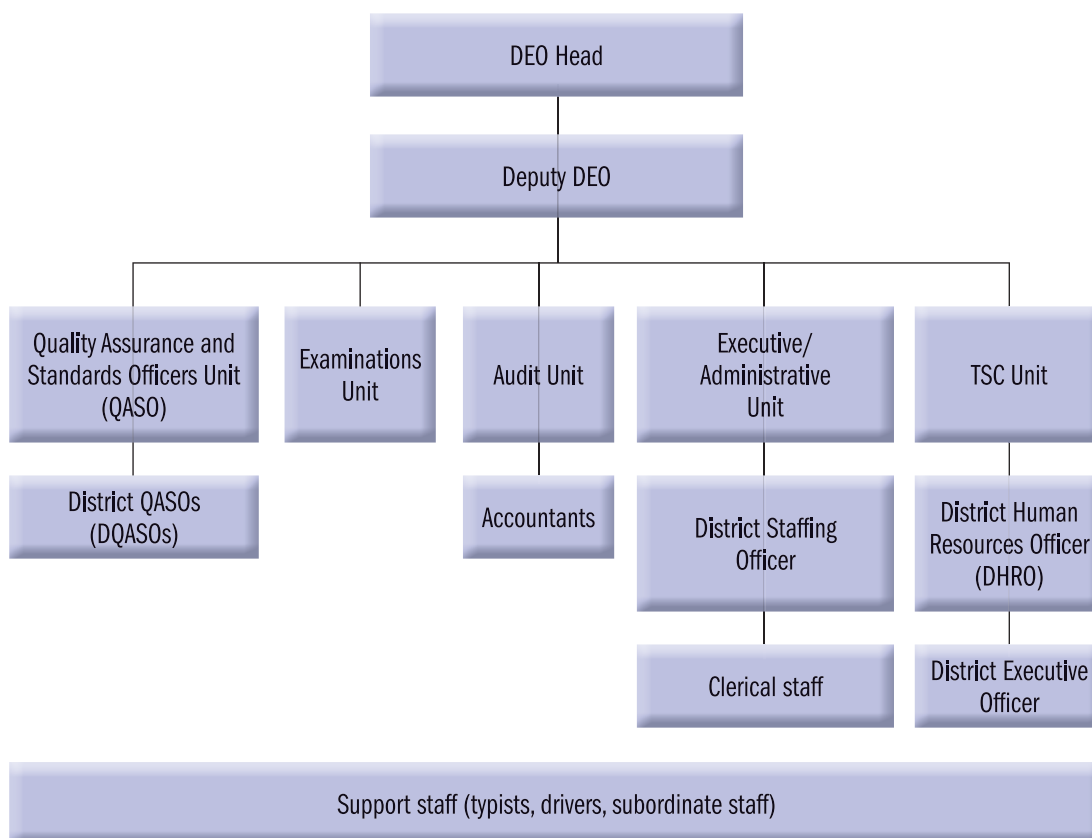
The office is headed by a District Education Officer (DEO Head), assisted by a Deputy DEO. The office is constituted as follows (*Figure 2*):

- Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) are in charge of guidance and counselling in primary and secondary schools, as well as administering examinations.
- An Audit Unit in the DEO is responsible for auditing schools and their funding.
- The Teaching Service Commission (TSC) Unit is composed of Human Resources Management officers and the district staffing officers. It reports to the DEO at the district level. However, in all districts visited, the TSC Units were not pleased with this arrangement, as they would prefer reporting directly to the TSC headquarters.
- In some cases, there is also an administrative unit composed of executive officers³ (EO) and clerical staff.
- There is also an examinations unit in some districts.

2. The terminology 'DEO' will be used in this document when referring to the office of the DEO, while the word 'DEO Head' will be used to refer to the Head of the office.

3. The EO is responsible for the general administration of the DEO office. This position is equivalent to the position of administrator.

Figure 2. Organizational chart of the DEO in Kenya



Source: Kenya District monographs.

Role of the DEO

The DEO is in charge of the coordination of education matters in the district and implements the policies as directed by the MoE. Some DEOs have defined their own vision and mission statement, to ensure that all staff work towards the same objective. One of the DEO’s main tasks is monitoring the quality of education in the district, which is mostly implemented through supervision visits. Another key role that has evolved in the last few years relates to the DEO’s responsibilities in school financial management. Indeed, with the policies of FPE, which go hand in hand with the transfer of grants to schools, the DEOs are required to play an essential accounting role in monitoring the use of these funds by schools. In Kenya, the rise of auditors as staff members in the DEO office shows the extent to which this role is becoming widespread in DEOs. Other important functions of the DEO are teacher management, assistance to the principals and head teachers in their functions, and organizing examinations.

Mission statement of the Mount Kenya DEO

‘Vision: to be a leading district in provision of quality education for sustainable development. Mission: to implement education policies and programmes that will provide globally competitive education’ (DEO Head, Mount Kenya).

