Chapter 9. Diversity within an integrated education system

By John Oxenham

A central item on the Education for All agenda is the challenge of providing an education of acceptable quality to those who so far have been excluded. These are for the most part the most disadvantaged populations, often living in remote and sparsely populated areas (Chapter 5). Schools as they are traditionally organized find it difficult to respond to the wants and the needs of these populations and to take account of the constraints of their living condition. The response has been the development of a wide variety of pilot, experimental and research projects (Chapter 4) that continue to spring up in almost every country and continual reforms of curricula and teaching materials for both children and adults. As the account from Burkina Faso reports, in that country alone there have been a dozen or more efforts undertaken by agencies, governmental and non-governmental, local and international, with financial and technical support from a variety of bilateral and multilateral bodies. All of them aim to organize good-quality education for poor children and adults in disadvantaged areas, both urban and rural. This chapter reviews what has emerged from these efforts to provide education for children and adults through channels other than the usual school.

Diversity in provision

A first observation, supported by the EFA Global Monitoring Report, is that all these efforts referred to above seem not to be coming together as coherent systems that will ensure that countries reach the EFA goals for 2005 and 2015. Indeed, in its list of 14 operational defects, the Burkina Faso report notes the inadequate integration of two sub-systems of formal and non-formal education, despite the step of forming an integrated Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy that is intended to coordinate them. Such inadequacy is, of course, not unique either in Africa or in the rest of the world. Yet it does mean that whatever benefits the array of small projects is generating remain confined to relatively small populations and denied to the population at large. They do not enter into system-wide currency.
With the diverse patterns of living found in Africa, gender imbalances in schools, and many different groups in difficult circumstances, diverse patterns of educational provision can reasonably be expected to be the norm. Small communities and relatively isolated single families practicing small-scale agriculture and scattered over large areas, along with migratory fisher and pastoral communities, need arrangements for educating their children that are different from urban or larger rural groupings. Chapter 3 has already spelled out the stark and unfair inequalities between the provisions, processes and attainments between the rural poor – and particularly poor rural girls – and the rest of the population in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Special arrangements are even more necessary where poverty means that some working children bring in up to 40% of a family’s food supplies, as Daichi and Garrett (2003) found in their study of four districts in Tanzania. While these children may be exceptional, it is worth bearing in mind that the ILO’s International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor estimates that some 40% of children in Africa spend two to three hours a day working and that the amount of work is positively correlated with rural residence (ILO 2002). To provide these children with open opportunity to learn, measures will be necessary to ensure not only their access and enrollment but also and mostly importantly to ensure regular attendance, good nutrition and health to underpin effective learning and successful completion. In short, systems aiming to attain quality education for all should accommodate working children through much more diverse and flexible arrangements than are currently characteristic of school systems.

In addition to the working children, most countries need to consider children and adults with a range of disabilities who cannot be readily accommodated in ordinary schools, as well as those in difficult circumstances, such as refugees, orphans, HIV/AIDS orphans and children caring for parents and other family members suffering from HIV/AIDS and prevented by such commitments from sustaining regular attendance at school.

From the perspective of gender imbalance, Mbilinyi (2004) describes three diverse efforts to promote gender equity in both access and quality. They include a direct challenge to a well-established culture in Kenya, a campaign in 12 countries to transform girls’ attitudes to subjects traditionally thought to be domains for boys – science, math and technology – and a program of complementary basic education for out-of-school adolescents, both boys and
girls, but with an emphasis on aiding girls to exceed societal expectations. As so often, the leadership for these initiatives came not from ministries of education but from a non-governmental body, in this case FAWE. On the other hand, it is clear that at least the benign acquiescence of the ministries was essential.

The country case study of Mauritius illustrates how emerging technologies can be harnessed to support diverse approaches to access, quality and effectiveness in education, particularly in basic education. Moreover, experience in using both local and world-service radio to support adult education in Ghana and Somali-speaking countries suggests that possibilities analogous to the Australian radio schools should not be abandoned (see, for example, ARDA, 1993; and AET, 2003). Similarly, the World Bank’s experience with networking secondary schools in computer exchanges (see, for example, SRI International, 2000) coupled with advances in solar, wind-up and wireless technologies, needs to be constantly monitored for potential cost-effective applications to basic education for children as well as younger and older adults. Could this range of technologies eventually be stretched to organize distance learning for children caring for sick parents and other family members? Or for working children, whose commitments do not fit the ordinary schools’ timetables? Or for communities so isolated and so small that the numbers of their children could not meet even the minimum criterion for a single teacher? A vital question that shadows all these possible options is of course the issue of cost-effectiveness and the concomitant issue of long-term sustainability using only indigenous resources. But that question comes into play only after the technical feasibility of an option is tested.

Coherence in objectives
To say that diversity, flexibility and openness to new technologies are required is not to suggest that there should be parallel education systems, independent of each other, where the state runs traditional schools, while other bodies devise other forms of education for groups who cannot use the ordinary schools. It suggests rather what Torres (2001) observed about the Colombian Escuela Nueva and its relation to the Colombian state: the “new school” with its new organization and approach was not an alternative to formal or state education but an alternative within the formal and public education system. That is to suggest that each government should – doubtless in cooperation with appropriate partners – develop and deliver a variety of educational programs to fit the needs of a range of communities and groups of learners within the country,
even as it permits and possibly enables a number of providers to set up and run ordinary schools alongside its own.

However, within most education systems in Africa, the actual norm is not diversity. Instead, a single dominant pattern of schooling provides for children, with minor provisions for adults. There is no denying that some diversity does exist, for example, in the form of special provisions for nomadic pastoral peoples or migratory fishing communities, as the Nigerian case describes, or for small scattered rural villages, like the Save the Children work in Mali (see, for example, Velis, 1994; Glassman and Millogo, 2004), or to help very poor children use their own languages to qualify for government schools, like the work of Tin Tua in Burkina Faso. Yet, equally, there is no denying that diversity in these forms tends to be exceptional and marginal to the main bodies of schools and corps of professional, career schoolteachers. The insufficiency of diversity is a failure on the part of governments to make education accessible to all and is in effect another form of remediable inequity.

A constraint upon diversity from another direction is what poor people and cultural or religious minorities perceive as a “proper education.” Attempts to improve the relevance of schooling to children’s lives have only too often come to grief as their authors’ concepts of what constituted a useful and valuable education diverged from the concepts that their clients held. Foster’s (1965) insight into the vocational education fallacy has been amply validated by later research – see Bergmann (2002) – while Boyle et al. (2003) in their study of six countries, three of them in Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Zambia), found that poor parents tended to define quality in education mainly in terms of the availability and reliability of competent teachers within the frame of the kind of school and curriculum similar to the one available to the rest of the country. The clear inferences are that any attempt at diversity in education would need to make sure that it satisfies or convincingly reshapes local preconceptions of education and that the people it recruits as teachers are both competent and reliable. Burkina Faso’s less than satisfactory experience with the instructors it posted to its Non-Formal Basic Education Centres (CEBNF) is an example that merits study (see Atchoarena and Niameego, 1998).

What would “diversity within an integrated system” entail? Before that discussion begins, two cautionary points need to be firmly made. First, diversity must not imply less than the ordinary accepted standards of quality and attainments in learning. Any hint that diversity offered only second-rate education or education that opened up no possibilities of advancement in directions
desired by the learners would doom the concept to rejection by the people it proposed to benefit. Second, diversity need not connote a cheap option, but, equally important, neither should it connote an option so expensive as to risk inequity and, worse, infeasibility for introduction on a scale sufficient to improve a situation substantially. For instance, if arranging quality education for the children of nomadic communities or families cost 15% more than the costs of urban primary schools, the additional investment would likely be deemed acceptable and equitable. However, if it cost 50% more, it could well be rejected as both inequitable and impossible, even if it ensured high achievements.

**Paradigm shift: getting education to the learners**

Subject to these two provisos, diversity would require first a paradigm shift in thinking about educational provision. The current dominant paradigm is largely supply driven: *getting learners to come to school or class*. The complementary paradigm is demand focused: *getting education to reach the learners*. That would entail looking at where the learners actually are, negotiating with them or their families what they would accept as worthwhile education, and examining how best to arrange it within the possibilities of the learners’ environment, means and commitments. This second paradigm already operates in adult education, for example, in the REFLECT approach described in the Burkina Faso case and now practiced in many more countries. It also operates here and there for children, for example, in the Save the Children work in Mali, in Nigeria for some of the children of nomadic and fishing communities *(Box 9.1.)* and possibly in the COBET pilot for a few communities in Tanzania (see Mbilinyi, 2004). In these instances, education is organized in places and at times that children can manage easily.

Such a shift in approach would likely foster or even demand openness to what has been called mutual learning or non-formalizing the formal while formalizing the non-formal. A good example of what is meant has taken place in Burkina Faso *(Box 9.2.)*, where non-governmental agencies have led the way in demonstrating that using the local language as the medium of instruction does not hinder effective learning in primary school but actually promotes it. The classes are non-formal in the sense that they are not part of the ordinary system of public and private schools but entirely formal in the systematic way they structure the curriculum and learning. Their results are moving the school system to reconsider the current language policy.
Box 9.1. Flexibility for nomadic and fishing communities in Nigeria

In 1989, some 3 million children of school age in Nigeria’s nomadic and migratory fishing communities had no schools or education programs that addressed their particular conditions. They had either to attend the traditional static schools or go without. Virtually all went without. In that year the authorities launched an initiative especially adapted for their ways of life. Between 1989 and 2002, enrollments climbed by a factor of 12, from 18,831 to 229,944 pupils. Further, the gender parity ratio improved from 0.54 to 0.85. Impressive growth, impressive gender equity! What was the situation for quality?

Relatively disappointing outcomes in the early years led in 1992 to several subsidiary initiatives. The first, Community Sensitization and Empowerment (CSE), aimed to gain the active support of parents and communities. It deployed a range of media, including literacy classes, extension services and cooperative societies for the adults. The second thrust, Pedagogical Renewal and Teacher Development, aimed to orient mainstream teachers to the culture and values of the pastoral and fisher communities and to introduce more effective teaching methods and materials. Perhaps more important, it worked to recruit, train and retain teachers from the pastoral and fishing communities themselves.

Alongside, 700 mobile collapsible classrooms were imported to move with the pastoral communities, while 25 motorized boat schools were introduced to follow and fetch the children of the migrant fisher communities. New incentives for the teachers comprised better housing, motorcycles and bicycles.

The outcome was that the transition rate from primary to secondary school rose from 45% of 1,274 pupils in 1992 (534 pupils) to 54.6% of 9,120 pupils in 2002 (4,976 pupils), an absolute increase of more than nine times.

The total development cost over the period 1990-2003 amounted to US$2,217,743 while the recurrent costs amounted to $4,156,607, or approximately $1.06 per pupil. The Federal Government of Nigeria bore all the recurrent costs and 96.3% of the overall development costs: These were apportioned 49% to curriculum and materials development, 45% to buildings and furniture and 6% to teacher development. UK DFID assisted with 27% of the teacher development costs.

Source: Republic of Nigeria, 2004

However, this paradigm continues to be a marginal option, most often only of secondary interest to the main ministries of education, their decision-makers and perhaps particularly to the influential bodies of state-employed career teachers. At best, it is regarded as a temporary expedient, to be used only until all learners can be brought to fit into proper schools.
Box 9.2. An integrated approach Banma Nuara in Burkina Faso

In 1992 the Tin Tua Association entered the 30-year struggle in Burkina Faso to develop a system of education that would be relevant for all age groups in the country. It began with just some 40 adults who had mastered literacy in their own language and wanted to learn basic French. The results of the first eight months encouraged further development into three branches: one for children age seven to nine years, the second for youngsters age 10-15 years and the third for adults age 15-30 years.

Branch 1 (seven to nine years) opened a satellite school of three classes and offered five years of systematically bilingual schooling using the local language and French.

Branch 2 (10-15 years) offered a course of 20 months in four sessions each of five months. Its students acquired a normal basic education plus two future options: either to start earning a living or to go on to secondary education.

Branch 3 (15-30 years) ran a center for multi-sectoral training. It offered instruction in French as well as in specific technical skills and aimed to equip the villages to develop themselves within the framework of decentralization.

By 2002-03, the three branches had a total of 1,053 learners, with gender parity ratios for enrollments at .73 for Branch 1, .56 for Branch 2, and .21 for Branch 3. The completion rates were high at 87.4% overall, while the success rates of the completers averaged 65%. However, for those who tried for the Primary Education Certificate, the results were even better: 70% for Branch 1, 94% for Branch 2, and for the 36 candidates from Branch 3, it was a full 100%.

A UNICEF study of the active bilingual approach has moved the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy to adopt the method for its satellite schools and Centers of Non-Formal Basic Education. It now deems the Branch 1 schools to be primary schools, provides teaching materials and welcomes their teachers to its refresher courses. On the community side, a strong demand for Branches 2 and 3 has sprung up, for their value in local capacity building is clear.

The one problem that Tin Tua has not yet solved is the instability of its teaching force. The root seems to be the low salaries that Tin Tua has to offer.


To develop a more concrete vision of what diversity within an integrated system might entail, it might be helpful to start with a reminder that the core of effective learning and education is of course a learner who is willing, interested, committed and able to learn. Although many learners can operate independently, most, whether adults or children, tend to thrive more efficiently and effectively if they enjoy the attention and assistance of a competent guide or teacher. This is the second element of a learning system. The third is social support, either in the form of sponsorship by family members, sometimes with
pressure and even coercion, or in the form of encouragement by friends, respected persons in the neighborhood or government and other agencies. These elements apply to both adults and children. The fourth element comprises the content, methods and materials to help make the learning engaging and effective and to reinforce it. The discussion will now consider options for getting education to reach the learners.

Committed learners
The experiences reported in the country cases have shown that demand for education exists among families for their children – and, it can be added, among young and older adults whose right to education has been either wholly or partially frustrated. It is usually strong and widespread and demonstrates itself effectively, as soon as a credible, affordable opportunity for education becomes available. Although there are also people who have no interest in education and may even oppose it, they tend to be few and to form a dwindling minority. Table 9.1 uses data from the study of PAPF Women’s Literacy Project in Senegal to illustrate the strength of demand for education among unschooled and partially schooled adolescent and adult women. Notable is the rapidity of the increases in enrollments. Table 9.2 follows to make the point – for both PAPF and for another program, CAF/PAPA – that increases in quantity do not necessarily entail declines in quality and effectiveness. On the contrary, the two programs in Senegal suggest that experience can engender increasing competence, quality and effectiveness.

