Decentralization – can it improve schools?

Decentralization is at the top of the reform agenda in many countries. Governments and agencies consider it an indispensable step in efforts to provide quality education for all. However, little is known about its actual implementation and impact on local offices and schools. This article looks at the policy implications of research undertaken by the IIEP in West Africa and Asia and two other articles comment on the findings in each case.

Decentralization in most developing countries is interpreted in three complementary ways: asking elected local authorities to take charge of education in their area, strengthening the role of regional and district education offices and increasing school autonomy in resource management. Research in Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal shows the constraints on the implementation of these policies. Another article (p. 4) comments in detail on these constraints faced by schools, education offices and elected local authorities and on the weakness of government intervention to overcome them.

While much of this is disheartening, there are also positive findings. Firstly, parents and communities are showing great commitment to their children's schooling. Many contribute strongly to the costs of schooling, by paying several fees and providing practical support. In quite a few cases, their financing keeps the local education offices functioning. Secondly, parents and teachers, inspectors and mayors, all are genuinely convinced of the need for decentralization and are committed to its implementation, although they are aware of the present constraints. Thirdly, although schools and local offices struggle with resource constraints, several have taken innovative initiatives. Arguably, the lack of support from the central level obliges them to do so, while the absence of a regulatory framework allows for such initiatives.

From principles …

This commitment to education and to decentralization, linked to the existence of effective initiatives, provides fertile ground for the successful implementation of decentralization. The challenge remains to transform these initiatives into national practice. That demands strong and concerted government efforts. The research, conducted in Africa and Asia,

© IIEP/C. Lugaz

A classroom in Guinea:
can decentralization make a difference?

In this issue

editorial
Gulliver unbound

THE big decisions about education are made by cabinets – but they are implemented in classrooms. What matters in the end, is what happens to the pupils and students: what they learn and how they thrive.

National decisions are needed to ensure equity – local decisions are needed to tailor them to meet the needs of each community and each child. So how to strike a balance – and which balance is the right one?

In recent times there has been a broad movement internationally towards decentralization – transferring authority to local decision-makers. Among the arguments in favour is that national policies are one-size that do not fit all. General policies must be adapted to be relevant. Each community is different, each school has its character. Too much centralization stifles inventiveness, too much inspection suppresses initiative.

But decentralization is not one thing alone – authority can be transferred to local political bodies, to schools, to teachers, to parents. And decentralization is not a panacea – it is a solution to a problem that itself generates problems, such as reduced accountability. Different local policies can produce inequalities in outcomes of studies and futures for children. What is locally adapted can be globally dysfunctional.

Hence the question is not: Should we decentralize? It is rather: What should be decentralized and to whom, when, how, with what means, and with what checks and balances?

What can be decentralized ranges from raising funds to determining curriculum, from the hiring of teachers to the building of schools.

Who can be delegated authority ranges from parents to mayors, teachers and inspectors.

When can address not only the development stages of a system but also financial constraints on the state – and hence is an issue open for opportunism.

By what means varies from authority over budgets, timetables, working hours, or hiring practices.

What check and balances pertains to the system of accountability, so that those with delegated authority do not go astray, and are supported when needed.

There is no one answer to any of these questions – and the combinations of solutions are indeed manifold. Yet variation provides information – which is the rationale for the studies reported in this Newsletter. The information gained can be translated into guidelines. Some can be warnings against what may not work well – e.g. tight inspection without support for improvement. Some can be alerts – e.g. that delegating authority to several local units (parents, teachers, community councils, administrations) may generate fresh conflicts. Perhaps the one most important overall piece of advice is that there is no single solution.

This carries a general lesson for all planning. Rather than searching for a perfect state, planners should keep on modifying what does not work well and learn by doing. If decentralization becomes an ideology, the proper answer to it may be incrementalism. For the tension is constant between national politicians pulling strings that they find are not attached to anything – and local decision-makers who experience themselves tied down as Gulliver.

Gudmund Hernes
Director of IIEP

and the subsequent policy seminars in Manila (Philippines) and Cotonou (Benin) at which the findings were discussed, all helped to identify key principles to guide such efforts and a number of promising ways forward.

A first principle concerns the need for complementarity. The essence of decentralization is to get more actors to work together towards EFA. While the efforts of one single individual are easily outweighed by the challenges, collaboration between all can make a difference. Legislation recognizes this principle, but isolation or conflict are regularly the order of the day. The reason is partly a problem of resources, partly one of frameworks.

Here and there, elected local authorities play an active role in education. But their intervention is generally limited to maintenance or construction, with little attention to monitoring quality. It is more the expression of personal interest than of national policy and carries risks: greater disparities, as only those with better resources intervene in education; and a conflict with the local education offices, as there is no clear collaboration framework.

Within such a framework, the mandate of all actors should take into account their resources, competences and assets. The opposite is sometimes the case: parents contribute from their very scarce resources, but are refused control over teacher presence. Principals manage finances and recruit teachers, which are delicate and intricate tasks, but their involvement in pedagogical supervision has not been strengthened. Inspectors have to supervise all teachers, while their resources only allow them a few visits each term. A strategic balance between the mandate and resources of all actors is needed. The level and nature of these resources and assets should not be taken as static. They should be built up, through legislation, capacity-building and awareness-raising and through the recruitment of staff with an appropriate profile.

A core principle runs through the above reflections: Decentralization does not imply that the State abandons its role, but rather that it takes on a different role. Where its supervision and support is weak and where its absence is not neutralized by strong local accountability, the inefficiency and mismanagement that characterized central management is more than likely to be repeated, if not multiplied at lower levels.

… to practice

These principles help in developing strategies to address three core challenges.

Strengthening quality monitoring, a key concern in a context of decentralization, demands that all actors be involved. Initiatives in Benin and Senegal show the potential of school networks where teachers exchange experiences and which develop a tradition of peer support. The Asian research shows that principals are competent to evaluate the performance of their teachers, while parents, community organizations and municipalities can exercise responsibility in supervising teacher presence and maybe in their recruitment. The district office is best placed to offer intensive support to a few schools, which are seriously under-performing. There is a need to reform school supervision, by changing: its mandate – from inspection to professional development; its focus – towards the most needy schools; its practices – from school visits to a mixture of visits, workshops, exchange and the creation of networks.

Transparency in the local management of resources is probably one of the main challenges to decentralization and paramount to its success. Ensuring that rules and regulations are known to all and that parents who contribute to school financing have an explicit right to know how these funds are spent is indispensable. Training and setting up financial control structures are equally important. This could be part of a wider accountability framework linking the actors to whom the district office and the school are responsible: the administration; the other teachers and schools; the students, their parents and the public at large. Information should be available on how districts and schools are using their autonomy and on how disparities are evolving. However, such transparency and accountability may encounter serious resistance when it threatens the existing power relations.

The profile of the teaching force has deeply changed because of the inclusion of volunteer, contract and community teachers. The motivation and quality of this new teaching corps need to be addressed. The development of a transparent career plan, based on performance, allowing volunteer or contract teachers to move on to civil servant status and be included in school-level management and decision-making will help to stimulate their motivation. Quality improvement demands regular support from within the school and outside; this includes some basic resources and recruiting teachers who belong to a community, be it the school or the locality.