However, the inadequate number of staff carrying out these functions is a major challenge facing the districts. In Kenya, vacancies affect mainly the position of QASOs, at district and zonal levels. In Mount Kenya DEO, for example, half of the positions foreseen for QASOs are vacant. The Deputy DEO in Lakeside District remarked: ‘The district needs 12 QASOs, yet currently there are only six of them; the district needs five education officers, currently there are two officers only’.

Table 7. Number of staff working in the Mount Kenya DEO, 2009

Designation	Establishment	Available	Shortage
DEO	1	1	0
Deputy DEO	1	1	0
DQASO	1	1	0
QASO	9	5	4
Education officers	3	0	3
TSC Unit	10	10	0
Clerical staff	10	7	3
Audit Unit	4	4	0
Typists	2	1	1
Drivers	4	3	1
Subordinate staff	3	0	3
Total	48	33	15

Source: Mount Kenya District profile - January 2009 update.

In contrast, all the positions of auditors and the TSC are filled. The situation is similar in other districts. This raises two major challenges. Firstly, owing to the lack of resources to fill the vacant positions, current officers are overloaded with work, which leads to administrative tasks taking priority over important pedagogical work. As a member of the DEO stated: *'Given the shortage of staff, there is limited individual attention to school'* (Mulembe DEO Monograph).

Secondly, because of the shortage of QASOs, their work is being executed in most districts by teacher advisory centre (TAC) tutors, who are not qualified enough for these particular tasks. Hence, delivery of the work shows a lack of expertise and creates confusion for school principals and head teachers regarding the roles of the DEO staff members.

Staff profile

Role of the DEO Head in Lakeside District

'The DEO Head has three major roles, namely: administration, coordination and working hand in hand with the DEO staff. The DEO Head is the secretary of the District Education Board; he coordinates education matters in the district. He is an agent of the Teachers Service Commission; he also represents the ministry at the grassroots level. The DEO Head ensures quality learning in the entire district and that schools are well staffed, ensures that the policies of education from the ministry are implemented and coordinates with the national examinations council to organize for exams within the district' (DEO Head, Lakeside District).

In most districts, senior staff possessed high qualifications with relevant teaching or other professional degrees. For example, in Mulembe District, the DEO Head is pursuing a PhD degree, and the Safari DEO Head is completing a Master's degree in education. Most of the other staff members are either graduates or diploma holders, which makes them competent in doing their job. However, interviews with personnel reveal that there is a shortage of skill

training and career guidance counselling that hinders further growth of the staff members.

Working conditions

Working conditions in DEOs are very poor and inadequate in all districts except for Mount Kenya. Facilities are small and cramped, resources are scarce and must be shared. The Lakeside DEO does not have computers, photocopiers or paper.

One of the other major constraints is inadequacy of transport facilities. Proper means of travel is very important for the QASOs and zonal staff for monitoring the schools. In addition, lack of funds and poor condition of the motorbikes and cars make the work even more challenging. In one of the districts, interviews reveal that school principals have to pay district education staff members to maintain their motorbikes. Hence, lack of funding seems to be the main challenge to the proper functioning of the DEO.

Inadequacy of resources in Mulembe District

In Mulembe District, the DEO seems to suffer from inadequate facilities. For example, the transport service for QASOs and other officers when on field visits is inadequate. There is only one vehicle at the district headquarters serving all officers and four motorbikes that are mainly used by the QASOs. Recently more strain has been created on the limited resources, because they have to be shared with the newly created districts. In addition, the motorbikes are in a poor condition, making the QASOs' work very challenging. *'Each of the 12 zonal QASOs is supposed to have a motorbike and yet only four are working'* (Principal).

Also, the DEO is highly understaffed. Given the shortage of staff, there is limited individual attention to schools. Ideally, there should be enough TAC Tutors and zonal QASOs. Besides understaffing, there is also a shortage of funds to run the office. The money received from the government is not adequate; the school heads are forced to supplement the budget for extra-curricular activities and transport for QASOs while visiting schools. The Area Education Offices (AEOs) have no personnel to run the office; some AEOs have hired secretaries to assist in the running of the offices and pay them using DEO operating funds.

2.2 Quality monitoring

Supervision

As mentioned earlier, quality monitoring, through supervision, is a core task of the DEO. In Kenya, the setting up of a separate unit under the DEO as 'Quality Assurance and Standards Officers Unit', the QASO, reflects the importance attached to this aspect.

Each district is expected to have a work plan based on the one developed at the provincial level. The district work plan contains aspects of quality assurance, quality development, and co-curricular activities. Quality assurance involves school inspection through control, while quality development deals with development of teachers' capacity. These work plans are made by the QASO under the guidance of the DEO. In some districts, the QASO plans with the TAC tutors who are responsible for teacher support.

Visits are planned on an annual basis in most districts. It is however not clear from the data as to how many schools are targeted every year. For example,

in Safari District, the ministry gives a target of 100 schools to be inspected each year, whereas in other districts it has been said that the target is to visit all primary schools in one year and all secondary schools in two to three years. Schools for inspection are selected from a list of low-performing schools. Visits can also be made on demand, in the case of the emergency need of a school.