Table 9.1 Senegal PAPF – Enrollments 1995 through 2001

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of agencies contracted to organize classes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners enrolled</td>
<td>23,100</td>
<td>58,736</td>
<td>90,181</td>
<td>109,711</td>
<td>203,006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Each cohort undertook a 2-year course

Also to be borne in mind for later comment is the increase in the number of agencies contracted by the government to organize classes in rural and urban communities.
Table 9.2  Senegal PAPF and CAF/PAPA – Percentages of learners who succeeded in the end-of-course tests for reading, writing, arithmetic and functional knowledge in 1998 and 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>% learners who can read a written text fluently</th>
<th>% learners who can write a simple meaningful text</th>
<th>% learners who can solve in writing a simple arithmetical problem</th>
<th>% learners who have theoretical mastery of ‘functional’ subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAPF* 1998</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAF**/PAPA*** 1998</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPF* 2001</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAF**/PAPA*** 2001</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*PAPF = Projet d’alphabétisation priorité femmes = Literacy Project, Priority Women  
**CAF = Classe d’alphabétisation fonctionnelle = Functional Literacy Class  
***PAPA = Projet d’appui au plan d’action alphabétisation = Project in Support of the Action Plan for Literacy  

Analogous data from countries like Botswana, Kenya and Malawi, (see, for example, Evans & Yoder, 1991; Kenya, 2003; UNESCO, 1999) show similarly strong demand among children for education: When their governments abolished fees for primary school, enrollments increased so rapidly as almost to overwhelm the schools. Yet countervailing factors – poverty, the need for children to work or to care for their families, the distribution of populations across rural areas, the patterns of livelihoods of different groups of people – all present problems of access, quality and equity. However, the country cases suggest that none of these problems is insurmountable, if the will to surmount them exists.

Therefore, if the conditions are reasonably negotiated with the learners and their supporting community, and if the instruction is competent, interesting and adequately serviced with materials, initial demand can translate into sustained attendance and completion by two-thirds or more of the learners, whether they are adults or children. The COBET project in Tanzania, admittedly small and only a pilot, had a 90% course completion rate for boys and an 89% rate for girls. Indeed, the current circumstances of Africa suggest that some form of integration between children’s education and adult education could benefit the quality of both – the point will recur in a moment.
Reliable teachers

The problem then lies not in initial demand; interested learners are abundant. Much less abundant is the second element of a learning system: good, reliable teachers. Rural populations, especially when they are small and scattered, or migrants such as pastoralists and fisher people, have always had severe difficulty in organizing ordinary schools with ordinary timetables and in recruiting and retaining ordinary teachers from state teaching services. Such communities tend to be very poor and to offer very little by way of amenities such as decent housing, trustworthy water supplies or access to good food supplies, let alone electricity and health services. The difficulties that small population groups encounter in mobilizing sufficient numbers of learners to satisfy current criteria for pupil-teacher ratios have always been compounded by the difficulties of designing timetables to fit the working obligations that very poor families require of their boys and girls, on the one hand, and the working hours and preferences of professional teachers, on the other. Dachi and Garrett (2003) note that in Tanzania “some teachers are sensitive to the demands made on children, but there is little evidence that the system permits them, or trains them, to accommodate their pupils’ needs.” Such difficulties are of course exacerbated for orphans and particularly HIV/AIDS orphans.

Nevertheless, several experiences, of which the cases from Mali, Nigeria and Tanzania are good examples, suggest that it is indeed possible to arrange for teachers to reach willing but relatively inaccessible learners. Nigeria has deployed motorized “boat schools,” each equipped with three classrooms, to seek out and educate the children of migratory fisher families, while it offers motorcycles, collapsible and mobile classrooms and other incentives to attract teachers to educate the children of nomadic groups. Both these initiatives have relied on the usual practice of importing trained or partially trained teachers into the targeted environment and have had to deal with the usual problems of being able to recruit only relatively ineffective teachers and of having to cope with a relatively high turnover among them.

In Mali, the NGO Save the Children, adopted a different strategy, more commonly found in adult education. It recruited people from within the local community and culture and attuned to village needs. Even if these recruits were only partially schooled or even only recently literate, Save the Children showed that it could train them to become effective teachers. Such people were in fact preferable to professionals posted in from elsewhere in the country and from other ways of life, most of whom are anxious to escape to a more
congenial posting. In partial corroboration, the case from Guinea suggests that teachers can indeed teach well, even if their training is briefer than established custom but more strongly grounded in actual practice. Although they occur in environments different from Africa, the experiences of BRAC in Bangladesh reinforce this point and are well documented (see, for example, Prather, 1993; CIDA, 2000). In these two cases, the need for an economic pupil-teacher ratio was met by organizing multi-grade classes, each containing learners of different ages and scholastic attainments. This option for connecting willing learners with effective teachers seems feasible, effective and attractive. However, although multi-grade classes and local, partially trained teachers do address the problems of access and equity, they require considerable constant support to address the issue of quality. Managing a multi-grade class demands from the teacher much more flexibility and resourcefulness. It also requires, most importantly, good supplies of teaching and learning materials. In her 1995 review of such schools, Little (1995) found that support was precisely what such schools did not receive.

Instead, multi-grade schools tended to exist only among poor, rural communities and to be even less well endowed with qualified teachers, textbooks and other learning aids than the average school. Ministries of education tended to ignore them. Teacher training colleges had no provision for preparing new teachers to deal with multi-grade classes, nor were there even manuals to guide teachers on how to handle sets of children of different ages and different scholastic attainments. The teachers themselves tended understandably to be unhappy and eager to move on to a proper school.

Clearly, in the eyes of the educational establishment, multi-grade schools are a stopgap device, to be used and tolerated in the interests of widening access until real schools can be made available and accessible. Because this view is held by the main authorities in education, the full potential of the multi-grade school as a tool for combining access, equity and quality has not so far been realized. Yet the African experiences above draw corroboration from Colombia’s Escuela Nueva, which also relies on multi-grade teaching and was so successful in its pilot stages that it has dramatically expanded its coverage. It has been sustained for more than two decades and adopted and adapted in several other countries in Latin America (see, for example, Colbert et al., 1993). Clearly, the multi-grade school is an option that governments will have to explore, adapt and develop, with existing bodies of public service teachers and their unions as well as with partners able to operate more flexibly.
The supporters of learners

The issue of partnerships can be linked to the third element in effective learning, the moral and practical support of families and sponsoring communities. In the difficult conditions discussed above, this third element takes on a greater importance than it tends to have among urban or larger, more settled rural communities. However, mobilizing such support in the first place and then organizing and sustaining it is a task that on the whole ministries of education find difficult. A well-tried way to supplement the efforts of a ministry and indeed to open up the possibilities of new options in education has been to allow non-governmental organizations to work out arrangements with local communities. Box 9.3. describes one of these initiatives. The report of the ADEA Working Group on Non-Formal Education provides information on several programs in Burkina Faso. Save the Children offers an example for Mali, while FAWE offers three others in Cameroon, Kenya and Tanzania. Nordtveit (2004) reviews partnership arrangements in Senegal.

Box 9.3. The School for Parents

The African Federation of Parent Teacher Associations (Fédération africaine des associations des parents d’élèves et d’étudiants-FAPE) has initiated a pilot project, The School for Parents (l’Ecole des parents). The overarching goal of the project is to increase parental awareness of the value of education and ways they can contribute to their children’s success in school. This is done through information campaigns using radio and targeted at parents in rural areas. The program is designed to:

• Inform parents of the importance of enrolling their children;
• Enhance social demand for education;
• Help parents to be more effective in supporting the education of their children; and
• Explain education reforms and encourage parental involvement in the process.

An initial pilot phase in three countries – Senegal, Burkina Faso and Guinea – will be extended in a later phase to all 13 francophone countries where FAPE has members. Parent Teacher Associations in the participating countries are assisting in the development of the radio programs, and a number of PTA members are being trained for this purpose. The ADEA Working Group on Communication for Education and Development (COMED) will provide technical support, while the World Bank will provide the necessary financing.

Source: FAPE/ADEA WGCOMED

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43. Mali has made spectacular progress on primary enrolments in the last ten years, from 23% in 1989 to 63% in 2002. A new study says that much of the credit is due to an innovative NGO sector – and a set of government policies that have encouraged NGO activity (See Tounkara 2001).
Further, the country reports suggest that the movement for deconcentration, decentralization, contractual partnerships and community participation is now continent-wide, so that it will be a matter mainly of identifying sound practices on the ground. Cases from two countries provide good examples. The two accounts from Senegal describe initiatives with schools, communities and local contractors, both voluntary and profit-seeking, while Madagascar has shown that contracts can be arranged with local communities themselves.

At this point, however, the problem of adult illiteracy crops up. The accounts from Benin, the Gambia, Madagascar, Mali and Senegal all mention the difficulties of associating parents and community notables in the governance of schools and in support of their children’s schooling, when most of the parents and notables are themselves unschooled and illiterate. From a slightly different angle, Ersado’s study (2002) in Nepal, Peru and Zimbabwe found that adult education is a significant contributory factor in the reduction in child labor and in improving the likelihood that children stay in school. Further, evidence from many countries, most recently from Ghana (see Huebler and Loaiza, 2003; and Valerio, 2003), confirms that the education of a mother has a strong influence on the schooling of her children, stronger indeed than a father’s. Further, the more school education that the mother has enjoyed, the more likely she is to ensure that her children enter and stay in school.

But even the experience of an adult literacy class is sufficient to raise the likelihood that a mother will send her children to school, as the data in Table 9.3 below from Valerio illustrate. The data are in harmony with data from many other countries in Africa and elsewhere. They suggest that investments in educational opportunities for women who were, as young girls, unable to take up their right to even primary education, would be productive in ensuring that increasing proportions of their children will be assured of their own rights to education.

**Integrating children’s and parents’ education.** Making this point in the context of a discussion of an integrated system raises the question of the possibilities of integrating the education of mothers – and possibly fathers, too – with the education of their children. In several OECD countries, programs of Family Literacy have been run with considerable success. They have used parents’ natural interest in the education of their children to improve both the children’s attendance and performance in school and the levels of the parents’ own education and subsequent employment.
Table 9.3  Percentages of mothers in Ghana who have sent their children aged 6–15 to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers grouped by education</th>
<th>Percentage who have sent their children to school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1: Individuals who have NEVER attended either formal education or literacy programs</td>
<td>73.8 (100.0)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2: Individuals who have never attended formal education, but HAVE attended literacy programs</td>
<td>76.2 (103.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3: Individuals who started but did not complete primary education and have NEVER attended literacy programs</td>
<td>89.7 (121.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4: Individuals who started but did not complete primary education and HAVE attended literacy programs</td>
<td>93.8 (127.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5: Individuals whose highest qualification is primary education completion</td>
<td>96.7 (131.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Valerio (2003) p. 97, Table 1. Data derived from the 1999 Ghana Living Standards Survey.

*The figures in parentheses take the percentage for Group 1 as a base 100 and show the data for groups 2 to 5 as rising percentages of this base.

The core idea is simple: Parents receive special tuition in basic skills and knowledge, along with guidance in using what they learn to supervise, support and encourage their children in learning at school. The special tuition is negotiated to fit in with the parents’ other commitments. In this way, what the parents learn has an immediate application to a purpose that is of course very important to them.

Whether the school, the government’s adult education authorities or some non-governmental partner, either national or community-based, undertakes the arrangements for Family Literacy is an issue to be decided within each country at levels appropriate to each country. The main requirement is simply that the content and methods enable the parents to grasp the connection between what they are learning and their capacity to supervise and promote their children’s performance in school (see, for example, Desmond, 2004).

Diversifying civil society. As mentioned earlier, the community and its leaders are among the important supporters of learners. Included in many communities are small organizations, some voluntary, some profit-seeking, that offer a variety services to their neighbors. The experience of the PAPF (or “faire-faire” project) in Senegal, reflected in Tables 9.1 and 9.2 above, suggests that they constitute a form of civil society, so that the customary connotations of the term, often referring only to international and larger local NGOs, need to
be expanded. However, PAPF has shown that these small community-based organizations, both non-profit and for-profit, can quite rapidly acquire the capacities to organize and manage educational work effectively. It corroborates the observation that in many countries “public service providers have dramatically improved the delivery of their services, and have often reduced their costs too, by using small and even micro-scale local community or private enterprises to fill the gap between themselves and their clients” (Harper, 2000).

Developing such capacity has required government and its several partners to make deliberate and sustained efforts to train local leaders and their communities, as well as local organizations and their supporters, in the necessary skills. Senegal’s PADEN project is a particularly good example of helping local notables to master literacy and other skills to enable them to take a stronger and more effective part in local governance. For its part, the PAPF program equipped a multitude of small, local organizations not only to draft credible proposals for contracts but also to handle financial control and to monitor and assess the outcomes of their efforts. This capacity building both diversifies civil society and strengthens it to branch into broader forms of social, political and economic development.

Such initiatives will always encounter difficulties, setbacks and disappointments. Nevertheless, the fact that PAPF could move from agreeing upon contracts with 77 local organizations in its first year to contracts with 404 such bodies four years later – a more than five-fold increase – points to the potential for governments to develop the capacities of civil society to undertake productive partnerships with them.

True, PAPF deals only with adult education. However, similar arrangements were made in Senegal for the École Communautaire de Base, so that they are clearly possible for the education of children as well. Indeed, the several country cases given in Appendix 4 of the background paper on Early Childhood Development (Hyde and Kabiru, 2004) demonstrate that parents and communities, given adequate support and guidance, are quite capable of running educational institutions for their children. Further, to recall an earlier history, Kenya’s long experience with its people’s Harambee secondary schools demonstrates what parents and their communities can do in education, even when the ministry of education is not whole-hearted in its support, despite the public enthusiasm of the country’s politicians (Kremer et al., 2002).
Conditions for diversification to succeed

Macro requirements
Getting education to reach the learners, connecting learners with teachers, mobilizing moral and other support for the learners and negotiating forms of educational diversification acceptable to learners, teachers and supporters, all necessarily involve a range of stakeholders and partners. Accommodating them within a system that will include the whole of a country, and not just scattered pockets of people, will require the government to accept the principle of diversity and responsibility for leadership in applying the principle in the various contexts that exist in the country. That is the first condition for the success of diversification within an integrated system.

The elements of diversification also imply the necessity of a clear and understandable national framework, within which each form of diversification fits both on its own merits and in terms of the further opportunities it opens. They also require a range of planning and financing processes and mechanisms that will balance simplicity with accountability. If the mechanisms are too simple, they may be open to excessive abuse. If they are too concerned with accountability, they may prove impossible for local communities to operate competently. The second condition of success then is that the state’s ministries of finance and education lead the way in negotiating the framework and in designing workable processes and instruments.

Micro requirements
Those two conditions apply at the macro-level. At the micro-level, the lessons and requirements that Hyde and Kabiru (2004) list in their review of Early Childhood Development programs in Africa for efforts to benefit very young children apply equally to efforts to diversify the provision of education for older children. Intensive communication among all the parties and clear and clearly understood roles for each are essential for the feasibility of any initiative. The local operational framework has to be derived from the social conditions, strengths, values and the expressed needs and priorities of the community, taking into account that different sections of any community may express slightly different needs and priorities. Community education, mobilization, empowerment, training and mentoring would all be important elements to assure quality and effectiveness.
The term “community education” can – and often must – connote efforts to convince a community of the rightness of a measure and thus connotes advocacy. The prime example here is the case of the Maasai and early marriage for girls in the Kajiado district of Kenya (Mbilinyi, 2004). In workshops for the local chiefs, for instance, FAWE ensured that “the issues of outdated cultural practices of early marriages and pregnancies which hinder girls’ education were voiced. Other problems identified were lack of community awareness of the importance of education, specifically that of girls, and lack of community mobilization and participation in the process of educational planning, and implementation within their localities.” Concomitant with these challenges to custom and culture, it has to be noted, were measures for reconciliation and healing: The chiefs undertook to see that the girls, who had rebelled against an early marriage because they wanted their education first, would be reconciled with their families.