Decentralization is neither a panacea nor a shortcut. In all countries, disparities will continue to exist. Some municipalities, districts and schools already have what they need to benefit from more autonomy; others need support, orientation and control. The implications are twofold. On the one hand, decentralization is not a policy objective in itself; it is a management strategy, adopted when and where centralized management is felt to be inefficient. On the other hand, decentralization demands a flexible implementation, with a balance between the autonomy and the characteristics of its beneficiaries.

Anton de Grauwe
a.de-grauwe@iiep.unesco.org

Institutional capacity-building through research

The IIEP closely links its research to capacity-building. Both programmes discussed here, were co-ordinated by the IIEP, but concerted efforts were made to include national institutions and to strengthen collaboration between them. In Asia, the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP) undertook the programme. In Africa three partners were involved in each country: the Ministry of Education, a national research institute, and the local office of the NGO Plan, which provided financial support and useful insights based on its field experience. In both Africa and Asia, the research teams discussed their experiences and the problems encountered in formal meetings and regular communications. The IIEP provided support through workshops, pilot exercises and overall co-ordination.

Barriers to decentralization:
examples from West Africa

This article describes certain obstacles to the successful implementation of a decentralization policy, as identified by an IIEP research programme in West Africa. The somewhat pessimistic tone contrasts to that of the lead article which proposes paths to explore for improving the implementation of such a policy.

THE research conducted by IIEP in Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal on the implementation of decentralization mainly consisted of field studies on local education offices and schools. Several obstacles to the successful implementation of such a policy emerged from interviews conducted with actors at the local level (head and staff of local education offices, representatives of local authorities, head-teachers, teachers, parents' associations, and external partners).

Poor quality monitoring

One of the problems identified during IIEP's research on decentralization policies in West Africa was poor quality monitoring on the part of local education offices, owing to the inadequacy of the financial, material and human resources at their disposal. In Benin, for example, school inspectors have petrol vouchers to allow them to visit schools for inspection and teacher support purposes, but they do not have the vehicles needed. One of the local education offices in Senegal has four inspectors for 796 teachers, a ratio of 1 to 199 – and this is by no means exceptional. In addition, local education offices have to fulfil numerous administrative duties and are overtaxed with work. This is detrimental to their educational role, as they consequently conduct fewer school visits. In Senegal, some teachers go four years without an inspection.

Overloaded and undersourced schools

School principals also suffer from a work overload. The rise in the number of students entails a similar increase in the teaching force, and most of the new teaching staff are community or contract teachers who need regular supervision. Principals also have more extensive administrative duties. They play a key role in managing schools' financial and material resources. Their responsibilities outside the school can also be considerable: as one of the best-educated members of the community, the school principal may serve as a town councillor, or may try to raise fresh funding for the school by forging relationships with external partners. In some cases, the principal also has teaching responsibilities.

The financial and material resources allocated to schools by the central education authorities are insufficient. Many of those interviewed pointed to a lack of textbooks. In Guinea, one teacher told the interviewers that he had to borrow the textbook from one of his pupils in order to prepare for a class. In some cases, these resources are completely inappropriate. For example, a school principal in Guinea told of how her school had been sent 40 staplers to start the school year, instead of notebooks and boxes of chalk. These resources are generally allocated by individual budget lines, which leaves little leeway for the principal to manage and use them efficiently.

Lack of transparency

The inadequacy of the resources allocated by the central level forces local education offices and schools to seek alternative sources of funding – generally from the parents. The director of the local office and the school principal have more autonomy as regards both the collection and use of such funds. The case studies revealed that they manage these funds entirely on their own. Lacking appropriate training, they do not always use these resources to the best interest of the school. Moreover, the parents who provide these funds have no say in how they are used, and the result is a serious lack of transparency.

Different categories of teachers

There is a notable increase in the number of community, volunteer or contract teachers in West Africa. Local authorities, school principals and communities recruit these teachers and, in most cases, pay their salaries. Some certified teachers interviewed in Senegal criticized the methods used in

© IIEP/C. Lugaz

Field research underway in Benin

such recruitment, alleging that it is often based on personal relationships and that these categories of teachers enjoy benefits that they themselves do not have.

Although hiring community, volunteer or contract teachers allows schools to cater for the growing numbers of pupils and the shortage of certified teachers, interviewees expressed doubt as to the quality of the instruction provided through such means, owing to the profile and insufficient training of these teachers.

Little support

In education, as in other domains, central governments in these countries have delegated some powers to local authorities. However, owing to the scope of their mandate, their meagre financial resources, their lack of experience and training in educational matters, and the illiteracy of elected officials, these authorities generally provide little support to the schools. The surveys noted that in some cases the political legitimacy of the local authorities comes into conflict with the professional legitimacy of the local education office, particularly in Mali.

Culture

There can also be cultural obstacles to the implementation of a decentralization policy. Such a policy forcibly implies considerable changes in the structure of the education system and in the division of responsibilities, and it can be stalled by stakeholders' traditional conceptions of these matters. For many stakeholders, schools are still under the sole responsibility of the central government and not that of local communities. In some cases, it was noted that schools were unwilling to allow community participation.

The problems identified in Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal seem to be common to other West African countries. Evidence from participants attending an international seminar organized by IIEP on this issue held in Cotonou in July 2004[1] confirmed this. These findings, together with discussions during the Cotonou seminar, made it possible to identify a number of ways to ensure a more successful implementation of decentralization policies (*cf. article p. 1*).

Candy Lugaz
c.lugaz@iiep.unesco.org

[1] IIEP Seminar on 'Improving schools in a context of decentralization'. Cotonou, Benin, 21-23 July 2004.

DECENTRALIZATION

Improving quality by reforming school management in Asia

© UNICEF

If improving the quality of education is a priority then the functioning and management of schools need to improve. Although much is known about the characteristics of successful schools, things are less clear when it comes to the strategies and devices principals rely on to achieve success. ANTRIEP undertook a series of case studies to answer that question. The findings form a unique and very useful research base for policy-makers.

SCHOOL autonomy and decentralization are policies that automatically put the school principal at the heart of quality improvement. International research highlights the crucial contribution school management makes to teacher and student performance and identifies the characteristics of successful principals, including strong leadership, achievement-orientation and good community relations. Such lists however are of limited use to principals who want to make their school successful, or to policy-makers who need to know what strategies to promote. Against this background, the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP) has undertaken case studies on successful school management. Their purpose is to understand how specific schools improve and to encapsulate the road to success which a school's management adopts. Thirty case studies were undertaken in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka covering rural and urban, public and private schools, with sizeable or limited resources. This forms a unique and very useful research base for policy makers committed to improving quality through school management reform.

The case studies and the discussions during the ANTRIEP Policy Seminar on the same theme[1] examined the strategies that helped these schools on the road to success.