Effects of school visits in Lakeside District

Schools visits and assessments are perceived as beneficial in Lakeside District because they are said to help identify the areas of weaknesses and strengths. The recommendations given in the assessment reports are useful because they provide schools with a new direction and way of solving issues affecting the school. The assessment visits motivate teachers and create a competitive attitude. *'Through the assessments, the relations between the QASOs and the head teachers have been improved, unlike in the past when it used to be tense and teachers would run away dreading these visits, but now they are a lot more cordial'* (Head teachers). A copy of the assessment report is left at schools so that the recommendations can be implemented. Recommendations usually focus on the following areas: record keeping, time management for covering the syllabus, professional records, performance, staffing, marking of the learners' books, and testing policy.

Distinction between QASOs and TAC tutors' visits in Mount Kenya District

The difference between QASOs and TAC tutors' visits in Mount Kenya District plays an important role in determining attitudes about supervision visits: QASO visits are focused on assessment, and those undertaken by the TAC tutors are aimed at advising teachers. QASOs note: *'Our role is supposed to be complementary: we assess; they advise. The TAC tutors have a primary background; therefore they go to advise not to assess'*. However, such a distinction does not seem to operate in practice, as emphasized by the group of primary school principals who asserted: *"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).

The group of principals in Mount Kenya gave mixed opinions about these visits. Some primary school head teachers were rather critical in this regard, stressing the inadequate profile of TAC tutors to carry out such visits: *'We don't know how they are recruited – they don't have credibility – therefore, they intimidate us'*.

School supervision visits are usually conducted by QASOs. Assessed schools range from early childhood development (ECD) level to middle level colleges (both private and public). Officers use an assessment form designed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) that contains sections on administration, curriculum, physical facilities, school staff, and examinations. When visiting schools, they therefore focus on the following aspects:

- quality of teaching,
- school facilities/infrastructure,
- curriculum development,
- use of financial and human resources,
- student assessment and growth,
- relationship of school with communities.

There are three different types of visits that have been identified in the course of this research:

- Investigation visit: in this case, the DEO staff go for a visit after being informed of some misuse or problem in the school.
- Advisory assessment visit: this is a detailed visit where the staff assess curriculum, finances, staffing, enrolment, facilities, and are usually accompanied by an auditor.
- Monitoring visits: these are usually done when a specific aspect has to be monitored, such as infrastructure, or when officers from the provincial or central level come to visit the schools in that district.

While conducting supervision, the staff visit schools in groups of two or three for primary, and five to six officers for secondary schools. The visits undertaken by QASOs are supposed to be more discussion-oriented with feedback given to the principal based on their assessment. It is evident from the data that specific training sessions and in-service training at the QASO level have contributed to better supervision work. However, lack of training in financial auditing makes staff unable to conduct school audit; an accountant/auditor usually accompanies them on their visit.

On the other hand, TAC tutors are supposed to advise teachers on their performance in teaching. However, interviews with school principals and teachers reveal some confusion regarding the role of the TAC tutors. In districts where there is a shortage of zonal staff, they have taken over their function without being properly trained for it. Also, the inadequate staffing contributes to fewer visits made to schools per year. As stated by one primary school principal from Mount Kenya District: *'The TAC tutors used to come more regularly before'* and he recommended *'that they visit more often'*.

The QASOs normally prepare reports after the assessment of schools. For a visit to a primary school, three copies of this report are given to the DEO, to the AEO, and to the school. When a visit is made to a secondary school, seven copies are made: one is kept at the school, while the others are given to the principal, the DEO, one District QASO, the BoG, the TSC, and one is sent to the Permanent Secretary. The findings from the research showed a lack of systematic follow-up of the visits done by the DEO staff.

Other monitoring tools

In most of the districts studied, QASOs monitor the schools based on their performance in the national examination system. The DEO has a list of schools that are performing poorly, and they are targeted first for supervision visits. Most of the districts monitor the progress of schools through their assessment visits and usually use the same criteria – such as enrolment trends, examination results from KCPE and KCSE, transition and completion rates.

The research shows a lack of other specific monitoring tools used by the DEO. Indeed, DEOs seem to be absent in the preparation of the yearly school development plans. The plans are made through a stakeholder’s consultation involving the staff, BoG, parent-teacher associations, and others such as local councillors and members of parliament.

Initiatives and challenges

One of the major initiatives to quality monitoring in Kenya has been to create a separate unit on quality assessment and standards in the DEO. This has not only made the role clearer for staff members, but it has also been accompanied by a ‘change in attitude’ perspective, where the QASOs are not looked at as rigid ‘inspectors’, but as ‘assessors’ or ‘advisors’ by the principals and teachers. This change of attitude mostly emanates from the fact that QASOs are now more involved in providing pedagogical support to teachers and head teachers, rather than the earlier role of inspection. As mentioned by a head teacher: *‘Through the assessment visits, the relations between the QASOs and the head teachers have been improved, unlike in the past when it used to be tense and teachers would run away dreading these visits, but now they are a lot more cordial’* (Lakeside District). Similarly, capacity building through training programmes organized by the ministry has also made QASOs more informed and conversant with their work.