Community education also clearly connotes forms of training for official leaders, like the Maasai chiefs of Kajiado or the council members participating in PADEN in Senegal, as well as for parents and the general public. In addition, as noted earlier, it connotes training for the kind of diversification of civil society that the Senegal PAPF program has stimulated.

**Evaluation**

To this formidable list of requirements, a system of monitoring, evaluation and research must be added. Long experience around the world has shown that such a system is exceedingly difficult to install and operate reliably. The following quote from Torres (2001, p.57) illustrates the situation. “Documenting and evaluating are not part of the education culture and are generally left to external actors and/or are done to comply with external demands (typically, those posed by financial relationships). Accounts are often descriptive, rather than reflective, analytical or evaluative, and tend to show success, mainly to respond to external expectations and criteria”. A recent and as yet unpublished review (Oxenham, 2004) of the World Bank’s experience over 25 years in supporting innovative education projects confirms Torres’ perception.

The difficulty has meant that the quantities, quality and reliability of information on the usual range of indicators and costs have usually been lacking, as many of the cases for this volume attest. Their lack has in turn made it more difficult to substantiate arguments for more resources with which to establish
pilot work on a more permanent basis and to take it to scale. Indeed, this lack likely constitutes a major reason why the multitude of promising experimental and pilot projects do not come together to transform school systems and why wheels seem to be re-invented so often. Nonetheless, the need for credible monitoring, evaluation and costing remains. If educators persist in addressing them inadequately, efforts at innovation, reform and diversification will continue to meet resistance and likely remain small in scale.

**Costs**

To press the point further, the issue of costs requires a special note. Torres touches the matter, while four recent studies by the World Bank have all found the accounting for costs unsatisfactory (World Bank, 2003; 2002; 2001a; 2001c). As is known only too well, ministries of finance and education are severely constrained for resources to satisfy the range of ever-increasing demands. They are also heavily dependent on securing the support of donors. If they cannot be reliably assured of the benefits that will flow from an innovation or reform and what those benefits will cost, they cannot be faulted if they hesitate to adopt the innovation system-wide.

**Communication and dissemination**

In addition, whatever is gleaned from monitoring, evaluation and research needs to be channeled into a system of feedback and communication. Ideally, it would flow from the schools, other educational vehicles and communities towards the decision-makers and financiers and then back to the communities and educational institutions.

**Conclusion**

*Common standards, local variations.* By definition, diversification requires the recognition that, although there is a set of necessary common elements to underpin an initiative, as well as a set of standards to which it must be accountable, there can be no single pattern for getting education to the learners. Parents, professionals and the community – and, where appropriate, the prospective learners – should all be involved in deciding on the most relevant and affordable options. The task that may prove the most difficult to resolve is the recruitment, support and retention of good, reliable teachers, even if the stakeholders accept that local men and women can be found and trained for the job. Substantial investment may be required for training, refresher training and
technical support, as well as for incentives to avert a potential “brain drain” of new teachers now aware that they can seek better opportunities elsewhere for their families and themselves.

Negotiating the curriculum will have to offer assurances that what will be taught will be fully equal to what is taught in the main educational system and provides equivalent opportunities for further education. But it may also include incorporating local or traditional knowledge, particularly if that can enhance the skills and productivity of the older – 11-14 year-olds – working children. In this regard, it is worth noting two warnings. First are the experiences of the agricultural schools in Burkina Faso and the Continuation Schools of Ghana (see Haddad, 1993, on Burkina Faso and Dankwa, 1987, and Anim, 1978, on Ghana). Skills apparently relevant to the local community and economy did not find favor with most of the intended learners, their families or communities. Second, the small pilot effort of COBET (Mbilinyi, 2004) has found that even the several curricula negotiated with the learners proved insufficient for the variety of contexts in Tanzania. The curriculum could also include contributions from parents and community members and appropriate recognition for them, although the history of Ghana’s Continuation Schools suggests that proposals along these lines might encounter queries and possibly resistance from professional teachers.

Alongside the curricular aspects of education, initiatives for diversification should ideally consider services that address local conditions affecting children’s health, nutrition and cognitive development. If many – or even some – of the participating families are too poor to assure their working children sufficient food to avoid exhaustion before a learning session, options for feeding programs should be considered. This would be particularly important for initiatives that aim to benefit orphans and children caring for sick parents. In addition, devising links with existing services such as health, forestry, veterinary and agriculture could enhance the quality, relevance and direct usefulness of what is learned. In addition, as suggested above, options should be explored for integrating or at least linking the education of children to the education of their parents and possibly other adults too.

This list of requirements serves to underline a sentence earlier in this chapter: Community education, mobilization, empowerment, training and mentoring would all be important elements to assure quality and effectiveness. It also serves to underline that the capacity building implied in that sentence in its
turn requires the pre-existence of the capacity to build capacity. Training teachers in new and diversified approaches similarly requires teacher trainers who know how to implement the approaches and how best to enable others to adopt their example.

Persons, who are accustomed to think in terms of the government providing all services, might infer that these requirements involve expanding public training facilities and personnel and thus increasing the long-term government commitments to salaries, benefits and pensions. On the other hand, thinking in terms of diversification could generate at least one other option that would offer governments more flexibility and lower the risk of long-term unproductive entanglements: The tasks of building capacity could be contracted out and challenge the voluntary and private sectors to undertake them.

These series of requirements and pre-requirements make it only too clear that promoting diversification is not an easy option. That may be part of the explanation of why ministries of education and professional teachers tend to prefer to stick to the customary paradigm of providing schools and leaving the learners to make their own way there. The requirements also help explain at least partially why initiatives such as Nigeria’s programs for nomadic and fisher communities and those described in Burkina Faso develop slowly and even after a decade and more still reach only minorities of the children and adults they strive to benefit. It is of course also possible that the people promoting an initiative omitted to prepare a strategy for expansion and to develop mechanisms and processes to assess the effectiveness, attainments, longer-term effects and costs of their work. In short, they may have neglected to generate the information that could equip them to substantiate arguments for expansion, general adoption and integration into the national system of education.
In most countries in sub-Saharan Africa education has, until recently, been managed through highly centralized systems. Most functions are carried out directly by officials of the ministry of education or by officials posted at the regional, district or school level acting on the basis of detailed instructions issued by ministry officials at the national level. This often results in inefficient application of resources, inequitable provision of access and unacceptable differences in the quality of instruction and learning achievement between rich and poor, urban and rural, boys and girls and has thwarted progress towards the EFA goals. In response countries have begun to implement changes in the way education is managed by decentralizing functions and resources, diversifying service delivery modes and transforming the role and responsibility of the central services. Given the absence of clear evidence of the impact of centralization or decentralization on the equitable provision of opportunities to learn, school effectiveness or student learning outcomes, justification for either is often based largely on ideological preferences, general beliefs about effective change strategies or simply the hope that doing things differently will result in better outcomes. Moreover, a lack of policy consistency has often resulted in flip-flops or swings from top-down to bottom-up emphases and both strategies being pursued simultaneously, often in a disconnected manner. As a result the relative roles and relationships of centralized and decentralized strategies for educational reform is a morass, badly in need of conceptual and strategic clarification (Fullan, 1994). This chapter reviews the evidence of the experience with these changes and the associated need for institutional development and capacity building. In addition to reviewing progress, it identifies constraints that have hampered progress, and challenges that countries will need to address to make management of their education systems more effective.

44 A more elaborate development of the argument made in this chapter can be found in Naidoo and Kong (2003).
**Decentralization of education in sub-Saharan Africa**

In the last decade, decentralization has become the dominant instrument for attempts to improve the management of public services in sub-Saharan Africa. Central governments are decentralizing fiscal, political, and administrative responsibilities to lower levels of government, local institutions, and the private sector in pursuit of greater accountability and more efficient service delivery, often in an attempt to solve broader political, social or economic problems (Support for Research and Analysis in Africa, SARA, 1997). Education decentralization and management reforms in sub-Saharan Africa are usually embedded in these larger reforms. Despite the considerable support for and the near universality of decentralization policies, there are on-going debates about their impact, which makes it imperative to better understand the extent, pace, and consequences of education decentralization in sub-Saharan Africa (Ndegwa, 2002).

Sub-Saharan African countries from Ethiopia to South Africa have engaged in some form of education decentralization, though the pace has been quite uneven. Ethiopia, Uganda, Senegal, and South Africa, for example, are proceeding fast; Ghana, Mali, Tanzania and Zimbabwe are moving more slowly; Guinea, Niger, Zambia and Nigeria are at the other end of the continuum. As discussed below, most education decentralization initiatives begin with **administrative deconcentration**, but the more successful ones are complemented by efforts to increase school-level autonomy and move towards **school-based management**, provide direct financial support to schools through **school grants** and **involve communities** in the management of the schools.

**Accelerating administrative decentralization**

Education decentralization reforms in sub-Saharan Africa have revolved around attempts to restructure centralized education bureaucracies and create devolved systems with different administrative levels, varying degrees of institutional autonomy and forms of school-based management. The process has also involved a transfer of some form (and degree) of authority from central governments to: (i) provincial, state or regional entities, (ii) to municipal, county or district governments and, (iii) to schools. Devolution and the distribution of authority to make decisions and to take action by local governments or local communities independently of central administrative oversight appears to occur less frequently than deconcentration, where local entities act largely as the local agents of central governments, manage personnel, and
Based on Rondinelli's conceptualization of decentralization, deconcentration, delegation and devolution have been applied to the form or functional dimension where: deconcentration refers to the transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations and local units, local government or to non-governmental organizations; delegation refers to the transfer of some powers of decision-making and management authority for specific functions to units or organizations that are not under direct control of central government ministries; and devolution refers to the transfer of authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government such as municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983; Rondinelli, 1981 and 1999). The CEF Program in Tanzania (see Box 10.2.) demonstrates the multiple motivations in practice – it involves communities in school management and attempts to mobilize resources.

Table 10.1  **Typology of education decentralization and management reforms in sub-Saharan Africa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central government (MOE) to provincial, state regional or district offices</td>
<td>Deconcentration</td>
<td>Regional/district offices are in charge of personnel and financial management functions. Central government retains control of fiscal allocations and appointments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central government (MOE) to municipal, county or district governments</td>
<td>Delegation and/or Devolution</td>
<td>Management decisions-staff appointments and allocation of local education budgets. Central governments retain accountability – control financial transfers from national treasuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From central government (MOE) and regional/district offices or local governments to schools</td>
<td>Devolution</td>
<td>Schools responsible for routine administrative decisions or more substantial powers. May include: maintenance, appointment of staff, school policy, development plans, curriculum choices, fund-raising and financial management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


45. Based on Rondinelli’s conceptualization of decentralization, deconcentration, delegation and devolution have been applied to the form or functional dimension where: deconcentration refers to the transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations and local units, local government or to non-governmental organizations; delegation refers to the transfer of some powers of decision-making and management authority for specific functions to units or organizations that are not under direct control of central government ministries; and devolution refers to the transfer of authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government such as municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983; Rondinelli, 1981 and 1999).

Education decentralization is a complex process that can result in major changes in the way education systems are organized, make policy, generate revenues and spend funds, manage schools, and develop and deliver the curriculum (Fiske, 1996). The main shifts in management functions across sub-Saharan Africa appear to be administrative, mainly the deconcentration of responsibilities from the central government to intermediate levels. Table 10.1 provides a typology of these shifts.

Different management functions that are being distributed, to varying degrees, among the levels of the education management system include functions such as the organization of instruction (textbooks, teaching methods, curricula, schedule); personnel management (hiring/firing, pay, assigning teaching responsibilities, pre- and in-service training); planning and structures (school openings/closings, course content, school improvement plans); resource management (expenditures, budget allocations); and monitoring and evaluation (inspections and supervision, examinations). Ultimate curriculum authority, personnel management and financing responsibility remain firmly located at the center in most countries, whereas the responsibility for providing the service is actually moving down into the system. This partial transfer of responsibility reflects a desire to ensure that national educational development goals and equity objectives remain under the purview of the central authority. Yet current initiatives represent important steps in shifting educational decision-making closer to the locus of action (i.e., the school and the classroom). Deconcentration and/or devolution reforms of the last ten years have strengthened the autonomy and decision-making power of many schools, encouraged the development of local leadership and administrative competence, introduced effective methods for community participation, improved capacity and systems to monitor and assess performance, and, in some cases, changed funding and financial management arrangements.

Problems that have slowed this process include limited resources, bureaucratic resistance, low capacity of local government, and lack of consultation and coordination between different levels of government. In several countries sub-regional or district offices have failed to fulfill their mandates owing to lack of adequately trained personnel, essential resources, absence of administrative systems and controls, overwhelming multiple demands and lack of clear defi-

47. The appendix to this chapter provides details of the shifts in management responsibility in selected SSA countries.
nition of roles. Moreover the effect on equity has been mixed. In some cases the distribution of funds between regions has become more equitable and additional resources have been targeted towards marginalized groups. However, almost everywhere differences in expenditure per student between well-off and disadvantaged remain or have widened.

Towards school-based management

School-Based Management (SBM) is the farthest going form of decentralization and one that is adopted by an increasing number of countries. Several education decentralization initiatives (e.g., Uganda, South Africa, and Senegal) have focused more directly on educational management reforms at the school level (See Box 10.1. Uganda’s experience). Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, schools are expected to become increasingly self-managed, and make decisions regarding curriculum, budget and resource allocation, and staff and students (Abu-Duhou, 1999). SBM is expected to improve the quality of teaching and learning by locating decisions closer to the school, allowing teachers to design education programs to meet local needs and to support improvement in learning. At this point, in sub-Saharan Africa, it includes a variety of initiatives that enable school- or community-based structures to assume powers related to school and educational decisions more broadly.48

School grants

School grant funds have become a popular mechanism to increase the involvement of school and community stakeholders in decision-making on school improvement in a context of education decentralization. Money is sent straight to the school often as a (conditional) block grant or to fund proposals designed to support the improvement of education through inputs such as infrastructure, equipment and teacher development. In reviewing 37 school grant programs (16 of which were in Africa), Roberts-Schweitzer et al. (2002) found that the grant mechanism was an enabling instrument for creating conditions that can lead to a responsive education system, acting as a catalyst for change and empowerment. Positive outcomes include devolution of decision-making power to the local level, addressing democratization and accountability through the empowerment of school management committees or local government structures, responding quickly to crisis situations where funding may be absent.

48. Community involvement is dealt with more directly in the next section.
and local administration is weak, and ensuring sustainability of investments through local involvement. These experiences also suggest that grant schemes, which contribute to capacity for improved teaching and learning, can improve the overall quality of education.

**Box 10.1. Uganda: Devolution of financial management to school management committees**

At the heart of the decentralization process in Uganda is the question of resources. Before decentralization, the central government decided how funds were to be utilized and remitted them directly to the department in the district, with the district authorities having no control over their use. With the Universal Primary Education policy, school fees levied on parents have been abolished and the schools receive a UPE capitation grant from the government. Uganda’s grant system is calculated centrally and released as a conditional block grant to districts, which in turn, release all funds to schools on the basis of enrollment. The ministry has also released guidelines to schools for allocation of funds, for example, 50% for scholastic materials, 5% for administration, and so on. The grant system provides about four dollars per child per year for children in grades one through three and six dollars per child per year for children in the next four years. The government pays teachers’ salaries and textbooks, but the grants are used to fund other school needs. The school management committee manages the money at the school level. Improved financial management depends on training and sensitization workshops for all the actors to appreciate the structures and guidelines of record keeping and accountability. The program aims to provide: (i) full community participation and decision-making without making unrealistic and unfair demands on the poorest, (ii) decentralized procurement which maximizes use of the local expertise and, (iii) targeting the poorest communities through a system of ranking and prioritizing neediest schools.