How to make a school successful

Many successful principals pay considerable attention to the physical enhancement of their school. The result is immediately visible and renovation work is generally easy to implement. It also

[1] ANTRIEP Policy Seminar on 'Improving school management: learning from successful schools'. Innotech, Philippines, 6-8 July 2004.

allows the involvement of all actors – students, teachers and parents. Although this should not be a way to avoid more complex decisions, it is at least a first step towards a wider transformation of the school.

The core to success probably lies in getting the balance right between delegation to, supervision over and support of staff. There is not one single model for a successful school. Everywhere, however, this autonomy is accompanied by a monitoring mechanism and incentive measures. In some schools, teachers auto-evaluate themselves and participate in peer supervision, whereas in others, supervision is the sole responsibility of the principal who can resort to putting microphones in each classroom. Partici-pation in decision-making is one incen-tive; formal recognition of work well done is another. Less prevalent is the use of financial incentives, for instance by rewarding extra work such as remedial teaching.

One consistent strategy of successful schools is to use student assessment, not only to select students for further study, but to improve teaching quality. This is done in different ways by: identifying strengths and weaknesses in learning; spotting students with problems and in need of remedial teaching; making teachers feel responsible; insisting on transparency; and, in some cases, encouraging competi-tion between teachers. However, this raises two wider issues. Firstly, there could be conflicting interests between the assessment undertaken within the school and the one done externally which is generally used for student selection or certification purposes. Schools have a specific culture which can be different from the one external assessments promote. Secondly, while competition between staff may be useful, some schools need stronger adhesion between staff.

Arguably, the aspect that mainly characterizes successful schools is the strong focus on the student as an individual with specific needs. This is visible in attempts to include students in decision-making, the emphasis on extra-curricular activities and remedial teaching. Contrary to most expectations, successful schools do not weed out 'weak' students but offer them extra help. This child-friendliness is easier to achieve when students and teachers feel a sense of belonging to the same community. This has implications for teacher recruitment.

Turning exceptions into traditions

All systems have at least a few successful schools. The challenge is to spread successful practices throughout the system, to turn what are exceptions into traditions. Before looking at the policy implications, it needs to be emphasized that, while the 30 successful schools were quite diverse, a few prerequisites were present in all: well-qualified and experienced principals with professional credibility; a fairly stable teaching force, diverse in age and experience but with a core group in the school for a long time; a minimum number of basic inputs.

Three policy implications deserve attention. The leading article of this *Newsletter* comments in detail on the following points:

➤ Principals are key to successful schools; they therefore need to work within a supportive policy environment.

➤ An integrated accountability frame-work has to be developed linking the different actors to whom the school is responsible.

➤ These different actors should be given professional training so that, subsequently, their autonomy can be increased.

The feasibility of such reforms is dependent on several factors. Firstly, structures do not replace cultures. Many successful schools set up committees or undertake improvement planning. Policy makers may want to impose these everywhere. But this will not make for a change and they risk being empty vessels, if the culture of joint decision-making, participation and quality assurance are not already present. The implication is not that schools cannot change, but that change is a long process, which needs to be supported and not imposed. Secondly, there is a risk of conflict between the needs of the individual school and those of the system. Schools prefer to choose their own students and teachers, and to keep an innovative and effective principal. This runs counter to concerns about equity and wide implementation of such reforms.

Thirdly, contexts differ strongly between countries and schools. This is an obvious point but one which is easily forgotten. Monitoring teachers by using microphones in classrooms is objection-able to many, but perfectly acceptable to some. Negotiating with teachers is considered unavoidable in some schools, but deemed as weak leadership in others. Culture plays a role and so does the level of teacher professionalism.

In short, the main road to a successful school does not exist – there are many different roads to success.

Anton de Grauwe
a.de-grauwe@iiep.unesco.org

USEFUL INFORMATION

IIEP publications on decentralization (existing and forthcoming):

McGinn, N.F.; Welsh, T. 1999. *Decentralization of education: why, when, what and how?* IIEP Fundamentals No. 64. Paris: UNESCO/IIEP. This book gives a general presentation of the issue.

The research in Asia and West Africa will produce three types of publications:

➤ For both research programmes, a synthesis report will be published.

➤ Country case studies will also be published. For West Africa, the four case studies (Benin, Guinea, Mali and Senegal) will be published by IIEP. The studies in Asia will be published by ANTRIEP.

➤ The IIEP will prepare policy briefs summarizing the main conclusions for policy-makers. They will focus on the lessons learned through the research on achieving EFA.

Forthcoming issues of the *IIEP Newsletter* will inform when these publications are available and how to obtain them.

Websites worth visiting:

IIEP: *http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/ research/basic/decentralization.htm*

ANTRIEP: *http://www.antriep.net/index.html*

Plan International: *http://www.plan-international.org/*

IIEP: Operational Activities by country since 2002
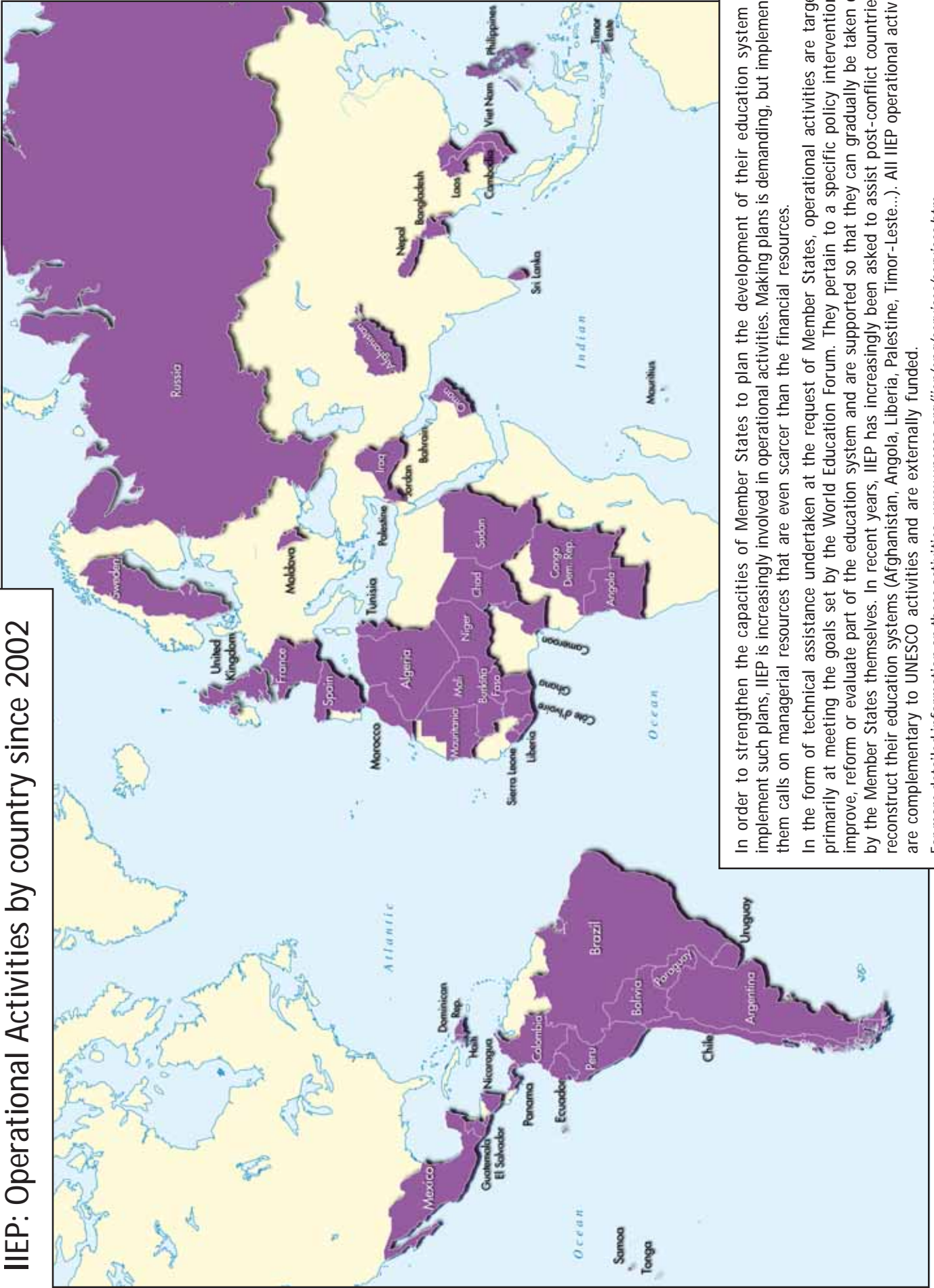
In order to strengthen the capacities of Member States to plan the development of their education system and implement such plans, IIEP is increasingly involved in operational activities. Making plans is demanding, but implementing them calls on managerial resources that are even scarcer than the financial resources.