Still, effective quality monitoring seems to be thwarted by numerous constraints, most specifically related to staff shortage in the DEOs that not only hampers the regular assessment, but also creates role confusion between QASOs and TAC tutors. Another problem is the lack of funding that comes from the ministry, which directly affects the transport and working conditions of the DEO staff members and their professional advancement.

The changing image of school supervision in Mulembe District

In Mulembe District, the monograph revealed that the assessments do not show improvement in the quality of education; however, there is a slight improvement in primary schools compared to secondary schools. According to the district human resources officer (DHRO), *‘Change of school management and staff transfers especially in secondary schools affects school performance. There has been improvement in the quality of monitoring compared to previous years when teachers used to be harassed and the officers behaved like “policemen”. The process of assessment now is more interactive and friendly than before. Formally, the officers were known as inspectors but now they are known as assessors. This attitudinal change has probably been due to training of the officers’.*

Although the assessments are effective to an extent, their effectiveness is constrained by a lack of commitment to implement the recommendations. *‘In most cases, they are positive, but where the head teacher is rigid, the school may end up losing’* (Principals).

2.3 Staff management

The autonomy of the DEO in staff management is an important issue in the case of decentralization. This section analyses the role of the DEO, first, in the management of its own staff, and, then, in the management of principals and teachers.

DEO staff

The function of DEO staff recruitment, appointment, and deployment still rests with the central ministry. As analysed from the monographs, the government appoints the

DEO Head. The DEO can make some appointments including the AEOs, the Zonal QASOs and the TAC tutors, but it might not be true in all cases. The Public Service Commission appoints school auditors and their assistants.

Little information on staff development, training programmes, and courses was provided during the field studies, but this may reflect the scarcity of such programmes. Apart from the Lakeside District, most DEO staff have not been given or sent for training for a fairly long time. The Kenya Education Service Institute (KESI) is mandated to

train and develop staff on behalf of the ministry. The MoE usually advertises for training programmes and then it depends on the staff's own initiative to apply for it. The criteria used to select officers for participating in the training programmes are also unclear.

It has been indicated by some of the interviewees that DEO staff members sometimes fund their own training programmes, which are mostly given by some donors or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It comes across from all the monographs that, though training needs assessment is a part of the appraisal form, it has no direct link to staff professional development. In most cases, these training sessions are attended on one's own initiative. Some staff members complained about their routine work and the need for training and personal development.

Staff appraisal and evaluation fall under the work of the heads of the DEO, who appraise their staff using forms sent by the MoE to all the districts. These are standard forms that are used while appraising QASOs, teachers, and other senior staff in the DEO.

In conclusion, the DEO has little autonomy in its staff management. The central ministry does most of the recruitment, appointment and deployment with little or no help from the DEO. Lack of funds also seems to be hampering the organization of any staff development programmes. Also, almost all the DEOs have staff vacancies, which means that staff are overloaded without any system of compensation or rewards.

Teacher management

Teachers' vacancies are either noted during school supervision, or indicated by the school which sends requests for more teachers. These posts are advertised in the newspapers and the applicants are screened by the TSC with approval from the DEO. For primary schools, a District Education Board (DEB) is constituted for the recruitment process, which most of the times comprises of the Head of the DEO (secretary of the Board), local councillor, District QASO, the AEO, members from other associations and unions, such as Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), and school principals. The selection is done on the basis

Effectiveness of staff appraisal in Mulembe District

The appraisal system is used for staff evaluation in Mulembe District. It involves meeting the set targets for each of the staff in the DEO. The exercise is conducted annually in June. *'Staff evaluation is important because it is the basis of staff promotions'* (Deputy DEO). The DEO Head appraises all the staff in his office including the Deputy DEO. Copies of completed appraisal forms are sent to the MoE for action. The Provincial Director of Education appraises the DEO Head.

According to the Deputy DEO, appraisal is effective because it is demand driven. The QASOs think otherwise that, *'Appraisal is merely routine work, because there are no promotions or salary increases'*.

of criteria provided by the TSC, except occasionally when the DEO might prefer recruiting a teacher from the same district than an outside applicant. This process however does not apply to secondary schools, where the DEO Head is just a member of the Board and the BoG mostly decides on the recruitment. The DEO staff, in this case, can only attend the discussions and see if the recruitment criteria of the TSC are being adequately followed.

The teacher hiring process in Mount Kenya District

In Mount Kenya, the decentralization of the hiring process is fairly complete. The only restriction imposed by the District Education Board (DEB) lies on the origins of the applicants; their application is not considered if they come from another district: *'We receive applications from everywhere, but as we know that the DEB will refuse people from outside the district, we do not propose these'* (District staffing officer). The DEO Head disapproved this: *'the DEB may recruit less qualified teachers because they belong to the district and because the DEB thinks they will stay longer. This is not yet the case in this district because there are enough qualified teachers here'*.