At first there were problems with grants reaching schools in time, and parents’ perceptions that they were not adequately involved in the SMC. To address this, amounts received from the district office are now posted publicly in the school and any parent or community member of the community can access the records of how the money is spent. Regular audits also ensure that the funds reach the schools and are utilized for the purposes intended. Key problems that remain include sharing information about allocations at all levels of the system, supporting school management committees, and providing adequate funding to overburdened district education offices. Despite these problems, Uganda’s UPE Program and SMCs have provided an effective means for the participation of parents in democratic decision-making in education.


Tanzania’s CEF Program (Box 10.2.) is an example of a school development program implemented in the context of decentralized management that employed matching grant financing. It initially encountered a number of problems that were later rectified by better targeting. The CEF is now submerged
into the overall capitation grant scheme being used in pursuit of quality improvements in the education system.

**Box 10.2. Tanzania: The Community Education Fund (CEF)**

The Community Education Fund (CEF), a component of the Human Resources Development Project (HRDP), was introduced in 1998. The program expanded from 372 schools in 1999 to 1,642 schools across 16 districts (reaching approximately 685,000 students) in 2001. The CEF matches funds mobilized at the community level with a government grant, to support implementation of a school plan developed by the community, in collaboration with the school staff. While the CEF was quite successful from the outset, it soon became clear that the poorest communities and weakest schools were not being reached, mainly due to the inability of poorer schools and communities to generate funds needed to receive the matching grant, weak school management, inexperienced community organization, and bureaucratic rigidity in matching community contributions. To address the problems, a more flexible approach was adopted. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the districts developed criteria to target the economic poorest and organizationally weakest communities for matching funds. District councils were required to set aside funds for the weakest schools to attract matching grants at a slightly increased ratio (1:2, 1:3, etc). Out of a total of 1,642 CEF schools, 151 weak schools were identified, with district council pledges amounting to some Tshs, 97,514,000 (about $100,000). This is about Tshs 500,000 per school ($500), but in some instances amounting to as much as Tshs 5 million (or $5000). For example, in a weak school in Kibaha, Kipangege school, parents raised $133, the district council (DC) then provided $2000, which was matched by the CEF at a 1:2 ratio, totaling $4200, from which the community is constructing two teachers’ houses and has purchased 20 desks and office materials.

The Project Status Report presented by the Government of Tanzania in July 2002, identified the following achievements of the CEF: (i) Increased parental involvement and contributions: unit contribution per pupil increased from 1,115 Tshs in 1996, to 3,007 Tshs in 2000; (ii) increased enrollment: gross enrollment for CEF districts increased by 30% between 1998-2001, and 15% for non-CEF districts; (iii) improved attendance: from 82% in 1998 to 93% in 2001; (iv) improved student achievement: from 20% of students scoring A-C in PSLE in 1996, to 35% in 2001; and (v) reduced drop-out rates: from 2.4% in 1995 to 1.5% in 2001.

Despite its successes, it is clear that even with additional support the poorest communities and weaker schools struggle to implement their plans. The strategy to target the poor tended to be over-general and should have been aimed at specific poor communities and not the entire district.


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49. This account of the CEF Program is based on a World Bank Aide-Memoire: TANZANIA Human Resources Development Program (HRDP) I Supervision Mission December 12 - 18, 2001, and communications from World Bank staff including Donald Hamilton, Adriana Jaramillo, Rest Barnabas Lasway, and Soren Nellemann and the Tanzania country case study.
Experience with grant schemes in sub-Saharan Africa emphasize that a number of basic implementation issues and equity concerns in the distribution of funds and use of community contributions have to be addressed. Experiences in Tanzania, Guinea and other countries indicate that particular attention should be paid to issues such as (i) sufficient technical assistance and time for weaker schools or regions to fully benefit and compete on an equitable footing for funding, (ii) monitoring of learning outcomes, (iii) weighing the appropriateness of community contributions and regarding them as a substitute for government funding, (iv) inequities in the distribution of grant funds, and (v) level of implementation capacity. Addressing these issues calls for grant schemes to be part of a broad government reform strategy aiming to ensure a basic management capacity and supply of resources for all schools.

**Community involvement**

Africa has some of the world’s strongest communities, yet education delivery takes place primarily through functionally and physically remote government structures. This situation prevails despite the greater attention to community-based approaches in contexts where most communities are rural, dispersed, isolated by poor physical and communications infrastructure, and have heterogeneous needs and priorities. There is growing recognition that local initiatives, which bring the school and community closer together, can generate a sense of ownership, enhance accountability, and ensure that content, scheduling, and educational requirements are accurately identified and adapted to local conditions. In the process, community support for education can play a central role in efforts to raise participation rates, and improve school retention and learning outcomes (Watt, 2001).

Community participation ranges from familiar forms of support such as community involvement in construction to more active involvement in management, planning, and learning. Community participation in sub-Saharan Africa is becoming multi-faceted, although the ability of communities to participate in and support education varies widely, and not surprisingly its impact is often uneven. Some well-resourced, highly motivated, and cohesive communities are single-handedly financing and managing education on an ongoing basis. Other communities lack the resources to make anything more than a minor contribution to the costs of education or are unable or unwilling to work together (Watt, 2001). Parents/Students’ Associations (PAs/APEs), and community-based school management committees, nevertheless, constitute one of the most striking features of the community’s participation in basic education. In Mali,
NGOs are supporting the operation of the Centers of Education for Development (CED), while the community, which sets up a management committee, pays teachers. In Guinea, a seven-person management committee designated by the community oversees the NAFA centers, or second-chance schools, for 10- to 16-year-olds not in regular schools. The management committee ensures the provision of premises and the enrollment of 60 to 90 children and is responsible for paying of the organizers (Niane, 2004). In Senegal, as part of the “faire-faire” strategy, community schools are playing an important role in providing greater access to education for at risk youth (Box 10.3.).

Box 10.3. Local Community Schools (ECB) in Senegal

These were initiated in Senegal in 1992-93 by two NGOs, ADEF-Afrique and Aide et Action, and were subsequently adopted in 1996 as a basic component of the alternative models tested by the ministry responsible for alternative education programs. They are currently in use by a number of private and community-based operators subsidized by the ministry and a large number of NGOs, including PLAN International and RADI. They target youth age 9 to 15 who were never enrolled in school (and are illiterate) or who left school early (school dropouts and others not enrolled). There are three goals of the pedagogical approach used: the integration of young people into socio-economic activities in their environment, continuing secondary school study, and pre-vocational training or integration into certain jobs. The model is based mainly on: (i) the design and self-management of the school by the local community; (ii) the inclusion of children aged 9 to 15 who are not enrolled or have dropped out, in particular girls, for a 4-year educational cycle, the equivalent of six years of elementary school; (iii) the use of national languages as the main language of instruction and French as a second language; (iv) support for the “basic adolescent education” program by the “adult literacy” program; (v) a coordinated “parents school/children’s school” approach, and (vi) the use of learning methods focused on promoting the environment.


In a review of community participation in Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Togo, factors that were identified as having a positive impact on community participation include a positive perception of basic education; regular and stable household incomes; a history of social mobilization, community organization and leadership; educational involvement beyond financial contributions; external support and development mechanisms in the community; the presence of community role models whose social status derives from their education; community involvement in the decision-making process; government aid and abolition or regulation of school fees; high student achievement; and communication among the MOE, communities, and school staff. On the
other hand, community participation was seriously hampered by poverty, illiteracy, lack of jobs for school graduates, and ignorance of the concept of free schooling (ERNWACA, 2002).

Community schools are particularly important in terms of greater community participation and decentralization. International and local donors and NGOs (some with governmental partners) support a variety of community-school models in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia in attempts to achieve universal access to basic education and to improve quality. The two main community school models in sub-Saharan Africa are creating new, community-managed schools and strengthening community management to revitalize existing public schools. For newly created schools, there are those that resemble public schools (in curriculum, textbooks, schedule, exams, teachers, teaching styles, supervision, etc.) and those that function as an alternative system in all or some of these areas. Community schools are seen as cost-effective (comparable or even better instructional services for less money), and community participation is expected to improve educational quality and student achievement. Community schools have contributed to increased access, enrollment and quality of education, improvements in gender equity, more relevant curriculum, improved attendance and promptness of teachers and students, improved infrastructure, increased government or external support, better government-community relations and partnerships, more effective parents’ associations or PTAs, and, communities and parents that are more involved in education (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002).

The types of community schools and government relationships with community schools vary from country to country. In Zambia there are over 700 community schools that are the result of the population’s desire to send their children to nearby schools, which are less expensive and less rigid than traditional schools. These schools are open to under-privileged children and place emphasis on the acquisition of the basic principals of reading, writing, arithmetic, and relevant life skills. In Mali, 10% of primary school children are enrolled in community schools, many of which resemble public primary schools. Transforming community schools into those administered by local communes (local government offices) and receiving communal funding is part

50. The kinds of community schools that this chapter focuses on in the context of community involvement and decentralization are community schools that have a connection to the public primary education system to distinguish them from community “schools” that form part of non-formal education.
of the educational decentralization process in Mali. Community schools, or écoles d’initiative locale (EDIL), make up about 20% of all primary schools in Togo. Although the écoles communautaires de base (ECB) in Senegal are part of non-formal education, students who graduate from ECBs can move into the public system. Many community schools exist in Ethiopia, and local officials are increasingly involved in community school programs. Ecoles spontanées in Chad are created and financed by village communities where there are no public schools (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder, 2002). However, many of the schools are often under-funded, of low quality and a poor substitute even for under-performing government schools.

For community support to education to realize its full potential, several key conditions must be in place. All the education stakeholders involved – communities, government, teachers, and often NGOs – must accept the need for change and be prepared and able to listen, learn and collaborate. Governments need to ensure that in all schools the basic conditions for effective learning can be met and that community efforts add to, rather than substitute for, what has been provided through public funds. Equity and quality objectives can be met only if this is recognized and acted upon to ensure that communities participate effectively in education development across sub-Saharan Africa. There must also be recognition that community support is a process in which risks as well as rewards need to be shared. In Madagascar the contributions of each party are formalized in a program-contract (see Box 10.4.). In many cases, sustained capacity building efforts are needed before communities can participate effectively. Some communities may lack the skills and confidence to contribute to school management, while others may lack the cohesion and experience of working together to reach collective decisions. The focus should always be on building a skills base at the administration, school and community levels that ensures engagement with the school over the long term. Where these conditions are in place, communities are likely to make a full and effective contribution to education (Watt, 2001).

**Diversification of education provision**

National, regional, and local education authorities have an obligation to provide basic Education for All, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement. With public funds for education stagnant or shrinking across sub-Saharan Africa, achieving the Education for All goal of universal quality education faces severe constraints. New and
Box 10.4. The program contracts (PC) in Madagascar

Program contracts have been tried out in particular in Madagascar and are based on local traditions of agreement and commitment. The strategy is based on a bottom-up, participatory approach with the steady empowerment of the community and its increasing involvement in the life of the school. The community is responsible for identifying its education needs. Each contract (which is a school project that defines each party’s tasks and responsibilities) in principle concerns five parties: the village community, the teachers, the school principal, the school district (“CISCO”) and the support project. Out of the 12,330 public elementary schools operating in Madagascar, about 4,330 (34%) have adopted the program contract approach. These are broken down into 63 “CISCOs” (56% of 111 districts). Parents and the community have become more aware of their role and power in a fruitful partnership, which is reflected in improved follow-up of pupils by the families, who contact teachers more frequently.

The Malagasy experience indicates that successful scale-up of the program contract approach requires mobilization to create awareness of the importance of schooling and provide information to communities; adapting program contracts to the realities of the local and/or regional context; clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of each contracting party; drawing on existing local structures to ensure contracts are met and the management (of money and supplies) is transparent; setting up monitoring systems that include administrators, school personnel, and community members; and a participatory approach to support community skills and motivate contracting parties at community level so as to encourage them to honor their commitments (e.g., providing classrooms in good condition, materials for teaching and training, and enough qualified teachers).


revitalized partnerships at various levels can help meet this challenge – partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families. With the demand for education outpacing supply, the gap has been reduced through partnership arrangements, private provision and alternative delivery systems.

Private provision

Private schools found in most sub-Saharan countries are expanding, given the state’s difficulty in ensuring adequate provision. For example, Côte d’Ivoire now put 60% of its secondary schools in private hands, a trend the government actively supports through the provision of financial incentives. Furthermore, in a number of countries the demand for private provision is growing as more and more parents perceive those schools to have better quality and account-

51. In Madagascar, the «dina» is an oral or written agreement made between community members (fokonolona) and is accepted by all the contracting parties as having the force of law, with sanctions (social or financial) for any breach.
ability. The sub-Saharan experience with private schools is of importance for a broader strategy to diversify sources of funding and service provision and enhance school autonomy. It is in fact a form of stakeholding – of building loyalty among partners who receive a specific targeted service (Niane, 2004). Studies have indicated that private schools are more likely to use local decision-making power to improve learning conditions, and they generally outperform public school students on standardized tests; unit costs of private schools are lower than those of public schools (Jimenez et al., 1991). Experiences with private provision can suggest how gains in public school efficiency and effectiveness may be achieved by adopting successful management practices employed in private schools (Republic of Gambia/DOSE, 2004).

Alternate provision: partnerships and outsourcing
Outsourcing (i.e., contracting with external providers) is another way to involve the private sector. It is usually done through a bidding process, where the winning group enters into a contract with the responsible government agency to set up and implement a project within a larger program. In education, outsourcing has been used to implement services such as school transport, canteens, cleaning, and maintenance, and to set up infrastructure and support programs (Nordtveit, 2003). Many argue that outsourcing services may be preferable to government-implemented programs, not only because specialized providers are more efficient but also because the services provided are user-friendlier, since the providers are often community-based and can interact with villagers to provide services that are based on actual demand and need. This approach is described more fully in Box 10.5. describing the faire-faire strategy used in Senegal.

Distance education
Distance education, which is very different today, given the advances in information technology, offers much more promise in decentralized education systems than in the place-bound centralized systems of education of the past. Distance education can reach people who would otherwise be deprived of learning opportunities, owing to physical distance, cultural context, societal expectations, organizational or infra-structural conditions, or personal constraints that block access to education (Visser, 1994). As a result, distance education is playing an increasingly prominent role in sub-Saharan Africa. There is considerable use of distance education to extend access to formal education, although most public institutions have often been constrained by lack of
Box 10.5. Senegal: The “faire-faire” strategy

In 1991 Senegal developed a policy and action plan to address the challenge of increasing access to education while paying attention to quality. It included greater participation and empowerment of grassroots actors through a “faire-faire” (outsourcing) strategy, designed to bring about a partnership between government and civil society organizations by decentralizing the delivery of education and diversifying the providers. The government retained responsibility for regulating providers, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating program implementation, and mobilizing and allocating resources. Civil society organizations became responsible for designing and implementing programs, building community capacity and action-research focused on learning improvement. Communities participated in identifying needs, and taking part in and developing local arrangements for management and follow-up. Diversifying the educational supply involved more than a dozen adult functional literacy programs and alternative models for young people’s education, which have made it possible to enroll more than a million learners. About 20 billion CFA francs in new funding were obtained for the sector. The literacy rate increased from 31.1% to 53.9%. Based on its openness to the local environment and to pedagogical change, “faire-faire” has made it possible to provide basic training opportunities responding to community demand, facilitate the introduction of national languages into elementary school, and integrate education and training programs into local development plans.