In the form of technical assistance undertaken at the request of Member States, operational activities are targeted primarily at meeting the goals set by the World Education Forum. They pertain to a specific policy intervention to improve, reform or evaluate part of the education system and are supported so that they can gradually be taken over by the Member States themselves. In recent years, IIEP has increasingly been asked to assist post-conflict countries to reconstruct their education systems (Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia, Palestine, Timor-Leste…). All IIEP operational activities are complementary to UNESCO activities and are externally funded.

For more detailed information on these activities: *www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/services/services.htm*

© B. Meyers / www.bevart.co.uk

Weighing up the balance

Traditional and alternative views of school system performance

Traditional views of school system performance can be misleading. Recent research points the way to making fairer and more meaningful performance comparisons.

ONE of the universal findings of educational research has been that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to do better on tests of educational achievement than children from poorer backgrounds – mainly because children from wealthier homes have greater access to a range of human and material resources that encourage, facilitate, and reward school learning.

However, when discussing the performance of whole school systems, there has often been a tendency to ignore this research finding and focus instead on what are widely described as 'league tables' – in which countries are ranked according to the average achievement scores of their pupils. Comparative judgments about the performance of school systems based on this **traditional view** are sometimes misleading (because differences observed in average pupil achievement among school systems may be influenced by differences in pupil socio-economic intakes), and always quite narrow (because such judgments bypass important issues related to equity).

Research conducted by the 14 countries of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) has moved away from the use of simplistic league tables towards a broader **alternative view** of school system performance. The SACMEQ researchers expressed this alternative view as an operational definition of high performance that included three benchmarks:

"High performance school systems should demonstrate:

➤ *high quality* – illustrated by high values on an indicator of expected average pupil reading achievement in a situation where the socio-economic backgrounds of pupil intakes are equal to the average across all school systems; **and**

➤ *high social equity* – illustrated by low values on an indicator of the impact of pupil socio-economic background on reading achievement; **and**

➤ *high distributional equity* – illustrated by low values on an indicator of the spread in pupil reading achievement."

Constructing socio-economic gradient lines

The SACMEQ researchers commenced their comparative analysis of the traditional and alternative performance of SACMEQ school systems by constructing socio-economic gradient lines that summarized the regression relationships between pupil reading achievement and pupil socio-economic background. They noted that there were negligible differences between lines generated by ordinary least squares (OLS) and hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) procedures.

Pupil reading achievement was measured by a test given to Grade 6 pupils based on a cross-national analysis of SACMEQ school system curricula. The test scores were transformed to a SACMEQ mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100. Pupil socio-economic background was measured by an index that combined information on the education of pupils' parents and the characteristics of pupils' homes (including house construction, home lighting, and possessions). The index scores were transformed to a SACMEQ mean of zero and a standard deviation of 100.

The socio-economic gradient lines for all SACMEQ school systems have been described in the *Table*. They have also been illustrated in the *Figure* for three school systems: Seychelles, Tanzania, and Mauritius. The results showed that the socio-economic gradient lines varied across school systems in terms of height, slope, and length.

➤ **Line height**: The heights of the socio-economic gradient lines represented 'adjusted' measures of the quality of education. These values estimated the expected average pupil reading achievement when all school systems had pupil socio-economic intakes that were equal to the SACMEQ average. The average line height for all SACMEQ school systems was 492 points, and the school system line heights ranged from a low of 435 points for Mauritius to a high of 571 points for Tanzania.

The **line heights** (illustrated in the *Figure* by the **heights of the line intercepts** with the vertical axis) provided a 'fairer' and more meaningful alternative approach to **comparing the contributions of school systems** to the quality of educational outputs – because these figures had a built-in adjustment for different pupil socio-economic intakes. In contrast, the traditional approach of using **average pupil reading achievement** (illustrated in the *Figure* by the **heights of the line centres** above the horizontal axis) was more closely oriented towards **comparing the combined contributions of school systems and pupil socio-economic intakes.**

The results for Seychelles and Tanzania provided an interesting contrast. Under a traditional view of school system performance, Seychelles was the best school system with an average pupil reading achievement of 582 points, and Tanzania was fourth best with an average of 546 points. However, everything looked different from an alternative point of view because, under the assumption of

equivalent pupil socio-economic intakes, Tanzania had the highest expected average pupil reading achievement of 571 points, and Seychelles had the sixth highest expected average pupil reading achievement of 509 points.

➤ **Line slope:** The slopes of the socio-economic gradient lines represented the degree of social equity in pupil reading achievement. These values quantified the impact of a one standard deviation unit change in pupil socio-economic background on pupil reading achievement. The average line slope for all SACMEQ school systems was 41, and the school system line slopes ranged from 16 for Mozambique to 89 for Mauritius.

Smaller line slopes implied greater social equity. Steeper line slopes suggested major differences in average pupil reading achievement across different socio-economic groups – with the potential danger that pupils from poorer backgrounds might be left far behind pupils from wealthier backgrounds.

Lower levels of social equity occurred for Seychelles, Mauritius, and South Africa where the line slopes were 58, 89 and 70 respectively. Higher levels of social equity occurred for Mozambique, Lesotho and Malawi, where the line slopes were around 16 to 17.

➤ **Line length**: The lengths of the socio-economic gradient lines represented the degree of distributional equity in pupil reading achievement. These values were scaled to be equal to the variance (divided by 100) of the pupil reading scores. The average line length for all SACMEQ school systems was 80, and the school system line lengths ranged from 25 in Malawi to 155 in Seychelles.