A group of secondary school head teachers explained the process of recruitment in detail:

- 'The BoG recruits, we participate in the interviews. There are enough teachers "floating", so it's easy to find candidates. The Ministry does not interfere with this process. The bigger schools do not have difficulties to find teachers. The situation is different though for the small schools (one head teacher represented here says not to have enough resources to attract teachers) and for some schools in remote areas'.
- 'The person to be recruited is in principle the most qualified one. There is a marking scheme defined by the ministry: 95% is specific, for instance for degrees and for work experience after graduation, only 5% for personal appearance'.

Head teachers highly appreciate this recruitment process, which contributes to developing a feeling of ownership of the school by the teachers, as they get to choose the school to which they apply: *'This system started in 2001. Before, recruitment was centralized. The new decentralized system is better: teachers come to the school; before, it happened that they did not come, as they did not choose the school they were assigned to. They now feel that they are part of the school. This leads to greater teacher stability and to teacher belonging'*.

Regarding transfers and deployment of teachers, the DEO can only make recommendations that are subject to the approval of the Provincial Director of Education and the TSC. Within the DEO, the DHRO is involved with issues affecting teachers such as delayed salary payment, retirement and retirement benefits, and teacher training.

Most of the training programmes and workshops for career development of principals are either funded by the ministry or outside donors. Occasionally, the TSC organizes training through KESI, but this is rarely done. The ministry also organizes training, but only when it has a surplus of funds at the end of the year. Teacher training and development, on the other hand, are sometimes organized by QASOs as part of their stipulated functions. However, data from all the DEOs visited during this research clearly indicate that training and workshops are sporadic, and that

Staff development in Lakeside District

In the case of teaching staff, there are different ways in which staff development is conducted in Lakeside District, while remaining subject specific. In the sciences department, the government initiated a programme for training science teachers but this is not strictly followed, as the teachers do not fully implement what they are taught in these programmes. There are self-sponsored programmes in schools for teachers who can afford to fund their studies or training. Given their meagre incomes, most teachers cannot afford self-sponsorship.

Principals have more opportunities for career development especially through their annual meetings where they discuss various issues affecting them and attend training sessions on the same. Heads of departments (HODs) are required to go for induction courses but they rarely go for these courses owing to lack of adequate funds. Recent training courses cited by head teachers include training in guidance and counselling, training courses organized and sponsored by the Kenya Secondary Heads Association benefiting subject teachers, and seminars for HODs and their deputies. At the end of the training certificates are awarded to the participants. Principals reiterated, *'The Government sponsorship is difficult to access and even if it is accessible, it is for a selected few'*. The implication of 'selected few' is that scholarships are given based on relationships with the ministry in charge.

Influences on teacher management in the Safari District

Decentralisation of the hiring process in Safari District seems to be problematic on many levels. For example, politicians sometimes interfere with teacher staffing by dictating where certain teachers are to be transferred or relocated. The 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 local community may decide whom they want as their head teacher.

Moreover, *'It is hard to post sickly teachers to the interior parts of the district as they insist they have to be going to the hospital frequently. This leads to overstaffing around town centres. Trade unions such as KNUT want their strong persons to be considered when recruiting and when giving transfers. It is hard to get special needs teachers to cater for the cerebral palsy children. It is also hard to transfer teachers with relatives in power positions who tend to interfere with the recruitment process'* (District Staffing Officer).

In order to improve staffing and address the above challenges, the District Staffing Officer mentioned that it is necessary to make the staffing office independent and free from interference by politicians and other state actors. He also observed that staff dependency on the DEO slows down the process, as every key decision has to be done in consultation with the DEO. According to him, the current reporting procedure that involves both the DEO and the TSC is cumbersome and needs to be reviewed.

there is a lack of involvement of the DEO in the professional development of principals and teachers.

QASOs appraise teachers during the supervision visits, but do not play any role in the teacher assessments carried out by the school. Teachers are appraised annually by either head teachers or school principals using a form developed by the ministry. However it is unclear whether the appraisal has any relation to teacher promotion/demotion or transfer.

Overall, it can be said that some decisions in teacher management are taken at district level, but the most important ones like recruitment, deployment, appraisal and evaluation rest with the ministry or with the schools themselves. The DEO seems to be acting more as an advisory body in most cases, without much management capacity.

2.4 Management of financial resources

Management of financial resources at the DEO

The main, and in most cases the only, source of funding for the DEO comes from the government through the MoE. Apart from for the Lakeside District, DEOs do not play a role in the allocation of the amount or in planning the budget. The money is sent in the form of Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) and is controlled by the district accountant. This means that the budget for each area of expenditure is fixed, and the DEO cannot shift budget lines according to office requirements. Consequently, a district might have

an excess of money, for example for electricity, but that amount cannot be used for fuel costs instead.