Key lessons from this experience include: (i) the development of partnerships should include coordination, support, sharing and participation; (ii) the formal frameworks for cooperation constitute the basic tools of the partnership and guarantee success; (iii) it is essential to build capacity and provide technical support to providers and communities; and (iv) close monitoring and evaluation based on information, monitoring of outcomes, the search for quality and multifaceted support is vital for success. The “faire-faire” strategy stands out as an innovative approach that leads to a new type of relationship between government and civil society organizations as they work together to manage and deliver education programs. It has mobilized substantial resources and involved people at every level, testing different policies for educational access and quality.


finances and human resources. In the anglophone countries (e.g., Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe) distance education covers mainly pre-service and in-service programs for teachers, while in the francophone sub-Saharan Africa countries (e.g., Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Senegal and Togo) it is being used more extensively for the professional development and in-service training of teachers, heads of schools, and inspectors.

Decentralization, diversity and a self-organized and emergent system of management offer further opportunities for sub-Saharan countries to derive the greatest benefits of distance education programs at all levels, especially in pre-service and in-service training of teachers. For example, Mauritius has
been successfully implementing a distance education program with 3,353 teachers going through the program since 1993. The program comprises a two-year part-time in-service course for primary school teachers leading to an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE). The program has tried to support attempts to achieve quality learning outcomes in Mauritius by ensuring that teachers use more effective instruction processes (Rumajogee et al., 2004).

Clearly, distance education can also help ensure that decentralization initiatives succeed by providing decentralized support where teaching and economic resources are not sufficient. Technological developments have greatly increased the number of media options currently available, and, depending on the particular context of individual countries in sub-Saharan Africa, they may have to adopt a range of different media, using each medium (print, radio, audio and video cassettes, and Internet) according to its particular strength in combination with face-to-face tutoring. Several countries involved in World-Links and SchoolNet Africa have adopted ICT instruction in the schools, especially in the countryside, in order to promote development in general and access to quality education in particular. Since its creation, SchoolNet Africa has helped build greater capacity for exchanges and sharing between national school networks and educators in 27 countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Niane, 2004). Despite current advances, it must be emphasized that the provision of adequate resources is key for distance education to continue to effectively support attempts at quality improvement in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Responding to the challenge of education management in sub-Saharan Africa**

Key actors involved in educational improvement initiatives in the region have recognized that for education management changes to make a difference to school quality and ultimately to learning outcomes for all students, key issues of organization of instruction, planning of programs, course content, financial management and personnel management need to be connected.

**The evolving organization of schooling**

Several recent initiatives related to decentralization and management are changing the way schools are organized and directly affect the learning and teaching process:52

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52. For specific details refer to the individual case studies that were commissioned for this ADEA study.
• **Local curriculum adaptation**: Some countries have created space for local curriculum adaptation. Experiences in Lesotho, Nigeria, Niger and Zambia highlight the role that teachers, school management, and communities can play in curriculum development.

• **Involving school management committees** in responsibilities beyond resource mobilization and classroom construction. In Guinea they play a prominent role in the management of the textbook program. In Madagascar the contributions of different stakeholders are formalized in a program contract.

• **Managing school resources**: In South Africa, Kenya Tanzania and Uganda, school management committees or governing bodies are responsible for the utilization of funds disbursed to schools by the national or state ministries of education. Funds are used for instructional materials and operating costs such as support staff salaries and maintenance.

• **Adapting school calendar**: Autonomy of schools to adapt the school calendar to local conditions. Community schools in Mali and Senegal enjoy strong community support in which the school becomes a village project. The community school model is accompanied in a number of countries by interesting innovations in adapting the school calendar, integrating local languages and developing practical community-based activities.

• **Monitoring and evaluation**: Programs in Mali, Benin and Guinea implement community-managed monitoring systems through which parents collect, analyze and use information to improve schools in their communities.

• **Moving responsibility for personnel management to lower levels**: In some Francophone countries attempts are being made to move the responsibility for personnel management to lower levels. In Guinea and Senegal alternative policies and practices have been adopted in recent years, and a partnership has been developed with local education authorities, who are encouraged to hire and pay teachers in exchange for government assistance and support. In Senegal, the government opted for a policy that allowed regional authorities to hire “education volunteers” as teachers outside civil service regulations and salaries.

• **Decentralized delivery of in-service teacher training programs**: A system of regular in-service workshops organized regionally or locally (Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania) to ensure regular participation by teachers and opportunities for practice and follow-up. Successful decentralization of in-service activities includes leadership development and the establishment of local resource centers and teacher groups, and school cluster networks (Guinea, Namibia, South Africa, Senegal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).
• **Involving teachers in quality improvement**: In Guinea and several other Francophone countries small grants programs enable teachers to become partners in the improvement of teaching and learning by initiating and carrying out their own professional development projects. With ministry personnel as facilitators, teams of teachers design projects and compete for small grants to carry them out.

Despite these promising examples, the decentralization of education management as implemented has not yet had a major impact on instructional practice. But the little evidence that is available provides some indications that the absence of a “clear connection between education management reforms and improved education quality” may be due more to problems of implementation (interventions have not been fully operationalized) than a failure of design logic (i.e., there is no connection). Establishing this connection in sub-Saharan Africa is difficult, since the experience is relatively recent and uneven and often focused more on resource mobilization than on improvements in quality. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that changes in education management alone will improve teaching practice and student learning. Decentralization and management reforms can contribute to improvements in service delivery and efficiency of resource utilization, but successful implementation will require improvement in the other intervening variables, such as leadership, teacher training, parent support, availability of resources, student and teacher motivation, and peer-group pressure (Hanson, 2000).

**Changing the role of national authorities in the management of education**

Decentralization and related changes at lower levels of the education system do not take place in a vacuum. The responsibilities of the different government levels and stakeholders in education need to be redefined and reallocated as new ideas emerge on what role the national government (ministry of education), sub-regional structures, schools, local communities and social partners should play in education. Significant changes in the role of central ministries of education in the management of education are a necessary part of decentralizing education sector management. A major decentralization issue is how to balance increased diversity, flexibility, and local control with the responsibility of the national education authorities for ensuring that an orderly provision of education occurs across a nation, and that it is equitable across regions and socio-economic and ethnic divisions (Abu-Duhou, 1999).
In centralized systems, national ministry functions usually cover the whole gamut of planning, program implementation, coordination, personnel supervision, monitoring, and evaluation. But in decentralized systems, the central ministry’s role changes from implementer to technical consultant and coordinator responsible for policy formulation, overall quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. As a result, new steering instruments and practices have been proposed in a number of countries. In Uganda for example, District Education Officers (DEOs) are responsible, in conjunction with communities, for the delivery of primary education, while the MOE focuses on policy-making, investment management, and quality assurance. In practice, DEOs are responsible for monitoring and supporting all primary schools in their districts. Through the District Service Commission, each district recruits and assigns primary school teachers, while payment of teachers’ salaries remains a central responsibility (Moulton, 2000). In Tanzania, the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government is responsible for delivering basic education through its district administration.

More central ministries are taking responsibility for overall accountability, making the systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of information critical elements. Information can be used to verify compliance with policy goals, to analyze alternative outcomes, and to guide future decisions. Information on financial flows (that is, budgeting and expenditure reporting) and other inputs, outputs, and outcomes is essential at the central level – to monitor and supervise local activities funded (at least partially) by central sources (Seddon and De Tommaso, 1999). The development of an EMIS system in Namibia, for example, has resulted in a well-maintained database of educational data and the production of education statistical data sets meeting information needs of users at different levels of the education system, the capacity to respond to ad-hoc requests for statistical information, and an increasing utilization of education statistics and other outputs of the EMIS (Voigts, 1999).

The central ministry and sub-national and school actors may share the responsibility for ensuring minimum educational standards necessary to safeguard equity of access and outcomes. Box 10.6. describes the way this is happening in South Africa. The central ministries generally plan the national curriculum and are responsible for national-level examinations. While textbook approval and procurement is usually centralized for efficiency reasons, distribution is often outsourced, and several countries (Uganda and Kenya, for example) have decentralized the choice of textbooks to the school level.
Box 10.6. Distribution of responsibility for education management in South Africa

Management and governance within the new education system reflect both centralization and decentralization tendencies, with responsibilities distributed across national, provincial, district and school levels. The central ministry of education (MoE) sets uniform norms and standards through legislation and regulations that prevail across all sites and is not directly involved in the management of provincial education structures, districts or schools but is responsible for funding the system. This is done through block grants to the provincial governments, which, in turn determine their own level of spending on education within national guidelines.

The provincial MoE is responsible for the management and organization of schools, while day-to-day management is located at the school. The province takes responsibility for evaluation and monitoring actors’ behavior within a national framework. As part of the decentralization process, all nine provinces have embarked on comprehensive organizational changes, including regional and district reorganization. All provinces have developed new local-level delivery structures or district offices. To support regional and district reorganization, there has been an on-going attempt to redefine roles and strengthen the capacity of district education offices to provide effective support to schools while simultaneously mobilizing schools to engage in self-improvement processes. District offices and officers are responsible for: effective organization and operations within education districts; providing effective curriculum, management, and governance support to schools and governing bodies; and functioning as an effective intermediary between schools and the regional and provincial education offices.

The devolution of power to the school level in terms of the South African Schools Act (1996) represents a real shift of power (in theory, at least) to a level where it previously did not exist. The act provides for the establishment of governing bodies (SGBs) with considerable powers at all public schools, including determination of admissions and language policy, making recommendations on teaching and non-teaching appointments, financial management of the school, determination of school fees and fundraising. SGBs are comprised of the principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and (in secondary schools) learners. The establishment and effective functioning of school management teams (SMTs) and SGBs is expected to empower educators to teach more effectively, enable principals to better manage and lead schools, and empower parent communities and SGBs to support governance and teaching and learning activities. Initial findings of the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance reveal a high level of parent involvement in budgets decisions, recommending teacher appointments etc. But the Committee also identified many cases where parents are not participating in SGBs (Soudien, 2003).


While the role of the central ministry as implementer is decreasing, it has at the same time an increasingly important role to play in management, financing, and general oversight of the system. In reflecting on the changing role of
central ministries of education, it is important to draw a distinction between provision of education services and financing. The first deals with delivering and managing the education services, while the latter relates to the source of funding to operate the system. Since local governments in Africa have little effective taxation power or revenue generation capacity, financing will have to remain a national responsibility. However, it does not follow that provision and management of education should also be a national responsibility. In fact, to address the challenge of achieving efficiency, equity and quality, responsibility for provision and management may have to be shared with local government authorities, schools, and communities (e.g., Mali, Tanzania and South Africa). This is especially important in sub-Saharan Africa, where efficient utilization of limited financial and human resources, and systemic accountability remain a big challenge. The biggest challenge in this regard is the management of the teaching force.

**Managing and supporting teachers**

In almost every sub-Saharan country teachers are the biggest category of civil or public service workers and account for most of the education budget (on average, 90% of education budgets are spent on teacher salaries), making the question of how best to manage teachers to maximize their effectiveness as educators of vital importance. Decentralization, local autonomy and SBM have been promoted as a means of empowering teachers, and improving performance and learning achievement, but they have also been criticized for negatively impacting teachers. In Senegal, for example, the regionalized employment of contract teachers has been seen as a means of undermining the security of civil servants. In South Africa, some teacher unions welcomed devolution to schools, while others opposed mandates that gave greater powers to school governing bodies over teacher appointments and evaluation. Such contrasting positions with regard to decentralization and its impact on teachers are not unexpected, since power relations are altered and teachers begin to lose part of the influence they have at national level (through the action of unions) as they become more exposed to immediate pressures from administration, head teachers and parents at the local level (van Zanten, 2002).

At the same time, centralized systems have proven to be particularly weak in dealing with day-to-day administrative tasks relating to teachers such as responding to grievances, keeping records and processing reassignments and promotions (Gaynor, 1998). Decentralization is helping to address problems in deploying and utilizing teachers, monitoring and supervision, and other
management arrangements. Yet, paradoxically, it may also exacerbate problems. There is evidence of a frequent lack of administrative resources and skills at intermediate and school levels. Furthermore, uncontrolled decentralization and local favoritism may contribute to disparities in teacher deployment. Devolution of personnel management powers has considerable risks and requires mechanisms for mutual accountability and coordination at all levels (Göttelmann-Duret, 1996).

Decentralization also poses immense challenges for teachers at a more individual level. Teachers may be ill-equipped to manage the changes in education decision-making and may feel that their professional status is threatened by community involvement in school affairs. This reflects that in many African education systems, accountability tends to be directed upward rather than downward. Changes in education financing, teacher hiring and firing procedures and school inspection will often be needed to redirect accountability downwards to the community from which teachers draw their students. This means that the balance of decision-making power among teachers, ministry officials, and the community must be renegotiated (Watt, 2001).

Several countries have adopted policies to decentralize certain administrative responsibilities, which hold promise for improving education delivery and performance. Improvements include the “uniformization” of databases and processes of data collection on teachers, computerization of information systems for educational management, and elimination of ghost teachers from the payroll. Decision-making powers have been devolved, particularly to the intermediate level (e.g., the district in Uganda and/or the region in Ethiopia, South Africa, Botswana and Malawi). School heads, and in some cases school boards (South Africa) as well as local councils (Uganda), have also been given an important say on matters concerning teacher deployment and recruitment (in Guinea, the prefectures are to be responsible for recruiting new teachers).

**Strengthening accountability, supervision and support**

Accountability, supervision and support play a key role in improving the quality of education. Most sub-Saharan countries adopted supervision systems

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53. Supervision is generally understood to mean an external intervention that encompasses evaluation, instructional support for the teachers, and administrative control of the school and teachers. Administrative-type inspection is usually treated separately and is not discussed directly, although it is an area that is impacted by decentralization, especially as it relates to deconcentration of administrative functions.
based almost entirely on French or British systems. These colonial models share a concept of school organization in which the central administration plays a preponderant role and school personnel merely act as agents. While most developed countries have transformed their supervision systems, the majority of sub-Saharan countries have maintained the inherited models. This has resulted in an inspectorate in most sub-Saharan countries that is essentially evaluative and motivated by a desire to control rather than support teaching and learning. Supervision and support assume even more importance with the present trend towards increased school autonomy. As schools begin to acquire greater autonomy and decision-making power over curriculum, staffing, and budget, the demand for supervision and support services changes. Schools and communities are ill-prepared to manage new responsibilities. Yet, inadequate attention has been given to preparing school management teams, school leaders, or district and regional administrators to carry out new, and often, increased responsibilities (Moulton, 2004). Recent research emphasizes that improving the quality of education is not simply a question of injecting more resources (learning and teaching materials, teachers, or teacher training) into the system but that the management of these resources at school level, the in-school relationships between head teacher and teachers, among teachers and between teachers and pupils, and the relationship between these in-school actors and their immediate supervisors, such as school inspectors and pedagogical or curriculum advisors, are equally important. In fact, an important determinant of school quality relates to the effectiveness of professional supervision and support for teachers (IIEP, 1996; Chapter 8 in this volume).