Shorter line lengths implied greater distributional equity. Greater line lengths suggested major differences between the reading achievements of the most and least able pupils – with the potential danger that some pupils might succeed while many other pupils were left far behind.

Lower levels of distributional equity occurred for Seychelles, Mauritius, and South Africa – where the variances in pupil reading scores were almost twice the SACMEQ average of 80. Higher levels of distributional equity occurred for Mozambique, Lesotho and Malawi where the variances were 42, 34 and 25, respectively.

Judging the performance of school systems

The SACMEQ school systems were ranked in the *Table* according to the **traditional view**. Seychelles was top of the list with an average pupil reading achievement of 582 points; Mozambique and South Africa were in the middle with 517 and 492 points, respectively; and Malawi was at the bottom of the list with 429 points.

The performance of the SACMEQ school systems under the **alternative view** was examined by combining SACMEQ's operational definition of school system performance with the research results presented above. This resulted in a high performance school system being defined as one that satisfied **all three** of the following benchmarks: *High quality* – with line heights greater than the SACMEQ average of 492; *High social equity* – with line slopes less than the SACMEQ average of 41; and *High distributional equity* – with line lengths less than the SACMEQ average of 80. The figures in bold in the final three columns of the *Table* designated benchmarks that were satisfied by school systems.

Only three SACMEQ school systems satisfied all three of the alternative view benchmarks for high performance: Swaziland, Botswana, and Mozambique. From a traditional view of performance these school systems had only been rated from fifth to seventh.

The four best school systems from a traditional view of performance were those at the top of the *Table* with the highest average pupil reading achievement: Seychelles, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mauritius. However, **none** of these school systems satisfied all three of the high performance benchmarks under the alternative view: Kenya did not meet the social equity benchmark; Seychelles and Tanzania did not meet the social and distributional equity benchmarks; and Mauritius did not meet any of the benchmarks.

Kenneth N. Ross and Linda Zuze
k.ross@iiep.unesco.org

Table: Traditional and alternative views of performance

| School system | 'Traditional' view | 'Alternative' view | | |
| | | Quality | Social equity | Distributional equity |
	Average pupil reading score	Line height	Line slope	Line length
Seychelles	582	**509**	58	155
Kenya	546	**556**	51	**79**
Tanzania	546	**571**	50	81
Mauritius	536	435	89	148
Swaziland	530	**524**	**26**	**47**
Botswana	521	**520**	**36**	**78**
Mozambique	517	**523**	**16**	**42**
South Africa	492	456	70	150
Uganda	482	**506**	41	83
Zanzibar	478	486	**20**	**50**
Lesotho	451	456	**17**	**34**
Namibia	449	456	48	**75**
Zambia	440	447	**39**	**72**
Malawi	429	437	**17**	**25**
SACMEQ	500	492	41	80

Source: SACMEQ Data Archive (2004).

Figure: Three Socio-economic Gradient Lines

Pupil reading score

Pupil socio-economic background
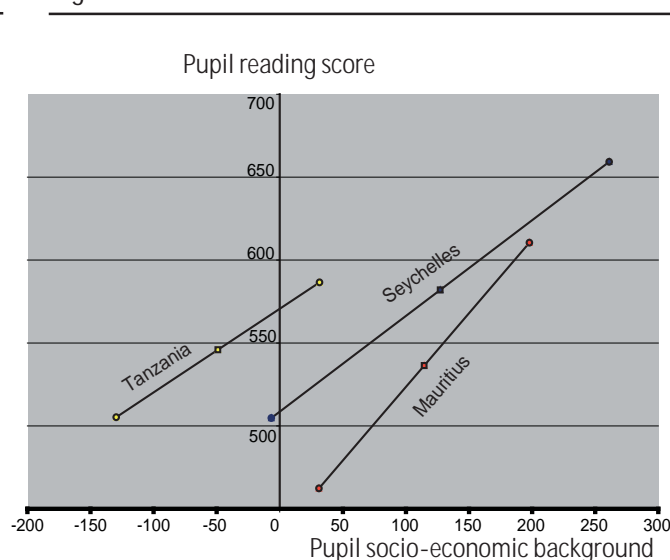
Cross-national studies on the quality of education

Planning their design and managing their impact

Outcomes of an IIEP/InWEnt Policy Forum,
Paris 17-18 June 2004

NATIONAL governments and inter-national agencies have shown increasing interest in the quality of education provided by educational systems. This trend has been accompanied by an increase of networks undertaking large-scale cross-national studies on the quality of education, such as TIMSS, PISA and SACMEQ. In response to this, the IIEP and InWEnt (Capacity Building International, Germany) organized a policy forum on 'Cross-national studies on the quality of education' in June 2004[1].

The policy forum explored two main areas: the key technical issues that need to be addressed for successful involvement in planning research design, and case study assessments of the successes, failures, and lessons learned when faced with the challenge of managing research impact. Policy makers and researchers from 23 different countries participated in the forum.

A powerful reform tool…

Evaluations of the quality of education require information on educational outputs, not just inputs, in order to effectively manage education systems. Inequality in educational outcomes has also become a political issue and the need to monitor and disseminate educational outcomes has grown. Cross-national comparisons of results have often proved powerful instruments for encouraging some countries to investigate why students in other school systems are performing better than theirs and what can be done to improve their own school system.

Members of the public are also taking an increased interest in cross-national comparisons of the quality of education. If a country does not have an effective education system, it cannot produce the competent, productive and competitive workforce it needs to maintain and improve economic performance, to increase prosperity and eradicate poverty.

Results of comparative studies can help political decision makers to decide what ought to be done to improve and sustain equity and quality of the system on a long-term basis. Participation in cross-national studies raises different expectations, and the research results may be received with mixed feelings. Ministers of education are keen to use the results of high quality cross-national studies that can stand the test of public criticism. But when it comes to

defending decisions based on these results, they must be confident that the methodology used is sound.

IIEP's research in this field suggests that ministries of education are more likely to implement beneficial policy reform after participating in cross-national comparative studies. They are also more involved in managing the impact of such reforms. The Institute has been involved in developing capacity for national assessments in Africa and Asia, particularly through the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), a network of ministries of education in Southern Africa set up in 1993 and more recently extended to East Africa. Major assessment projects on achievement in French and mathematics have been carried out in 12 French-speaking sub-Saharan

---

Comments from a policy maker

YEMEN is currently implementing a Basic Education Development Strategy (BEDS) the main objectives of which are: to increase the enrolment rate of children aged 6-14 years, improve the quality of basic education, alleviate disparities and enhance equity, as well as make the education system more efficient.

The IIEP/InWEnt Policy Forum was an opportunity for the Yemeni delegation to take advantage of a wide range of national, regional and international experiences and a rich mix of participants which provided an excellent learning environment.

The policy forum should have a considerable impact on improving the quality of education in Yemen and on monitoring the implementation of BED strategies – notably with the introduction of

education information management systems (EMIS) which is a prerequisite for the introduction of standardized approaches to sampling and test administration. Success in these areas will provide a sound foundation for the design and implementation of a national quality control system in Yemen.