The DEO receives some extra funds for school co-curricular activities such as organizing games, shows, etc. DEOs with school feeding programmes receive additional funding for this specific purpose. The Ministry usually decides the budget for the DEO; the amount depends on the size of the district with regard to number of schools, pupils, and students in each school. This means that funds are not linked to the actual need of the DEO (for example, fuel cost for travelling, infrastructure building, or even training). As stated by a staff

Centralized decision-making in Mount Kenya DEO funds

In Mount Kenya, the DEO receives its funds from the central Ministry directly. Its overall amount and use is decided at the central level, with no involvement of the DEO whatsoever. The DEO does not prepare its budget expressing its needs. Indeed, as emphasized by the DEO Head, *'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 headquarter parameters, but they do not take into account that we also need to arrange transport for the zonal officers'*. The DEO is neither involved in the decisions of its budget, nor is it informed about it, as was stressed by the DEO Head, *'I don't know how the ministry decides on the distribution; we are not involved at all; I really don't know.'*

member from the Mount Kenya DEO: 'It would be better if we were asked to prepare a budget; it would be closer to our needs ...'

Management of school financial resources

One of the major achievements of the Kenyan Government has been to adopt the Fee Free Education policy for both primary and secondary schools. The policy was passed at around the same time as the decentralization policy; hence most people view them as synonymous to each other. All principals and teachers agree that the Free Primary Education (FPE) Fund and the Free Secondary Education (FSE) Fund have been most beneficial in increasing enrolment rates in primary schools, and higher transition rates from primary to secondary schools.

Power in management of school funds in Safari District

The monograph has revealed that the DEO lacks power to make financial decisions to address teachers' problems. The Education Officer emphasized, 'Some issues presented by teachers may require me to go to Nairobi, but because of financial and time limitations I cannot go hence letting the teachers go on their own. If the teachers use their own money, the TSC takes long to refund their money'. The Education Officer proposed the establishment of a kitty for such purposes. He went on to suggest that power should also be vested in his office to make decisions rather than decisions made in Nairobi. The district office knows the area and the teachers best, hence can come up with best solutions for the problems and avoid overcrowding at the TSC headquarters in Nairobi.

The Central Ministry directly transfers the FPE and FSE funds to schools. Funds are allocated on a per pupil basis. However, the total amount that schools receive may vary, as several other funds are distributed to schools. These other funds are less regular and do not reach all schools (Table 8). They take into account other criteria, such as the need for infrastructure or the existence of vulnerable children. Though school committees can submit a budget to the government indicating their needs, most of the time they do not have any control on the amount of any funds disbursed. The utilization of these funds is also guided strictly by the rules and procedures received from the ministry.

An example of various kinds of funds given to the Lakeside District is given in Table 8.

Table 8. Allocation of funds to different categories in Lakeside District, 2008

No.	Name of fund	Amount in Kshs.	Disbursed every year	One off fund	Primary School	Secondary School
1.	Free Primary Education Fund (per child)	1,020	Yes	No	Yes	No
2.	School Infrastructure Fund	500,000 - 3,000,000	No	Yes	No	Yes
3.	Science and School Equipment Fund	150,000 - 230,000	No	Yes	No	Yes
4.	Poverty Eradication Fund	220,000 - 279,000	No	Yes	No	Yes
5.	Disaster Fund	220,000	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
6.	Free Secondary Education Fund (per student)	10,265	Yes	No	No	Yes
7.	Most Vulnerable Children Fund	100,000	No	Yes	Yes	No
8.	Constituency Development Funds	200,000 - 600,000	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
9.	Community Support Grant	-	No	Yes	Yes	-

Source: Lakeside District monograph, Kenya.

Problems in school financing in Mulembe and Lakeside Districts

In Mulembe District, head teachers and principals of the district observed that the mechanisms for monitoring funds are not adequate. Head teachers note that, *'Most often, the QASOs and auditors do not visit schools in the rural areas for assessment because the road infrastructure is very poor. Indicators used for monitoring funds are not adequate as primary school heads have no capacity to keep proper and accurate books of accounts'*. Principals suggest that *'The system of monitoring funds is not effective. Ideally, auditing of primary schools must be completed within a month, but practically, the auditor can only audit books in two or three schools within a month'*.

In Lakeside District, one principal described how some schools are managing without government funds: *'As regards boarding schools, the schools end up borrowing some money from the parents as the development funds are not enough and poverty is very high in the households. In day schools, the situation is worse because the heads are forced to go an extra mile to talk to the suppliers to allow them take goods on credit hence creating debts. The debts keep on accumulating and the heads of these schools feel embarrassed to the point of not being able to request the suppliers to give them more goods on credit. In addition, activities like drama courses are being offered in these districts but there is no money to fund those. The major problem is with the way the free secondary education fund was introduced. This was during the run-up to the 2007 elections. The government was categorical that it was going to cater for the tuition only by giving Kshs 3,600 per student but the public misunderstood this as full coverage. The political angle is now affecting negatively on the running of the schools, but fees cannot be increased, as there is no authority to do so'*.

their supervision visits, guided by procedures outlined by the government. QASOs are sometimes required to provide financial training to principals and head teachers, but most of them complained about a lack of financial management training programmes and skill-building at school level during the interviews.