Decentralization poses an opportunity and challenge for supervision. The work of supervisors involves a number of sources of tension, which are heightened with decentralization: administrative versus pedagogical, supervision versus support, and central administration requirements versus the school level priorities. Supervisors tend to be concerned with the administrative aspect of their role and emphasize supervision and administrative control to the detriment of support, and, the expectations of central government over those of the school (Brunet, 2004). This fits poorly with the trend towards decentralization and increased school autonomy. In response, many supervision systems are undergoing structural changes based on the realization that supervisors are too far from the school to provide adequate support for teaching and learning. Countries increasingly are adopting in-school or community-based strategies (e.g.,
resource centers, clusters, and supervision by principals, peers, and school management committees) to complement or even to replace external support and supervision (Chapter 8). In Mauritania and Ghana, for example, greater control has been given to head teachers over accreditation and certification, reducing the role of supervisors in certification.

Among the main recurring problems are an absence of appropriate mechanisms for selecting competent supervisors and advisors, a lack or poor quality of training, the excessive number and diversity of the tasks, the dispersion of the schools they serve, and a lack of resources. Despite the widespread problems, several positive practices are occurring. These include the new administrative and pedagogical framework in Burkina Faso, the release from courses of heads of schools with ten or more grades in Guinea, school management committees in Ghana, the use of job performance specifications in Senegal (see Box 10.7.), and Whole-School Evaluation in South Africa. These are not ideal models but provide the basis for discussion and appropriate action needed to support quality education. As attempts to improve management of education in sub-Saharan Africa continue—and in order to help the poorest performing schools or those with low quality resources, teachers and facilities—consistent and continued supervision is needed, but this should not be to the detriment of their autonomy. Decentralization of education management provides an opportunity for supervision to become a flexible and diversified system, which adapts interventions in accordance with the needs of schools, concentrates on the weakest ones and works towards supporting quality rather than control (Grauwe, 1998 and 2001).

**Strengthening the capacity to manage**

Weak capacity of the ministry of education, other education management structures, schools, and communities is a major obstacle to progress toward better quality teaching and learning (Moulton, 2004). Experience across sub-Saharan Africa indicates that capacity development must extend beyond school personnel and include non-teaching professional staff and community
Box 10.7. The use of job performance specifications in Senegal

The development of job performance specifications was used by Senegal to address concerns about the quality of instructional practice. The number of school visits by supervisors fell from year to year, with enormous disparities in supervision between regions. In response a system of incentives based on a clear task definition for each of the main groups of personnel (teachers, heads and supervisors) was developed. The core of this effort consisted of formalizing and publicizing the roles or tasks of each group and, in particular, the evaluation of performance.

While the task specifications for supervisors did not include any change in the nature of their roles, a much more specific framework for performance was set up, with a distinct emphasis on training and organization. Formalizing and publicizing their roles and functions was an essential part of the new approach.

As a result of the program, the pupils’ results improved but not without effort. The main difficulties were due to the absence of training in results-based management, to the teachers’ conservatism and to inadequate logistics. Despite the difficulties encountered, the results were telling: School organization improved with the introduction of new managerial instruments and a results-based approach. The improvements were seen at the level of school projects, the teaching team, partnerships, and the openness of the school to the local environment. The Senegalese experiment with job performance demonstrates that transparent management and empowerment of stakeholders is key in establishing a school culture that supports quality improvement.

Source: Niane et al. (2003)

stakeholders to support implementation. Administrators in central, regional and district structures need specialized training in curriculum, guidance, inspection, special education, examinations and testing, monitoring and supervision. Head teachers, teachers, and communities are also experiencing dramatic changes in roles and responsibilities.

Many administrators in central, regional and district offices lack management experience and skills. Most ministries are far from optimal in their organization and resourcing of the functions required to provide quality education to all children. Ghana, the Gambia, and Burkina Faso have taken the first step in systematically improving management by conducting a management audit. A recent World Bank project in Ghana focuses primarily on building capacity. It broadens the concept of management from one of sporadic training, equipment supply, and heavy technical assistance to one that includes incentives, procedures, accountability mechanisms, and systematic transfer of knowledge so that each unit of the system can manage its assets competently. The Gambia and Burkina Faso have analyzed the capacity of the ministry’s organizational
units with project implementation responsibilities (planning, budgeting, information technology, human resources, and quality assurance). The analyses looked at whether the unit had: (i) the right organizational home for tasks assigned to it, (ii) effective leadership, (iii) the needed financial and human resources (level and mix of skills), and (iv) adequate work practices (techniques, methods, and procedures). The key element is the coherence among all of these conditions.

In order to ensure that quality outcomes are achieved, capacity development of principals and teachers needs to focus on improvements in teaching and learning. Richard Elmore (2002: 40), highlights the challenge:

*You have to dramatically increase the skill and knowledge of teachers and principals. I think that is what everyone needs to recognize about instructional leadership: It’s not just a matter of releasing people to do what they already know how to do. It’s making available the skill and knowledge for people to do things that they have not yet been able to do or not yet learned how to do, and that involves connecting people to sources of knowledge and skill outside of their own workplace; connecting people within the workplace to develop knowledge and skill; and substantially increasing professional development that is instructionally focused and designed to enhance student learning.*

Capacity constraints may be exacerbated with decentralization. A study of five Sahelian countries, for example, points out that decentralization initiatives in West Africa created major new local level training needs – needs which the existing school system could not meet on its own. A variety of actors require new skills and knowledge in order to play a meaningful role as participation in the management and provision of education expands. This includes national capacity to define policy objectives and specify performance expectations and local capacity to support schools, identify low performing schools and plan and implement effective targeted remedial action.

Failure to address civil society’s capacity-building needs may jeopardize the success of any real decentralization effort. In Uganda, empowering communities and parents to play an active role in local schools required the training of more than 50,000 community mobilizers, headmasters, and teachers in

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54. The PADLOS-Education Study (Easton et al., 1998) was conducted by means of a series of case studies carried out in five West African countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Senegal.
support of Universal Primary Education. Civil society institutions carry out important roles, including mobilizing input for national development plans; helping improve the delivery of education at the community level (through activities such as participating in school management and PTAs), supporting teachers, producing learning materials, encouraging attendance, operating schools (especially where no government schools exist), and serving to create the demand for, and as an instrument of, accountability and transparency of policy and use of resources (Easton, et al., 1998).

Although capacity building is key to a successful implementation, decentralization and education management initiatives cannot be endlessly delayed owing to lack of capacity. Capacity building and implementation may have to be carried out concurrently. Capacity development programs should be flexible enough to accommodate contextual variations across the country, focus on both short- and long-term objectives, and go beyond technocratic aspects and attend also to power relationships and political processes. Capable ministries enable schools and communities to respond to their changing environment by trying new approaches and adapting functions and structures (Moulton, 2004).

**Conclusion**

Education decentralization has in many cases not yet led to better quality education, improved governance, or greater efficiency in resource allocation or service delivery. This is not unexpected, given that improving education quality while maintaining the integrity of the national education system and ensuring equity is a much greater challenge than administering expansion of enrollments (Chapman and Adams, 2002). The challenge is greater still in sub-Saharan Africa, because most education management changes as initially conceived within the context of decentralization hardly touched key management issues relating to the organization of instruction, planning of programs, course content, financial management of funds, and personnel management. This is changing with a greater focus on efficient management at all levels of the education system, from the center down to the school level, in support of quality improvement. The lessons of the experiences reviewed in this chapter can be summarized as follows:

- A large number of countries have embarked on education decentralization, often within a context of a broader national policy. The process is mainly being implemented in three ways: administrative deconcentration, diversification of providers and differentiation of programs. It almost always
includes administrative decentralization, but the evidence suggests that this is an important but far from sufficient element in improving the quality and efficiency of service delivery. The deconcentration process needs to be supported by deliberate efforts to involve communities in the process of schooling and the provision of direct support to schools.

- A range of alternative education structures and program delivery mechanisms are being experimented with to ensure responsiveness to the needs and the priorities of people in different social, cultural and economic contexts. The diversification of providers has been primarily through private for-profit and not-for-profit providers (NGOs and churches). Some countries are exploring the potential of support from the business community, while others make extensive use of outsourcing to private providers.

- Separating financing and provision will allow governments to tap the contribution of multiple sources of provision, provided public financing is structured in such a way that equitable access to good quality schooling for all is ensured. However, ensuring equality of educational opportunity with related equality in educational spending—or even allocation of above-average resources for those that are most disadvantaged—will require significant central funding even for locally implemented programs in almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where local resources are often limited, and income inequality is high.

- The restructuring of education management has important implications not only for the lower levels of the hierarchy, but also for the central services.

- A major challenge that few countries have tackled successfully is the improvement in the management efficiency, the deployment and the professional support to teachers.

- Effective restructuring will require sustained capacity development, including clear definition of roles and responsibilities, incentives for performance, continuous training and technical support at all levels of the system.

The role of central governments in promoting decentralization policies has invited contrasting interpretations. Some view government intervention as a necessary step aimed at challenging the self-interest of professionals and the inefficiency of intermediate layers of government (at state, district and local levels). For others, it is a confused attempt to devolve responsibility to individual schools, leaving them without the collective support structures they need and, ironically, leading to an increase rather than a decrease in bureaucracy (as each institution has to deal with administrative matters formerly
handled centrally) (Humes, 2000). Yet, viewing decentralization and centralization as alternatives or opposite solutions is shortsighted. What is required is a shift of mind-set from “either/or” to “both/and” thinking. This suggests an emphasis on a praxis-driven approach to decentralization, where the “solutions” are driven by problems/dysfunctionalities that are clearly identified and subjected to analytical scrutiny. Such a pragmatic approach would involve an understanding of who is or is not doing what, when, where, why, and how, and how efficiently it is or is not being done. Solutions/actions should flow from the answers to these questions and methodologies developed to tackle them. Any effective strategy will be a mix of central and decentralized action, as appropriate given national conditions. The center’s role may include stimulating and responding to local action, helping formulate general direction, gathering and feeding back performance data, focusing on selection, promotion and replacement, providing resources and opportunities for continuous staff development, and the like. The role of the local unit involves taking action, working on a shared vision, developing collaborative cultures, monitoring and problem solving *vis-à-vis* desired directions, responding to and being proactive with external agencies and events, and developing the habits and skills of learning organizations (Fullan, 1994).

However, management reforms alone cannot be expected to improve quality. They have to be part of a comprehensive package that includes resources for essential inputs, and support for effective instruction. A mix of political will (policy makers working together with stakeholders), technical inputs (competent policies and personnel in education) and economic factors (adequate resources) is essential. At the same time, there has to be congruency between “bottom-up” and “top-down” principles, emphasizing expertise, rights, and power of local communities while taking into account context and constraints. The process of restructuring education sector management in sub-Saharan Africa must continue to emphasize flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of different populations while ensuring equity in access and results.
Appendix – Typology of education decentralization in sub-Saharan Africa
Taking the interaction between level and degree of decision-making power into account, the following typology describes decentralization of education management reforms in sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 10.2 Decentralization of management functions by level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Regional/Local</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, accreditation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Operating recurrent budget,(^5) in-service training; provision of textbooks and supplies; construction of classrooms; building maintenance</td>
<td>Teacher evaluation; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, evaluation, accreditation; establishment of schools; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, evaluation; provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; operating recurrent budget; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, accreditation; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating recurrent budget; in-service training; provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; EMIS</td>
<td>Operating recurrent budget; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55. The recurrent (discretionary) budget excludes teacher salaries and is usually no more than 5 to 10% percent of the education budget in most of these countries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Regional/Local</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guinea</strong></td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; operating recurrent budget; in-service training; teacher payment, supervision, evaluation; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
<td>Promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Niger</strong></td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Operating recurrent budget; in-service training; teacher evaluation, accreditation; provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
<td>Promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nigeria</strong></td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; school organization; operating budget; in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS</td>
<td>Building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10.2 Decentralization of management functions by level (suite)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Regional/Local</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development of textbooks; construction and establishment of schools; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; operating recurrent budget; in-service training; provision of textbooks and supplies; building maintenance</td>
<td>Operating budget; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; school organization; operating budget; in-service training; teacher, supervision, evaluation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; school organization; operating budget; provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Education policy; planning; curriculum development; school organization; operating budget; pre-service and in-service training; teacher recruitment; payment, supervision, evaluation, accreditation; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; construction of classrooms; building maintenance; standardization of exams; promotion of pupils; EMIS; evaluation of school system</td>
<td>Planning; school organization; operating budget; in-service training; development and provision of textbooks and supplies; establishment of schools; building maintenance; standardization of exams; EMIS</td>
<td>Planning; operating recurrent budget; establishment of schools; building maintenance; promotion of pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 11. Monitoring performance: Assessment and examinations

By Thomas Kellaghan and Vincent Greaney

The World Bank policy paper of January 1988, *Education in sub-Saharan Africa, Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion*, placed a major focus on improving academic standards through the reform of examination systems. In June of the same year, Donors to African Education (now the Association for the Development of Education in Africa) signaled their interest in examinations when they set up a Working Group on School Examinations to study and promote the role of examinations in quality improvement.

Interest in assessment increased following the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in which student achievement was proposed as a major point of reference in judging the quality of education. In the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, national governments, organizations, and donor agencies recommitted themselves to a revised set of goals relating to Education for All (UNESCO, 2000b) which include “improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills” (goal 6) (UNESCO, 2002b). Since all countries are committed to ensuring that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, some form of assessment will be required to determine if this happens.

This chapter reviews the rationale for, and experience with, the use of assessment to improve quality in African education systems over the past two decades. Four categories of assessment: (i) public examinations, (ii) national assessments; (iii) international assessments, and (iv) classroom assessments, are described. Following this, the use of information derived from assessments and examinations in classrooms and factors that may inhibit it are discussed.

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56. Following this, studies of examinations in 14 countries were carried out and a report, “Using Examinations to Improve Education,” was prepared by the authors of the present paper and published by the World Bank (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992). The present chapter reviews what has happened in the field of examinations since then.
Public (external) examinations
Public (external) examinations have played a major role throughout the history of modern education in Africa. In most countries major examinations are administered by an agency outside the school at the end of primary schooling, after two or three years in secondary school, and at the end of secondary school. The examinations serve a number of important functions. First, they control the disparate elements of the education system and specify goals and standards for instruction. Second, they are used to select students in pyramidal education systems in which the number of places diminishes at each successive level. Third, the examinations have a certification function, though this is often lost sight of because of the emphasis on their use for selection. Fourth, examinations may serve an accountability function for teachers and schools. Finally, especially at the end of secondary schooling, they legitimate membership in the international global society, and facilitate the international mobility, of students (Kellaghan, 1992; Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992; Omolewa and Kellaghan, 2003).

