

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, improve health, promote education, and preserve the environment, among other objectives. The urgency of these imperatives calls for their promotion on a global scale. Yet, it is at the *local* level that the consequences of these efforts are most felt, and where strategies are emerging. The contextualization of these objectives is necessary to ensure communities' ownership as well as their translation into concrete action plans, tailored to local needs. Like the other SDGs, the achievement of SDG 4 on quality education will require both global and local commitments.

Education, to the extent that it brings together a range of stakeholders within a given territory, is a local issue. It concerns individuals – learners and teachers – and takes place in multiple environments: within family, community, and classroom. In order that it properly reflect its local dimensions, education has increasingly undergone decentralization reform, involving the transfer of responsibilities to local actors, be they education experts or elected bodies. Countries have adopted varied decentralization frameworks, ranging from deconcentration and devolution – the transfer of some degree of autonomy to local elected authorities – to school-based management.

In this context, cities, through their local elected authorities,¹ are playing an increasing role in the implementation of national and local education policies, in partnership with ministries of education and other local actors. Likewise, cities will also play a growing role in the achievement of the SDGs, as indeed is highlighted in SDG 11, with its call for “sustainable cities and communities”. Such is their anticipated contribution to Agenda 2030 that the OECD² asks if cities are ‘the new countries’. It is cities which are responsible for ensuring the provision of and access to equitable and quality education for all their citizens, while framing this responsibility within their overall sustainable development. Efficient planning and management of education, articulated with other development sectors, appears as an essential tool for cities to achieve this mission.

Rationale for a research programme

While a number of studies have been carried out on urban planning, there is a dearth of comparative and global studies on how local elected authorities conduct educational planning and management. One reason for this may be that, in the wake of recent reforms towards devolution, more attention has been paid to assessing the overall effectiveness of the *state* in decentralization, to its new roles and responsibilities at the different levels of the education system.

But the role played by elected authorities in the planning and management of education in their city should not be neglected. Cities have become important partners of ministries of education. And, in a number of cities around the world, administrative units for education have been created to carry out the cities' increasing responsibilities.

Moreover, the educational planning process of local elected authorities has a number of particular characteristics:

- The officers in charge of planning and managing education belong, not to the ministry of education, but to the local government administration;
- Planning and management in education by local elected authorities focuses on the devolved responsibilities in this area, and must contribute to the implementation of the national education policy at the local level;

¹ The terms ‘city’ and ‘local elected authority’ are used interchangeably in this Information Note.

² OECD. 2016. *New Trends Shaping Education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/education/trends-shaping-education-22187049.htm>

- Local elected authorities must coordinate educational planning with representatives of the ministry of education at local level, e.g. district education offices (DEOs);
- Educational planning is part of the overall city planning process, in conjunction with other sectors (health, transport, culture, employment, etc.).

It is therefore crucial to examine and learn from the ways local elected authorities conduct educational planning and management in different contexts, and to identify challenges and strategies to strengthen their effectiveness, especially in light of the challenges raised by the Education 2030 Agenda.

This new programme is in line with IIEP's 15-year-long research programme on the implementation of decentralization policies and their implications for the roles and challenges of local-level actors. IIEP has researched the impact of decentralization policies on schools and DEOs in 15 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This research led to policy advocacy and training on how to improve implementation of such policies, paying special attention to strategies to strengthen the role of local actors in fulfilling their mission. Having previously focused on professional experts in the education sector, it is now essential for IIEP to build on and deepen this expertise by examining the role of local elected authorities in the decentralization of education.

Objectives

This proposed research programme will aim to:

- Deepen knowledge of the roles of local elected authorities in planning and managing education in their territory, in different contexts;
- Analyse how educational planning and management is carried out by local elected bodies;
- Examine the priority given to educational planning in a city-integrated and co-designed planning process;
- Highlight the main challenges faced by local elected authorities when planning and managing education in cities;
- Suggest strategies to improve cities' effectiveness in in this regard, paying specific attention to the role of the ministry of education in this process;
- Stimulate knowledge sharing and strategic thinking among cities and countries on how to successfully plan for SDG 4 at the city level.

Research questions

To achieve these objectives, one central research question will guide this research programme: How can cities ensure successful planning to achieve SDG 4?

To answer this core question, the following areas will be explored: the profiles and responsibilities of local elected authorities in planning and managing education in the city; the characteristics of educational planning and management cycles in cities; the available resources (human, material, financial) and their management by the city; the coordination with local education professionals (DEOs, school staff, etc.) and other actors (local citizens, parents, civil society, private sector); the coordination mechanisms with other planning sectors; and the relationship with the ministry of education at the national level.

Methodology

This research will rely on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from a set of primary and secondary information sources.

The programme will be structured around four complementary components:

- i) Field research in a group of cities, interviewing local actors;
- ii) A quantitative survey to be conducted in dozens of cities;
- iii) A series of thematic desk reviews, focusing on the context in which cities plan for education;
- iv) Interviews with field practitioners and planning experts.

i) Field research

Cities and local actors will be the main source of information. A set of case studies will be conducted to learn from the experience of local elected authorities about how they plan and manage education.