Safari District QASOs' relationship with central Ministries

Although formulation of education policy is normally done at the ministerial level, QASOs have an opportunity to contribute to education policy. They collect information from schools on various statistical issues such as enrolment, dropout rate, and submit to the ministry. They also make recommendations to the ministry about specific problems such as the schools which should have a school feeding programme. Although most suggestions are not adopted or acted upon adequately, the QASOs continue to forward their recommendations to the ministry. While the MoE is slow to respond to recommendations, other ministries such as Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Water are quick to respond to recommendations that are specific to their ministries. For instance, if QASOs recommended that one school should have water, the request for water is sent to the Ministry of Water directly and the ministry takes action.

Though the most substantial amount of funds for schools comes from the government, they might also receive funds from other sources, such as the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) and the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), which are governed by local political bodies. The schools are encouraged to apply for these funds. However, most interviews with the principals reveal that getting these funds involves a hard and lengthy procedure, and sometimes their distribution reveals favoritism towards some schools and for some students known to the local members of parliament. Other than that, schools can also receive donations from NGOs, parents, and individual well-wishers.

The role of the DEO in the management of schools' funds mostly comprises monitoring and administration. They have no say whatsoever on how much funds the schools should get and they do not partake in its planning and utilization. The DEOs possess fairly detailed reports of the amount of funds allocated to schools, and they monitor the funds through regular audits. These audits are carried out by QASOs and the auditors from the DEO during

The direct transfer of funds from the Ministry to schools has had some adverse effects for the DEO. Firstly, more time given to financial audits restricts the DEO staff from carrying out equally important tasks such as quality monitoring and teacher development. Secondly, many have viewed the strengthening of schools through financial autonomy as a weakening of the role of the DEO, whereby management of the overall development of the school has been substituted by mere administrative and financial management roles.

2.5 Relations with national and local authorities

Relations with the Ministry of Education

The monographs reveal that the relationship of the DEO with the ministry are based on few and formal interactions. Formulation of education policy is normally done at the ministerial level, where the DEO plays little or no role. The QASOs of each district collect and submit information from schools to the ministry on various statistical issues such as enrolment, drop-out, etc. Overall, the DEO seems more like an implementing body, guided by strict rules outlined by the ministry. One QASO commented as follows: *'we can be consulted about which teachers can attend a seminar or training organized by the district. (...) Last year, after returning from my study leave, I completed a form about the adequacy of the curriculum. I completed it, but I don't know what happened to it'*.

Relations with local authorities

While the relation of the DEO with the ministry seems to be minimal, their relations with district councillors show a different trend. In all DEOs visited, except Mount Kenya, there is a growing trend of collaboration between the DEO and local authorities.

The interactions between the DEO and local authorities happen on two major functions. Firstly, the local government has representatives on the DEB that work with the DEO on many issues, such as primary teacher recruitment, financial management of schools, etc. Secondly, the council interacts with the DEO for advice and support concerning the various funding programmes that the council possesses for school construction and infrastructure provision, such as the LATF. Before constructing any school or disbursing funds for other activities related to schools, the council has to get a sanction from the DEO. Usually, they receive a list of needy schools from the DEO to process with further work. Also, a marked change in the attitude of some of the councillors towards the need for better education facilities has been noticed during the interviews, which could also lead to more interactions and building of better relations with the DEO.

Relationship between local authorities and schools in Lakeside District

The local authorities contribute to education by funding projects such as classroom construction and supplying materials such as desks. They also provide funds for building access roads to schools and paying salaries for the ECD teachers in all primary schools that have ECD programmes. The councillors and the area Member of Parliament are members of the District Education Board committee.

According to the town clerk, *'When new institutions come up and they want to be registered, they pass through the council committee before they are passed on to the DEO for approval. The council constructs classes for schools if it is a community priority made through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP) process. The council constructed two classrooms in 2008 in two schools, and bought land for expansion of two primary schools. The council also paid fees for two students in 2008 and two students in 2007'* (Town Clerk). The Town Clerk indicated that the council is not involved directly in the management of funds sent to schools apart from having representation in the management committee.

2.6 Conclusion

Under the decentralization policy in Kenya, the main role of the DEO seems to be one of quality monitoring, mainly through school supervision. The DEO has traditionally been attached to the supervisory role. What has probably changed in the process is the redesigning of this role through a well-trained unit called the Quality Assurance and

Positive change from the creation of the DEO in Safari District

Ever since the current DEO Head came to Safari, there has been a positive change in the district. More schools have been opened. In 2009, there were about 10 schools and the year before about four schools that were constructed. The DEO Head has tried to restore discipline in head teachers particularly on how to implement free primary education (FPE) and free secondary education (FSE) policies. *'The DEO Head has enhanced auditing of schoolbooks and has streamlined management procedures. During his time, common forms of indiscipline among teachers such as absenteeism and drunkenness have been reduced'* (QASOs).