Monitoring educational quality with respect to competencies linked to national economic performance, participation in the global economy, and the building of a knowledge society will be of great value to the Yemen, as will the monitoring of gender differences, access and the efficiency of the whole system.

Hamoud Al-Seyani, Head,
BEDS Technical Implementation Team,
Ministry of Education, Yemen

countries in the *Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs des Pays de la CONFEMEN* (PASEC). During the 1990s, national assessment programmes developed rapidly throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and national assessments are also regularly undertaken in many Asian countries.

... if used accurately

Participants in the forum stressed the importance of comparing only what is actually comparable and not to create frustration by including countries with completely different socio-economic backgrounds in the same study. Experience from the PISA and other cross-national studies has shown that poor country results can exert considerable political and public pressure to initiate a sector reform. In order to obtain support for improving quality and participation, cross national studies need allies within civil society and a public opinion that understands the relevance of education for society as a whole. The media and journalists should help the researchers in making the debate a public forum.

Another issue discussed during the policy forum was the complex concept of 'quality' since it refers to a broad spectrum of competencies in reading, mathematics and science. Policy discussion is often limited to basic levels in these subjects. How can the broader concept of quality be taken into account in the design of these studies in order to highlight the role and responsibility of education in social integration? How can they be made to assess thinking skills, affectivity, attitudes and values, family backgrounds, learning environments, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds in multicultural societies?

As the policy forum discussions concluded, participants emphasized the need for further training and capacity building if cross-national studies are to be used as a tool for measuring the quality of education. Cross-national quality comparisons can only be successful if educational administrators and managers at all levels are trained in the professional skills needed to set up education management information systems (EMIS) and to design and implement such studies (drawing up test items, sampling, costing, etc.). Specialists in qualitative and quantitative educational research, as well as educational financing, should understand how to build the links between these fields before drawing conclusions for policy-making.

Cross-national comparisons can have a considerable impact not only on improving the quality of education in schools but also on creating more equitable systems, provided all the necessary factors are duly taken into account at the design stage. Planners are not visionaries, but in their efforts to build more equitable school systems for the future and narrow the divide between countries, these international comparisons play a key role.

Ingrid Jung and Ulrike Wiegelmann, InWEnt, and Ilona Jürgens Genevois, IIEP
ulrike.wiegelmann@inwent.org
i.jurgens.genevois@iiep.unesco.org

[1] A detailed report of the IIEP/InWent Policy Forum will be available shortly on the IIEP web site at *www.unesco.org/iiep.*

How to compare? Some technical aspects of cross-country comparisons of student achievement

In order not to compare the incomparable, various preconditions must be met:

➤ *Sampling must be truly representative in each country.*

This implies that every student – however remote the area they live in, whatever language group they belong to, or whatever type of school they attend – must have an equal opportunity to be selected. In many developing countries, this is a real challenge. Above all, the school sampling frame available at the ministry is often incomplete or out of date, e.g. does not include some of the private schools or has not been updated if schools closed down.

If sampling is based on schools rather than on students directly, adequate weights need to take into account the size of the school. Moreover, if some strata of the population are deliberately over-sampled and correspond to specific policy concerns requiring more precise information for some sub-groups of the population rather than others, this needs to be well documented and taken into account via compensating weighing procedures.

➤ *Countries must have a common set of achievement requirements which can be used to formulate 'anchor items'*

No cross-country comparability can be established if tests are completely different or if the anchor items are not known. While additional items may be required to adequately reflect the curriculum in different countries, the nucleus of common items is necessary to derive a joint scale on which all items can be ordered according to their difficulty. It is important to note that translation problems can sometimes severely distort the meaning of a test item thereby altering its difficulty and/or its power to discriminate between good and bad students. Such items must in fact be considered as different and cannot be used as anchor items.

Once these requirements are respected, it must be ensured that data collection takes place under identical conditions in all countries, that the respondents are those actually sampled, and that data entry is carried out correctly.

Finally, when it comes to analyzing the data, it is important not to trust any comparison without an appropriate measure of dispersion. If the dispersion is high, mean country values might look very different and still not differ from each other in a statistically significant way. This implies that it cannot be excluded that simply by drawing a new sample one might obtain the opposite result. Dispersion is usually measured in terms of the standard error whose calculation needs to take into account the underlying sampling procedure. As strata and clusters include students that have many common characteristics, observations within these groups are not independent. This leads to an underestimation of standard errors estimated using standard formulae. A frequently-used alternative to the computation of the appropriate but more complicated formulae is an empirical procedure based on 'bootstrapping' or 'jackknife' methods.

Katharina Michaelowa, Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWA), Germany
k-michaelowa@hwwa.de

Increasing access to higher education:
virtual universities and e-learning?

© IIEP

Many universities worldwide face the challenge of an increasing and increasingly varied demand coupled with stable or decreasing resources. Faced with this situation, some governments and institutions are looking to information and communication technology (ICT) as a potential solution to expanding access to quality higher education.

THE virtual university is an important example of the use of ICT to deliver higher education both in developed and developing countries. New initiatives are growing steadily as universities seek to reach a broader, and in many cases, an international student body. Indeed there appears to be an economic imperative in some initiatives. Various organizational models exist, from the online arm of a traditional university to a university operating completely in cyberspace, from respected and well known institutions to private profit-making ventures. Most of these institutions base their instructional delivery on the Internet. They seek students regardless of their geographical location, and they teach and evaluate these students in a different manner from the traditional academic procedures established for on-campus students. They seek students in a worldwide market, and countries with higher education systems that cannot meet demand may or may not welcome these institutions working within their borders. The education provided may be of high quality and internationally recognized or it may be of poor quality, offering the student an educational experience of little value and at considerable cost, in terms of both time and resources invested.

Although there is promise in these new developments, there are also concerns. Developing countries could benefit from new methods of education delivery that do not require heavy investment in bricks and mortar, or they could, through lack of infrastructure, become even further disadvantaged. The so-called 'digital divide' may be reduced or exacerbated, depending on developments in the coming years. ICTs, their availability and the manner of their use, may well serve to increase inequalities between institutions and between countries.

The virtual university and e-learning represent an important development in the use of ICT in higher education. They have the potential to increase access and flexibility in higher education, but integrating ICT effectively will challenge existing educational policies, demand revised or entirely new ones, and require different approaches to planning and management.

Exploring the phenomenon

In 2001, IIEP initiated a study to identify the main policy, planning and management issues associated with the virtual university as an example of ICT-supported education. These new institutions warrant study for two important reasons. Because of the different teaching and learning methods, virtual universities must develop policies and planning and management procedures that are appropriate to their organization and modes of operation. And because of their potential international reach, the institutions may operate outside higher education policy at the national level.

The exploratory study was based upon case studies selected to represent the main emerging institutional models. The cases also represent different geographical regions since different situations may give rise to different problems and different approaches, and eventually, different policy and planning concerns.

Sharing the lessons

The case studies are presented in a web publication with a number of background chapters and a summary chapter of lessons learned. The web publication, IIEP's first, was designed to facilitate access to the information and permit easy updating and enhancement.