The quality of public examinations in Africa
Many studies and official reports have identified inadequacies in current examinations. First, since most examinations are limited to pencil and paper tests, they ignore a variety of areas of knowledge and skill, often specified in curricula, which cannot be measured by these tests. Second, examinations place a high degree of emphasis on the achievement of cognitive skills (particularly language and mathematics at the end of primary schooling), and pay very little attention to practical skills. Third, there is evidence that items in many examinations measure achievement at a low taxonomic level (involving the recall or recognition of factual knowledge), rather than the achievements students are going to need in later life, such as the ability to synthesize material or apply knowledge to new situations (e.g., to make inferences, to develop a logical sequence of steps to solve a problem, to argue a case). Fourth, many examinations contain very little reference to the everyday life of students outside the school. Fifth, the quality of questions in examinations is often poor: they are poorly phrased, alternatives in multiple-choice tests are unsatisfactory, or scoring criteria lack clarity. Finally, candidates’ lack of proficiency in the language used in an examination may prevent them from demonstrating their competence in the domain being examined (ERGESE, 1986; Kellaghan and Greaney, 1992; Kelly, 1991; Little, 1982; Oxenham, 1983; Somerset, 1996).
There are two major implications of this situation. First, issues arise about the validity of the examinations, in particular the extent to which they are biased towards the testing of competencies needed by students continuing their education into the next cycle and so fail to adequately reflect the goals of curricula for students (a majority in most countries) who will not proceed to secondary education. And second, since teachers focus their teaching on what is assessed in an examination that has important consequences attached to performance, serious concerns have been raised about the character and quality of teaching and learning in schools.

Over the years, various attempts have been made in many countries to improve the quality of examinations. The improvements were often technical, designed to improve efficiency (e.g., the use of the multiple-choice format, machine scoring). A variety of other reforms have also been proposed to address the deficiencies outlined above (e.g., expanding the content of examination items, including items that require students to display higher order cognitive processing skills).

**Using data from examinations to describe student achievements**

Knowing how students performed on examinations can be useful to both policy-makers and teachers. Three sources of information about students’ performance in examinations are used in examination systems in Africa: chief examiners’ reports, other feedback mechanisms, and analysis to identify categories of pupils who perform poorly.

*Chief examiners’ reports.* Commentary on student performance on examinations is typically presented in chief examiners’ reports in which the strengths and weaknesses of a candidature, together with perceived deficiencies in teaching, are described. Reports vary considerably in quality, in the level of detail that they provide, and in the relevance of the information they yield for individual schools and teachers.

*Other feedback mechanisms.* A number of countries have developed other systems of analysis and feedback to schools on how pupils performed in examinations. Typically, the feedback provides information on the performance of candidates on individual items in an examination (Kyalo, 1997; Rharade, 1997; Somerset, 1987, 1988, 1996). Concrete advice may also be provided on how to address difficulties that candidates exhibited in their responses. The
information may be provided in a newsletter sent to schools, in workshops, seminars, and school visits (particularly to schools with poor results).

**Identification of categories of pupils who perform poorly.** Examination results can be used to identify differences in performance between boys and girls, between regions, between locations (urban-rural), between pupils from different language groups, and between schools. Although the reasons for these differences are complex and implicate socio-cultural and student background factors that may not readily be manipulated by political action, nevertheless the provision of guidance, support, and resources to poorly performing schools or districts by educational authorities can lead to improvement.

A much more radical and proactive role than providing information on the achievement of students is assigned to examinations when it is proposed that examinations be changed in the expectation that this in turn will lead to changes in the classroom. The proposal is based on the fact that an alignment can be expected to take place between what is taught in schools and the objectives of the examinations when high stakes are attached to examination performance (that is, when performance has important consequences for students, and often for teachers). It has been argued that if examinations cover important and relevant content and assess important knowledge and skills, teachers will adjust their teaching accordingly, and the quality of student learning will improve (see, e.g., Eisemon, Patel, and Abagi, 1987; Heyneman and Ransom, 1992; Little, 1982). But what is the evidence that changing public examinations will have these effects? This question is addressed by considering evidence relating to three more specific questions.

- **Will a change in the content areas examined result in a shift in the content to which students are exposed in class?**

  There is considerable evidence from a variety of countries that changes in examinations will affect the content to which students are exposed in class – the subjects that receive attention and the topics within subjects that are taught (Madaus and Kellaghan, 1992). In Kenya, the introduction of Kiswahili and practical subjects for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in the 1980s was reported to have resulted in a dramatic increase in the coverage of these subjects in schools in spite of a great many difficulties relating to facilities, textbooks, and teacher competence (Eisemon, 1990). Also in the 1980s, the replacement of multiple-choice items on sentence style and structure by an essay-writing component in the Com-
mon Entrance Examination (taken at the end of primary schooling) in Trinidad and Tobago had the effect of increasing the amount of writing tasks assigned by teachers during the year to provide students with experience in formulating arguments and applying their knowledge to new problems and issues (London, 1997).

- Is a change in examinations likely to result in an improvement in the level of student achievements?

There is little empirical evidence either to support or to challenge the claim that a change in examinations will result in an improvement in the level of student achievements. The most frequently cited study in this context is that of Somerset (1987, 1988), who examined the effects of reforms in the examination administered at the end of the basic education cycle in Kenya in the 1970s (see Box 11.1).

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**Box 11.1. Examination reform in Kenya**

In the 1970s, steps were taken to reform examinations at the end of primary school in Kenya. The content of the examinations was changed:

- To include fewer items that measured the memorization of factual information and more items designed to measure higher-order skills (comprehension, application); and
- To focus on the measurement of skills that could be applied in a wide range of contexts, in and out of school.

The changes were designed to affect how teachers prepared students for the examinations and, in particular, to encourage the teaching and acquisition of competencies that would be useful to the majority of pupils who would leave school after the examinations. Two types of information were provided to support these changes:

- **Incentive information**, comprising the publication of a district and school order merit list based on performance on the examination (league tables); and
- **Guidance information** based on an analysis of the performance of students nationally on individual questions, which was sent in a newsletter to all schools. The newsletter also explained changes in the content and skills covered in examinations, identified topics and skills causing problems, and suggested ways of teaching these topics and skills.

League tables are no longer published, because schools and districts were manipulating the system by presenting only the best students for the examination. The Kenya National Examinations Council continues to produce a newsletter, but lack of financial resources precludes sending it to all schools. It can, however, be purchased from the Council.

Source: Somerset (1987)
Unfortunately, data are not available that would allow us to determine if the performance of pupils in general improved as a result of the reforms, as scores each year were standardized (to a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 15). However, the available data did permit comparisons over time between the relative performances of candidates in different districts. While the initial impact of the reforms was to widen achievement differences between districts, this trend was reversed after the system had been in operation for four years: nearly all districts in which performance had been relatively poor showed striking gains relative to performance in other districts (Somerset, 1987).

- **Will a change in examinations result in a change in students’ cognitive processing skills?**
  
  A key objective of proponents of reform is to use examinations to develop higher-order cognitive processing skills in students. If examinations required students to display higher-order skills, would teachers shift the content and methods of their teaching to meet that demand?

  Evidence on the effect of examinations on the teaching and on students’ acquisition of higher-order skills is mixed. While data from the Kenya experience on this issue are not available, Eisemon et al.’s (1987) inability to discern a greater emphasis in primary school instruction on problem-solving, reasoning, and explanation following the introduction of the new types of item would not lead one to expect any great change in students’ cognitive processing skills. In a study in Swaziland, teachers’ approaches to the teaching of chemistry were not found to be related to the kinds of questions used in an examination in which three cognitive levels (recall, knowledge with understanding, handling information) were assessed (Rollnick, Manyatsi, Lubben, and Bradley, 1998).

  There is, however, some evidence that when guidance is provided to teachers in the preparation of students for examinations, and teacher understanding of the demands of examinations is developed in in-service training, the inclusion of tasks requiring higher-order cognitive skills in examinations may lead to greater emphasis on teaching these skills in classrooms, which in turn is reflected in superior pupil performance (Eisemon, 1990).

**The problems of high stakes examinations**

It should be borne in mind that the use of high-stakes examinations to lever educational change can have a number of negative, if unintended, conse-
sequences for school practice, whatever the quality of the examinations. These include narrowing of the implemented curriculum, neglecting what is not examined, emphasizing learning strategies that are superficial or short-term (such as memorizing, rehearsing, and rote learning), devoting a significant amount of time to test-preparation activities, a heavy reliance on extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation in student learning, and malpractice (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1996b; Kellaghan and Greaney, 1992; Kellaghan, Madaus, and Raczek, 1996; Le Mahieu and Leinhardt, 1985; Madaus, 1988; Madaus and Greaney, 1985; Madaus and Kellaghan, 1992). Of particular significance in the context of Education for All is the fact that teachers may focus their efforts on students who are most likely to succeed. This, in turn, may be associated with high rates of grade retention and early dropout (Ackers, Migoli, and Nzomo, 2001).

While disadvantages will continue to be associated with public examinations as long as high stakes are attached to performance, it is unlikely that there will be any diminution in their role or importance in most countries until education systems can accommodate many more students. In this situation, the goal should be to reduce negative effects associated with poor quality instruments, even if the negative effects associated with high stakes assessment cannot be eliminated.

**National assessments**

While public examinations are a long-standing feature of education systems, national assessments (sometimes called system assessments, assessments of learning outcomes) are relatively new (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1996a; Kellaghan, 2003; Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001a, 2001b). A national assessment may be defined as an exercise designed to describe the level of achievements, not of individual students, but of a whole education system, or a clearly defined part of it (e.g., fourth grade pupils or 11-year olds). The centerpiece of the assessment is the collection of data in schools. Usually students respond to assessment instruments and questionnaires in groups. Teachers may also be requested to complete questionnaires in which they provide information considered relevant to an interpretation of their students’ achievements.

**Using assessment for policy making**

National assessments were introduced in realization of the fact that the educational data on inputs to education that had typically been collected in the
past were often of little relevance or use to educational planners (Kudjoh and Mingat, 1993). National assessments would address this issue by providing information on the “products” or “outcomes” of schooling (e.g., student achievements, inequalities in the system), which, it was hoped, could be used in conjunction with input data to provide a sounder basis for policy and decision-making. The longest running and best-known national assessments are in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Chile. Developments in national assessment, most of which seem attributable to the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, did not occur in less economically developed countries until the 1990s.

The main issues addressed in national assessments are:

• How well are students learning in the education system (with reference, for example, to general expectations, EFA goals, the aims of the curriculum, or preparation for life)?

• Is there evidence of particular strengths or weaknesses in the knowledge and skills students have acquired?

• Do the achievements of subgroups in the population differ? Are there, for example, disparities between the achievements of boys and girls, of students in urban and rural locations, of students from different language or ethnic groups, of students in different regions, or students who drop out early or are repeating grades?

• To what extent is achievement associated with the characteristics of the learning environment (e.g., school resources, teacher preparation and competence, type of school) or with students’ home and community circumstances?

• Do the achievements of students change over time? This can be particularly important at a time of major change in the system (e.g., when number of students is increasing and the composition of the student body is changing; or when new subjects or curricula are being implemented) (Kellaghan, 2003; Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001b).

**National assessment activity in Africa**

A great deal of activity relating to national assessment was generated in Africa during the 1990s. Four major categories can be identified. Three involve similar activities in several countries: the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project; the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) project; *Programme d’Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs*
des Pays de la CONFEMEN (PASEC). In a fourth category, national assessments, which were not related to any of these projects, were carried out in individual countries.

MLA, which began in 1992, is a joint UNESCO/UNICEF initiative, and is part of the EFA assessment, which has as its objective constructing a comprehensive picture of the progress of countries towards EFA goals (Chinapah, 1997). In MLA I, the achievements of grade 4 pupils were assessed in literacy (reading/writing), numeracy, and life skills (relating to awareness and knowledge of health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene). In MLA II, grade 8 pupils’ achievements were assessed in mathematics and science. Common tests were used in all countries. In both MLA I and II data were collected on students’ backgrounds, school characteristics, and family backgrounds.

To date, MLA assessments have been carried out in more than 70 countries, 47 of which are in Africa (UNESCO, 2003). Forty African countries participated in MLA I and 11 in MLA II. By March 2003, reports had been published on the MLA I assessments of 18 sub-Saharan countries, and on the MLA II assessments of two. In addition to national reports, a separate report on MLA I for 11 countries has been prepared (Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mauritius, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia) (Chinapah et al., 2000). Only four of these countries had met their Jomtien learning target (i.e., 80% of learners should attain the defined learning competencies) for fourth grade pupils in life skills; two in literacy; and none in numeracy. Gender differences were small in all countries. With the exception of Mauritius, pupils in private schools performed better than students in public schools in all three learning areas. The ability of parents to assist learners in doing schoolwork was related to student achievement in most countries.

SACMEQ is a collaborative voluntary grouping of 15 ministries of education in Southern and Eastern Africa, working in close collaboration with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in Paris to build institutional capacity through joint training to carry out co-operative educational policy research (Ross et al., 2000;). Between 1995 and 1998, eight education ministries collected information in SACMEQ I on baseline indicators for educational inputs, general conditions of schooling, human and material resource allocation, and the literacy levels of grade 6 students. Teachers as well as students were tested, except in Mauritius and South Africa. Fifteen countries participated in SACMEQ II between 1999 and 2002: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland,
Tanzania (mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Seven national reports have been published, and 14 are in preparation.

As in the case of MLA, the results of SACMEQ assessments indicated that education systems were failing to meet the performance standards of ministries. For example, less than 30% of grade 6 pupils met specified minimum literacy standards in Namibia and Zambia (UNESCO, 2000a). Significant achievement differences were usually found between regions and between types of school within countries. Gender differences were not significant (Mioko, 1998).

PASEC, which was established in 1991 as a response to the Jomtien Conference, acts as a network for sharing information on educational evaluation instruments and results among Francophone countries. It encourages the involvement of senior decision-makers and of other stakeholders in the identification of policy issues and emphasizes the need to base decisions on reliable data, followed by a realistic agenda for action (including time-frames and cost estimates) (Kulpoo and Coustère, 1999). Initially, pupils in grades 2 and 5 were assessed in French and mathematics. Now pupils are assessed in all grades from 2 through 6. Since 1994, the same tests have been used in all countries. Data are also collected from pupils and teachers on a variety of school and background factors. PASEC differs from other national assessments in Africa in that in some countries pupils are assessed near the beginning (November) and end (May) of the academic year. Thus, it is possible to obtain some indication of growth during the course of the year, though this is possible only for pupils who survive in the system. Twelve countries have participated in PASEC: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, République Centrafricaine, Senegal, and Togo.

In addition to these three programs to support national assessment, several countries have carried out national assessments, which vary in their technical adequacy (e.g., Burundi, Eritrea, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia).

All the national assessments in Africa share a number of features. All involve education planners and managers, and all are designed to provide information for policy-making. All view capacity building and the strengthening of the policy-maker/researcher nexus as major objectives. All are sample-based and all adopt an input-output model of the education system and attempt to identify factors associated with achievement. Impact has been reported by assessment
teams or close associates for the assessment programs in a number of areas: in policy debate and formulation, in reviews of educational policy, in national education sector studies, in developing donor-assisted reform projects, in re-appraising the adequacy of resources, and supporting policy decisions.