Standards Officers (QASO) Unit. This is a new initiative whereby the focus on pedagogical support through the introduction of QASOs has led to a change of attitude in both the DEO staff and the school authorities. The use of evaluation forms and discussion-oriented meetings during supervision has been viewed by the schools as a move away from authoritarian to more participatory and support-oriented methods by the schools. The training programmes organized by the central ministry have contributed to this change to a large extent, as they have made the QASOs more competent in their work.

However the quality-monitoring role of the DEO faces some threats:

- Firstly, the lack of staff and other resources makes the field implementation difficult and many schools and teachers are rarely visited;
- Secondly, in most districts while the supervisory role is allocated to the QASOs, they are supported by TAC tutors to provide advice to teachers. However owing to inadequate staffing at the district offices, the QASOs pass on their work to the TAC tutors. As a result, the quality of supervision gets compromised as most of the time TAC tutors are not trained to perform that role;
- Finally, because of the new trend of direct transfer of funds to schools, supervision visits include financial audits, auditors joining QASOs during their visits to schools.

This is somewhat unfortunate as financial control overshadows the importance of quality monitoring.

While schools have more financial autonomy, this is not the case for DEOs. They do not participate in the preparation of their own budget, as the central ministry decides on the amount to be allocated as well as on how these funds should be used. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the budget comes with strict spending rules and cannot be transferred from one category to the other. This has sometimes made the DEO incapable of organizing travel requirements for its staff's supervision visits, for instance. The lack of resources affects other issues, such as the organization of staff development programmes, the improvement of offices' premises, or the purchase of new vehicles or modes of transport. *'Staff members do not receive any form of cash for their career development from the DEO or if they do, then it is very little'* (QASO, Safari District).

The DEO staff expressed mixed feelings about decentralization. Some of them consider that decentralization has brought a lot of change in their roles through training and has been accompanied by higher enrolment and transition rates in both primary and secondary schools. On the other hand, some staff members complain that the

Attitudes towards decentralization in Mulembe District

The Mulembe monograph has shown that participants had mixed feelings about the decentralization of education in Kenya. The Deputy DEO observed, *'While minor decisions are made and implemented at the grassroots level, major decisions comprising over 90 per cent of the decisions regarding education are still made at the central level by the Ministry of Education'*. He suggested that teacher transfers and employment should be done at the district level and not at the central level. While commenting on financial management at school level, the Deputy DEO remarked, *'Teachers face challenges of mismanagement and embezzlement of school funds. Clerks should be employed in primary schools to assist in bookkeeping, simple accounting and the management of school funds'*.

Results of decentralization in Lakeside District and recommendations

The principals and the DEO staff concur that the FPE, FSE, CDF and other government funds disbursed to schools have contributed to increased enrolment of children in primary schools and transition from primary to secondary schools. For instance, infrastructure funds have made it possible to construct new classrooms, which in turn have led to the admission of more children in primary schools. However, increased enrolment has compromised standards in performance, as many teachers are unable to handle big classes.

According to head teachers, decentralization has increased financial responsibilities, which they are unable to cope with.

To address these challenges, they proposed the following:

- There should be a sitting allowance for school management committee members;
- There should be a clerk in each school to deal with accounts records;
- The school heads should be trained in financial management.

DEO has no say in most key decisions, its role having been confined to monitoring and auditing of school finances.

DEO Heads have also expressed their frustration concerning their involvement in staff recruitment and development. As stressed by the DEO Head of Mount Kenya, *'For the DEO personnel, Nairobi decides. I don't have any say.'* The central ministry and the Teachers Service Commission mostly handle the DEO staff recruitment process: the DEO has little role in this regard. The staff appraisals are guided by central procedures. Usually they are not linked to staff career progression and development.

The DEO is involved in the primary teacher selection, but it only has an advisory role. There is intense political influence on these recruitments, which has led at the same time to a weakening of the DEO and to a strengthening of political actors at the district level.

There also seems to be little support provided by the central ministry in the day-to-day activities of the DEO. While people could interpret this as recognition of the DEO's autonomy, it might not always be the case. As noticed earlier, the DEO is strictly guided by central rules and procedures when it comes to budget spending, staff evaluation and development, and even school supervision (the schools are evaluated based on a form given by the central ministry). This proves that there is a strong central control on the activities of the DEO, but a marked absence in its daily activities. For example, the DEO reports to the central ministry on its activities like school visits, staff evaluation, and budget/work plan, etc.; however, the monographs show that it seldom receives feedback on these issues. This can create a sense of isolation and a feeling of frustration among the DEO staff members.

To conclude, as far as the DEO is concerned, it appears that the decentralization policy in Kenya has not really vested any autonomy or led to greater resource availability within this office. Most of the traditional role of quality monitoring by the DEO has been retained with an extension of financial auditing added to that role. However, it seems that most of the time the creation of this separate function has worked against the pedagogical support that used to be provided by the DEO.

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