Three background chapters present the context – the trends and challenges and the impact of borderless education. Ten case studies from different regions and representing different institutional models describe the particular experience of the institution described, with the objective of helping the reader to understand what the institution set out to do and conveying the

main messages and lessons learned.

The lessons learnt in the case studies are quite diverse, but a number of common issues were identified as important to the success of institutions offering e-learning:

➤ leadership and support from the senior level of the institution;

➤ appropriate technology infrastructure and adequate resources for its implementation and maintenance;

➤ staff training, support and reward structures;

➤ new teaching and learning approaches;

➤ programmes appropriate to the technology;

➤ quality of the educational product and service;

➤ co-operation.

Supporting interaction

One of the main functions of UNESCO is to act as a clearinghouse for disseminating and sharing knowledge and best practices with the objective of helping Member States build their human and institutional capacity. The web publication was designed to disseminate in an innovative manner the information collected. In addition, a strategy was developed to strengthen national capacity in Member States. A series of Internet forums is being held to actively stimulate reflection and debate on the implications of the virtual university and e-learning at the national and international level.

A first forum was held in early 2004 on the topic, *Virtual universities and transnational education: Policy issues – What are they? And whose are they?* Almost 400 participants participated and a lot of information was generated. A report was prepared synthesizing the rich discussion, with a framework for policy development by level of concern.

Participants praised IIEP for the initiative and requested that ongoing interaction be supported – that they continue as a virtual community of interest. Issues were identified for subsequent forums.

The second forum on *Free and Open Source Software for e-learning* was held in June 2004 and 260 participants took part. **Sixty-five** countries were represented and a very active discussion ensued with a wealth of information shared through the 500-odd messages. At the end of the scheduled time period, the group requested to be constituted as an ongoing Community of Interest. Discussion is continuing in the IIEP forum and a certain number of the participants are undertaking and sharing research and development work using the site of one of the expert moderators. A series of tutorials has been developed and the group is currently exploring the feasibility of creating a Help Desk for countries interested in using FOSS solutions as a means of sharing information and expertise internationally.

The next forum will explore the potential and implications of open courseware. This will be followed by one on the issue of quality assurance and, finally, a forum is planned to share the rich reflection during the forum series.

Building capacity and informed decision-making

Taken together the web publication and site and the discussion forums will ensure that the investment is fully exploited for capacity building and promoting informed decision-making. It is important to support an emerging community of practice in an area that is burdened with high expectations and equally high challenges – to make effective use of ICT to provide greater access to affordable high quality higher education.

Susan D'Antoni and Lucinda Ramos
s.dantoni@iiep.unesco.org

The Virtual University – Models and messages / Lessons from case studies
Edited by Susan D'Antoni. 2003.
www.unesco.org/iiep

IIEP's first web publication explores the policy, planning and management implications of virtual universities. Three background chapters describe the context – the trends and challenges and the impact of borderless education. Ten case studies from different regions and representing different institutional models tell the story of their development and what they have learned. The web site also includes sections on the Internet Forums and on links to virtual universities.

User comments on *The Virtual University*

"Congratulations to the IIEP/UNESCO for creating an effective model for a virtual forum – a good beginning for a global dialogue on the educational dimensions of development planning."

"Wonderful use of the Internet."

"I am grateful to all of you for the stimulating and nourishing discussion we are having. It shows that this is the 'momentum' for sharing and planning future co-operation in this field."

"This discussion is taking an interesting intellectual turn, strong enough to appropriately counter the negative view about online learning as intellectually deficient."

"I have found these discussions and reference material most stimulating and I hope we can start to imagine some next steps that really make a difference in this field."

redEtis discusses strategies for education and work in Latin America

Launched by the IIEP together with the Argentine Institute for Economic and Social Development, redEtis recently hosted its first regional seminar in Buenos Aires on 'Education to address the labour crisis and social insertion in Latin America'.

CO-SPONSORED by the Argentine Ministries of Labour, Employment and Security Social and of Education, Science and Technology, the **redEtis** regional seminar (Buenos Aires, 23-25 June 2004) sought primarily to discuss the diversity of economic change and job opportunities in the region, to reflect on the focus and approaches of policies and innovative experiences linking education to social and employment insertion, and finally to promote an exchange between the various stakeholders.

More than 200 participants from the ministries of education of Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay attended the event, together with officials from the Argentine provinces, international bodies and NGOs. The event was opened by the Argentine Ministers of Education and Employment and IIEP's Deputy Director, Françoise Caillods.

The debate first highlighted that economic and social conditions in Latin America have deteriorated as inequality and unemployment have increased. Within this context, education has ex panded but drop-out rates (more than 50% of young people fail to complete secondary education) and the quality of education have not improved.

When it comes to acquiring employ-ment skills through education, there is a clear conflict between meeting the needs of the production and high-tech sectors, on the one hand, and those of the informal sector which provides jobs for large sections of the population, on the other. In this respect, new curricula need to be designed which, while offering equal opportunities, combine teaching basic core skills with more specific work skills.

Another issue addressed at the seminar was the existing and potential links between education, employment, social insertion and local institutional networks. Local diversity can both help and hinder specific efforts to move forward with local development strategies. What role can education institutions play in local development planning processes? By linking into a network of local relations, schools would be able to connect with other social policies, and this would open up real opportunities for young people to gain work experience as trainees in either private businesses or local public services.

A third issue discussed at the seminar focused on young people and their position in the job market: how they find jobs, the qualifications, skills and knowledge they need, and the differences between groups in terms of gender, age, social and economic status. Exclusion is often related to both social and educational inequalities which subsequently lead to inequalities in the job market. The 15 per cent of young people in Latin America, who neither have a job nor are in education, are particularly vulnerable. State policies should take action to overcome inequalities in access, attendance and achievement in the formal education system and to put in place support mechanisms to help job seekers.

However, this will be hard to achieve in a context of high unemployment.

Finally, participants discussed secondary education and general/ technical further education (outside universities) and how they can contribute to educating for work. Some of the issues considered were: what are the most equitable modes and degrees of institutional diversity and uniformity? To what extent and through what combinations should curricula strike a balance between general and specialized content? Does 'specialized content' mean training for a trade or profession, technological training or could other approaches be explored? Renewed emphasis on the responsibility of educational institutions to provide vocational guidance was an interesting point brought up by a number of participants. In a climate of uncertainty as regards the routes to employment, and the future in general, providing vocational guidance for young people would not only broaden their opportunities for finding a job but also help their social insertion in the larger sense.

Claudia Jacinto and Silvina Cimolai
redetis@ides.org.ar

---

redEtis
Latin American Network for Education, Labour and Social Insertion

For more information, readers can consult the *Boletín redEtis* published twice a year in Spanish and available soon on the redEtis web site at: *www.redetis.org.ar*. The *redEtis electronic gazette* is currently available on: *http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/networks/ redetis/gac14.htm*

The Virtual Institute

DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE

A distance education course on *The Management of University-Enterprise Partnerships and Income Generation Activities* was offered to 13 higher education institutions of the South Asia region – with 4/5 participants in each team.