Selection of cities

Research will be conducted in a mixed group of cities identified according to the following criteria:

- Cities of different sizes, in terms of population (large, medium, or small cities);
- Cities in urban and rural areas;
- Cities in countries with different levels of income;
- Cities with experience in integrated planning including education;
- Cities with a significant experience in education.

Guidance from international networks of cities - such as the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), coordinated by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) - experts and practitioners will be of particular help in identifying these cities. Calls for expression of interest in participating in the research will be launched through these networks.

Field research in France

Decentralization of education in France provides an interesting framework from which to launch the analysis. Characterized by a mix of deconcentration and devolution of responsibilities to regional and departmental offices of the Ministry of Education ('Rectorat', 'Inspection Académique'), as well as to local elected authorities ('Conseil régional', 'Conseil général', 'communes'), it offers a ground for coordination between education stakeholders at the local level. French Local Education Projects are one example of coordination mechanism for educational planning.

In order to learn from the French experience and to test the research questions and tools, it is proposed to organize the exploratory mission in a French city in December 2018. Field research will be then implemented in a group of five French cities in 2019, so as to deepen the lessons learned. In 2020, the research will be broadened to cities in other countries, selected according to the aforementioned criteria.

Approach

For each city studied, desk reviews will be conducted beforehand on the national decentralization framework and the scope of responsibilities which cities have in terms of education, in order to lay down the overarching institutional framework in which cities plan for education.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in each city with a set of targeted local actors, namely, local government officers in charge of educational planning and management, DEOs, teaching and non-teaching staff, parent representatives, and planners in other sectors. Interviews will also be carried out with central-level actors in ministries of education and departments in charge of decentralization. An examination of their planning tools, budgets, and policy documents will deepen the analysis.

ii) Quantitative survey

In 2019, a quantitative survey will be conducted in dozens of cities, with the goal of collecting information on the responsibility of cities in terms of education, planning cycles, appointment of local actors, and resources. The purpose will be to learn from the experience of cities of different sizes and in different regions. The survey will serve to gather preliminary insights that will then be deepened during fieldwork.

iii) Thematic desk reviews

Concurrently, a series of thematic desk reviews will explore specific items of the analytical framework, focusing on the context in which cities plan for education, as well as key issues raised in Agenda 2030. The topics will be identified based on preliminary desk reviews and contacts with practitioners and partners. One such theme might be how local elected authorities have been addressing the challenges of inclusive education and the integration of migrant students into city schools. These studies will rely on document analysis and interviews with key informants, and will be published on the IIEP website as working papers, exploratory notes, and short articles.

iv) Interviews with field practitioners and experts

Lastly, regular interviews with field practitioners and experts will be conducted to further explore some areas of the research. These will be shared on IIEP's website in different formats (audio, video, blog).

Scope of the research

In this research programme, the term 'city' will refer to local territories with self-governance and responsibilities transferred from the central level. As stated above, the research will not focus on a specific category of cities. The purpose is indeed to learn from the various roles and challenges that local elected bodies face when planning and managing education in different contexts.

In line with the 2030 Agenda philosophy, which highlights the commonality of education issues faced by cities around the world, the research will target cities in countries with different levels of income.

This raises the issue of comparability between different scenarios and contexts. It is important to note that the programme does not seek to generalize the lessons learned, but rather to increase the knowledge available at the global level on this specific issue.

Depending on the context, transferred responsibilities can relate to primary, secondary, and TVET education. The research will therefore cover the different levels of education, as long as they are within the scope of responsibilities assigned to cities. The research will focus on formal education.

Timeframe

The programme will be implemented during IIEP's 10th Medium-Term Strategy (2018-2021), in four phases:

<i>2018</i>	<p><i>Phase 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conceptual analysis, research proposal, and tools Partnerships Exploratory mission in a French city Thematic documentary reviews
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2019	<i>Phase 2:</i> Quantitative survey in dozens of cities Field research in France Thematic documentary reviews
2020	<i>Phase 3:</i> Field research in a group of cities (countries and cities to be identified) Thematic documentary reviews
2021	<i>Phase 4:</i> Leveraging knowledge: publications and dissemination (policy seminar, conferences)

Activities and deliverables

A policy seminar will be organized, at the conclusion of the research, to discuss the research findings and policy strategies with ministries of education and elected bodies and decision-makers of cities of varying contexts.

A set of products will be prepared and shared with the main target audiences, to include: printed and online publications; interviews with experts in audio, video, or written format; and articles. Depending on available resources, a film presenting the key messages of the research may be produced. An IIEP webpage will be created as a platform for exchanging knowledge on lessons learned from the research.

IIEP's training courses on local education governance will be updated and enriched from the research findings. Upon request, training courses will be designed and developed for municipal education advisors to strengthen their educational planning and collaboration skills.

Partners

At the start of the programme, potential partner agencies and networks with strong knowledge in city-level planning will be sought to form collaborative partnerships in the implementation of the research. The objective will be to synergize areas of expertise, bringing our knowledge on the topic together.

Contacts

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