The objective of this course was to help senior managers and other professionals in the participating institutions to identify strategies for the improvement of the management of such activities. The instructional mode combined individual study, group discussions and interaction with the IIEP team. A two-week online discussion gave the participants an opportunity to share experience and consider best practices for the calculation of overhead costs.

IIEP is planning to organize three distance education courses in 2005:

- *Education Sector Diagnosis*
- *Strategic financial management of higher education institutions*
- *Management of university-industry partnerships*

These courses contribute to strengthening both individual and institutional capacity through the formation of a study group.

INTERNET DISCUSSION FORUMS

One of the important functions of UNESCO is to act as a clearinghouse for sharing information and knowledge. The IIEP discussion forums perform this function well – linking developing and developed countries, and experts and those wanting to learn about the topic being discussed.

CONTACT FOR THE VIRTUAL INSTITUTE

Susan D'Antoni
s.dantoni@iiep.unesco.org
or on IIEP's web site at
http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/training/
virtual/virtual.htm

The forum on *Planning education before, in and after emergencies*, held in September-October 2004, was moderated by Margaret Sinclair. With more than 180 participants, the forum provided the opportunity for a rich exchange of experiences and ideas. The report is available at:
http://www.unesco.org/iiep/

ALUMNI NETWORK

This network has an important role in maintaining the strong link between IIEP and its alumni. It has now been operating for several years and there are plans to enhance its services, based upon the comments received from a survey of its members that was undertaken during June and July.

If you have participated in the ATP, you are welcome to join the Alumni Network. To become a member, please send a message to Tania Besimensky at:
t.besimensky@iiep.unesco.org

IIEP-Buenos Aires

SITEAL – Using household surveys to analyze educational trends

An analysis of the trends in education in Latin America which focuses on equal access to knowledge cannot ignore the far reaching social changes which have swept the region since the beginning of the 1990s. Although the structural reforms initiated more than a decade ago in most of these countries have brought greater economic stability and growth, they have also led to increasingly acute problems of unequal distribution of wealth, poverty and exclusion. In view of these changes, the challenge of providing quality education for all is ever more complex.

In this context, the household surveys conducted by national statistics offices in the region have become an extremely valuable diagnostic tool. These surveys provide basic indicators as regards school access and regular attendance which can be used to analyze the status of the school population in relation to broader information on the characteristics and living standards of families, their relationship to the labour market and their entitlement to various social schemes. These surveys also help identify children and teenagers who are not in school, and help to identify the social and economic reasons for their absence. Finally, they also enable us to ascertain the impact of levels of schooling on employment prospects of adults and the living standards of their families.

For these reasons household surveys are a privileged source of information for the System of Information and Trends in Education in Latin America (SITEAL). SITEAL is a project developed by IIEP-Buenos Aires and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) with a view to fostering a better understanding of the status of education in the region through the systematization, processing and analysis of information. One of its main achievements is precisely a broad base of comparative indicators derived from the household survey data gathered from the countries in the region. This database can be accessed on the Internet at *www.siteal.iipe-oei.org*

Nestor López
n.lopez@iipe-buenosaires.org.ar

IIEP Activities

ADEA/World Bank/Education International Conference

Bamako, Mali
21-23 November 2004

Presentation of the preliminary findings of the IIEP study on contract teachers in Cambodia, India and Nicaragua.

Contact: y.duthilleul@iiep.unesco.org

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Capacity-building in Liberia

November-December 2004

This includes an EFA Planning Workshop for senior MoE officials and two Medium-Term In-country Consultancies on: i) school mapping and microplanning and ii) teacher payroll and registration systems.

Contact: d.gay@iiep.unesco.org

Capacity-building in Algeria

22-26 November 2004

Course (under the PARE support pro-gramme) for officers from three regional ministries and services of education.

Contact: e.kadri@iiep.unesco.org

Capacity-building in Morocco

13-17 December 2004

Course for heads of regional services of the Ministry of Education and Youth (under PADEF/French Co-operation support programme for basic education).

Contact: e.kadri@iiep.unesco.org

Developing secondary and vocational education in Tunisia

December 2004

This activity is a follow-up of the EU support programme for basic education.

Contact: p.runner@iiep.unesco.org

Workshop on gender in policy-making in Afghanistan

January 2005

Course for educational planners and managers from the Ministry of Education (under the PASE/BAS support programme).

Contact: k.mahshi@iiep.unesco.org

Capacity-building in the Congo D.R.

February 2005

Course for educational planners and managers from the Ministry of Education (under the PASE/BAS support programme).

Contact: p.runner@iiep.unesco.org

Inter Agency Task Team on Education meeting on 'Education and HIV/AIDS'

Capetown, South Africa
17-19 January 2005

To assess progress on the Global Initiative on Preventive Education and ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity of ministries to tackle HIV/AIDS issues. A survey of education ministry readiness to tackle such issues in 70 countries will also be released.

Contact: a.draxler@iiep.unesco.org

Sub-regional Workshop on 'Tracking education expenditure'

Southern Africa
February 2005

An IIEP/World Bank Institute course on methodologies for tracking education expenditure for countries in Southern Africa

Contact: m.poisson@iiep.unesco.org

Internet discussion forum on 'Open educational resources (OER)'

February – March 2005

The forum will explore the context, current initiatives, issues and implications of OER.

Contact: l.ramos@iiep.unesco.org

IIEP-BA ACTIVITIES

Training of education officials at the provincial level in Argentina

Buenos Aires, Argentina
February 2005

This seminar will focus on issues of governance and the management of education systems.

Study visit for Brazilian school principals

Buenos Aires, Argentina
12-19 March 2005

For 30 school principals from Sao Paulo and Santa Catarina (Brazil) to visit innovative school projects in Buenos Aires to study their management.

Contact: info@iipe-buenosaires.org.ar

The 2004/2005 ATP takes off

FOR the 40th session of its *Advanced Training Programme in Educational Planning and Management*, IIEP is welcoming around 30 participants from Africa, the Arab States region, Asia and the Caribbean. While some of the countries represented (Botswana, Egypt, Sri Lanka and St Lucia) are working hard to meet EFA targets, others (Liberia or Congo Democratic Republic) are involved in reconstruction.

The course commenced with a series of seminars on topics education and development, followed by an orientation seminar, held in Plailly (30 km north of Paris). This seminar not only provided participants

with an opportunity to share their varied professional experiences but also to get to know each other.

The discussions highlighted current trends in developing educational plans, especially EFA plans, with the support of external agencies and donor communities. Inter-sectoral planning, sector analysis, sector-wide approaches and poverty reduction strategies are becoming common in most countries. Increased external funding support has also increased the need for accountability. Consequently, planners are under more pressure to produce regular indicator-based assessments.

While 'traditional' planning skills such as statistical analysis, projection techniques, school mapping and educational research for decision-making are still very relevant, areas such as management information systems, monitoring and evaluation processes, human resource management issues and budgeting concerns are growing in importance.

Finally, it was noted that even when situations varied among the countries represented, practices did not differ. This forms a firm basis for further exchange and collective learning during the programme.

Training and Education Programmes Unit
nv.varghese@iiep.unesco.org