**International assessments**
International assessments share many procedural features with national assessments, although they differ from them most obviously in the fact that they have to be designed to allow administration in more than one country (Beaton et al., 1999; Greaney and Kellaghan, 1996a; Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001b). They provide some indication of where the achievements of students in a country stand relative to the achievements of students in other countries, as well as evidence on the extent to which the treatment of common curriculum areas differs across countries.

Since the 1960s, over 60 countries have participated in international studies of achievement in reading, mathematics, science, writing, literature, foreign languages, civic education, and computer literacy. Few African countries have participated in these studies. This is not surprising. Participation by African countries in international studies that are pitched to conditions and standards in the industrialized world would seem to be of little value.

While MLA, PASEC, and SACMEQ were designed as national assessments, results have been reported in a way that permits international comparisons. However, to allow valid comparisons, instruments, target populations, sampling, and analyses would have to be identical in all countries. It is not clear that this always was the case.

A number of problems have been identified in international studies (Kellaghan and Greaney, 2001b). These exist whether the studies are carried out in Africa or elsewhere, though some are more likely to arise in developing than in industrialized countries. First, it is difficult to design an assessment procedure that will adequately measure the outcomes of a variety of curricula. Second, problems arise if it is necessary to translate instruments into one or more languages. Third, the populations and samples of students that are being compared may differ across countries (e.g., students in special education programs or with learning difficulties are excluded in one country, but not in another). Fourth, the ranking of countries in terms of the average scores of their students, usually the main interest of media, can be misleading, espe-
cially when the statistical significance of mean differences in achievement is ignored. Finally, while it might be argued that an examination of relationships between classroom inputs and student achievement in some countries may be relevant in other countries, one cannot assume that practices associated with high achievement in one country will show a similar relationship in another. Relationships between inputs, processes, and outcomes need to be examined in the context of individual countries (Chapman and Mählck, 1993).

Despite such problems, some countries may still be interested in participating in an international study. Certainly, there is much to be said for the experience in test construction, sampling, analysis, and report writing that an international comparative study can provide. Development and analytic costs may also be less since they are shared. If countries are interested in obtaining cross-country comparative data, there is much to be said for limiting participation to countries in which levels of economic and social development are similar. It should be noted, however, that many of the benefits of international cooperation can be obtained without going down the road of collecting international comparative data.

**Classroom assessment**

The assessment of students' learning in the classroom (both by teachers and by students themselves) is an integral component of the teaching-learning process. Much of this kind of assessment is subjective, informal, immediate, on-going, and intuitive, as it interacts with learning as it occurs, monitoring student behavior, scholastic performance, and responsiveness to instruction. In addition to ongoing teacher observation, it involves classroom questioning and dialogue, the marking of homework, and the use of portfolios. Its function is primarily formative. It occurs during learning (rather than when learning is presumed to be complete) and is designed to assist or improve students' acquisition of knowledge and skills. Its role is to determine students' current level of knowledge, skill, or understanding, to diagnose problems they may be encountering, to make decisions about the next instructional steps to take (to revise or to move on), and to evaluate the learning that has taken place in a lesson.

Classroom assessment may on occasion be more formal, as when teachers administer a quiz or end-of-term examination. Such assessment will have a summative function when, for example, the information derived from it is used to
make a decision about the retention of a student in a grade or promotion to the next grade. The information may also be reported to pupils, to parents, and to other teachers and individuals who may need to know about a student’s progress. Further, it may be used to evaluate the appropriateness of curriculum, methods of instruction, classroom organization, and textbooks.

The quality of classroom assessment
Despite its central role in the teaching-learning process, not a great deal is known about how teachers assess their students. There is evidence in the international literature, however, that the quality of teacher assessment may be deficient in many ways. Problems that have been identified include the use of poorly focused questions, a predominance of questions that require short answers involving factual knowledge, the evocation of responses that involve repetition rather than reflection, and a lack of procedures designed to develop students’ higher-order cognitive skills (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Madaus and Kellaghan, 1992). Observations of practice in African classrooms do not present a very different picture (Ackers et al., 2001; O-saki and Agu, 2002; Rollnick et al., 1998).

Several commentators attribute the assessment procedures that are prevalent in African classrooms to the nature of the teaching-learning situation, which is invariably described as one in which the teacher is dominant and pupils are passive. Teachers have been described as talking all the time throughout a lesson, leaving little opportunity for pupils to become actively engaged (Ackers et al., 2001; Bude, 1993; O-saki and Agu, 2002; Rollnick et al., 1998). Other explanations that have been offered for existing assessment practices include poorly qualified teachers, large class sizes, poor facilities, and a shortage of learning materials (including books) and of a place to store them (Carron and Châu, 1996).

The negative influence of public examinations on teaching and assessment has also been noted. Eisemon et al. (1987) observed that pupils were taught through drill, recitation, and exercises of a fill-in-the-missing-word type, all of which were designed to impart the factual information and techniques that they would need in a public examination. The use of “mock” examination papers (based on public examinations) was also considered to limit the scope of instruction to what teachers thought would be examined, leading to incoherence in lessons. Although repetition and dropout are complex in terms of their
causes and effects (see N’tchougan-Sonou, 2001), it is likely that teachers’ assessment practices, as well as public examinations, contribute to them.

**Improving classroom assessment**

If the observations on classroom assessment that have been outlined represent general practice, or even a significant amount of practice, in schools in Africa, then a sea change, not only in assessment practices but also in teachers’ general approach to instruction, will be required if assessment is to contribute significantly to the improvement of student learning. Teachers will need to increase their efforts to seek the active participation of students in their learning, to involve them more in the instructional-learning process, and to insist that they share responsibility for their own learning.

With some notable exceptions in Francophone countries, classroom assessment has received little attention in reforms that propose the use of assessment to improve student learning. However, given its central role in the teaching-learning process, and the disadvantages associated with high-stakes public examinations, improving classroom assessment practices should be accorded high priority in any reform that has as its objective the improvement of students’ learning.

**The use of school-based assessment in public examinations**

So far, classroom assessment has been considered in the context of day-to-day teaching in which information derived from assessments is used primarily for formative purposes. Assessment data generated in the classroom are also used for summative purposes (usually referred to as school-based assessment or continuous assessment), in which the data contribute to the grade students are awarded in an external public examination.

Among the criticisms made of public examinations are that they are limited in the time frame in which they are administered, in the knowledge and skills that are assessed, and in the techniques that are used. Any of these limitations could result in students not being given the opportunity to demonstrate their true level of competence. To address this situation, several examination systems in Africa have introduced, or are planning to introduce, an element of school-based assessment to their public examinations (see Box 11.2.).
Box 11.2. School-based assessment in Swaziland

In the 1980s in Swaziland, a conference of senior school and ministry personnel proposed that (i) school-based assessment deal with non-cognitive as well as cognitive development; (ii) national item banks be available to teachers to construct tests; (iii) clear guidelines for assessment be provided; (iv) procedures for recording and interpreting be common to all schools; and (v) standards be controlled statistically and moderated in school inspections.

School-based assessment was piloted in 16 schools in 1991 and 1992. In 1993, it was introduced to all primary schools for English and mathematics. Problems encountered included large classes, lack of time, lack of teacher competence (especially in the case of unqualified teachers), lack of remedial teachers to provide a back-up service, and the limited value for parents of reports based on the assessments.

A review of the public examination system by the Examinations Council of Swaziland and the National Curriculum Centre in 1994 set in motion the process of incorporating aspects of continuous assessment by teachers into the public examination system. For the past few years, a mark based on school-based assessment submitted by schools contributes 5% to a student’s score on the Primary Certificate Examination.

Reasons have been advanced both in favor of and against the use of the results of school-based assessment to determine student grades in what is primarily an external examination (Bude, 1997; Heyneman, 1988; Kellaghan and Greaney, 1992; Pennycuick, 1990a, 1990b; Wasanga, 1997). The following reasons have been advanced in support of its use. First, since school-based assessment is carried out over time and by a person who knows the student well, it is likely to provide a more valid and reliable appraisal of a student’s achievements than is possible in a single external terminal examination. Second, school-based assessment permits an extension of the range of curriculum topics which are examined (e.g., a student’s ability to plan and organize a project and persevere with it over time). Third, school-based assessment reduces the undesirable backwash effects of external examinations, since grades are not determined solely on students’ performance on the examination. Fourth, school-based assessment can make allowance for an atypically poor performance of a student on an external examination, due for example to illness. Fifth, school-based assessment can increase the level of pupil motivation and application throughout the year.

Several reasons have also been advanced why school-based assessment may not be appropriate in examinations when results are used for certification or selection. First, the use of school-based assessment when decisions about certification or selection are involved can change the nature of the relation-
ship between teachers and students from one that is essentially supportive and collaborative to one that is judicial. Second, the competence in assessment of many teachers is considered to be poor, or even if it is not, teachers often feel that they do not know exactly how to translate their informal judgments into more formal and public ones. Third, the standards used to grade students in school-based assessment are likely to vary, both between schools and between classes within schools. To address this issue, school-based assessment results may be “moderated” or scaled against written examination results. This, in effect, privileges the external assessment by making the school-based results conform to the standards and distributions displayed in the written examination. Fourth, teachers may be subjected to considerable parental pressure, particularly in small and closely-knit communities. Fifth, school-based assessment requires teachers to devote considerable time to assessment and record keeping. Sixth, school-based assessment gives rise to a variety of administrative problems for schools, such as what to do when students are absent for tests or when students transfer from one school to another. Seventh, teachers’ assessments are subject to a variety of biases relating to students’ gender, socioeconomic background, and personality characteristics. Finally, it is difficult, in some cases impossible, to apply school-based assessment to non-school-based candidates.

It is hardly surprising in light of these observations that the implementation of school-based assessment as a component of public examinations has proved problematic in several countries (e.g., Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda). While the aspiration and motivation to introduce it have been high, practical difficulties have on more than one occasion resulted in failure, postponement, or the limitation of the school-based element to a minimal, almost token, amount.

**Using assessment and examination information in the classroom**

There is much to commend in efforts to use data from examinations and national assessments to provide feedback on student achievements to policy makers, planners, managers, curriculum developers, textbook writers, and the general public. However, there is also a need to move from a macro- to micro-level in the use of the information that is generated. Although it may be widely agreed “that educational reforms live or die by the success of their implemen-
tation at the school level” (Verspoor, 1992, p. 23), educational plans invariably fail to pay adequate attention to this issue. This may be due, at least in part, to the fact that getting information to teachers, effecting changes in their behavior and helping them acquire new skills poses many challenges. Expectations that information from assessments and examinations (in publication of results, newsletters, workshops) will radically alter the culture of schools and substantially raise the achievements of all students need to be tempered by a consideration of the factors that may serve to frustrate the intentions of reformers. Unless these factors are recognized and addressed, policies involving assessment may be very limited in their impact on the quality of student learning. The factors discussed in this section are relevant to a consideration of reform proposals based either on public examinations or national assessments.

**Mode of intervention.** The most common mode of intervention involves centralized decisions regarding the input required to bring about desired behaviors in schools. This approach can work when problems are well-structured and amenable to relatively standardized solutions (e.g., the provision of textbooks). It is less likely to be appropriate when problems are not clearly defined and when their solution will require a multiplicity of responses depending on local circumstances. This is the case when problems relate to instructional objectives, equity, and quality, in which case more indirect and interactive strategies will be required. Such strategies typically rely on enabling and framework-setting legislative and administrative measures together with targeted financial and professional support for desired local actions (Verspoor, 1989, 1992).

**Relevance of information.** There are at least two inherent limitations in the use of data derived from examinations and national assessments to guide the practice of individual teachers. First, since the data, for example in chief examiners’ or national assessment reports, relate to general standards of performance in the education system, they may or may not be relevant to a consideration of conditions and student achievement in any individual school. Second, items in examinations and assessments and the data derived from them are limited in the extent to which they can provide insights into the knowledge structures or cognitive strategies that they call on. Further, since items are not designed to be diagnostic for individual students, analyses based on results will be limited in the amount of instructionally relevant information they provide.

**Teacher competence.** Assumptions that all teachers are competent in subject matter and teach in a coherent and organized way (e.g., that they focus on the
instructional targets of an examination) may be based on an unrealistic perception of classrooms (see Arnott and Kubeka, 1997; Carron and Châu, 1996).

Teachers’ understanding of implications of changes. The gulf between what is required in reforms and what teachers understand and actually do can be very large. It cannot be assumed that teachers will know what is really involved in reform proposals or what they should do on the basis of assessment results. Even when provided with in-service training and guidance, the meanings attributed to reform by policy-makers and by teachers may be disparate, since guidance is likely to be interpreted in the context of teachers’ existing understandings and practice relating to curriculum and instruction, which may be very different from those of reformers (Chapman and Snyder, 2000; Grant, Peterson, and Shojgreen-Downer, 1996). Providing teachers with information and the necessary skills can be difficult, and teachers may need considerable and continuing support in interpreting reforms and in devising appropriate teaching strategies based on their interpretation.

Complexity of teaching. It hardly needs to be said that teaching is an extremely complex activity in which teachers continually interact with a large number of learners who vary in their levels of achievement, aptitude, motivation, and interest, and have to employ a multiplicity of strategies in addressing problems associated with poor achievement.

Particular problems arise when examinations, as test designers are increasingly striving to do, place emphasis on measuring higher-order skills rather than, or in addition to, general minimum lower-level skills. Evidence is available to indicate that teaching higher-order skills differs in many ways from teaching lower-level ones. Higher-level skills cannot be taught by rote methods; they take longer to teach, develop gradually over time, are less amenable to direct instructional approaches, are often difficult to locate in a curriculum, and may be too diffuse to drive instruction (Airasian, 1988). This does not mean that higher-order skills cannot be taught. There is evidence from a study in Nigeria that when primary school pupils were taught social studies using a problem-approach method, not only did they acquire more facts, they also comprehended material better and were able to apply their knowledge to the solution of new problems and to evaluation activities (Ogundare, 1988).

Classroom context. The fact that many classes are very large and have limited resources (space, textbooks and other aids) is an important consideration.
when reforms that involve change in teaching style are being proposed (Eisen-
mon et al., 1987).

**Opposition based on the perception that a change will involve a risk to pupils.** Parents, school authorities, and teachers may perceive changes in classroom practice, and in assessment procedures in particular, as threatening the ad-
vantage which pupils have under the existing system (Chapman and Snyder, 2000). Though supportive of steps that might improve the quality of educa-
tion, they may be more concerned to maintain the comparative advantage that pupils enjoy under existing conditions, fearing that they will do less well in an alternative system or will suffer while teachers are adapting to it.

**Conclusion**
Public examinations have received the most attention in proposals to use as-
ssessment as a lever of reform to improve student achievements. On the basis that the content and form of the examinations impact immediately and directly on what is taught and learned in schools when important consequences are attached to performance for students (and teachers), a variety of reforms and innovations have been proposed. The available evidence suggests that:
- If the content areas of examinations are changed (e.g., a new subject or a new component of a subject, such as essay writing, is examined), the content to which students are exposed in class will indeed change; and
- Improvement in students’ overall achievement levels or in their cognitive processing skills are less clear and, if they occur, are likely to be relatively modest.

These findings should not surprise us. The present situation is that a great many students underachieve. This state of affairs can hardly be attributable to the quality of the examinations, which are likely to have less influence on student learning than lack of teacher competence, large classes, a lack of resource material, and the difficulty of teaching higher-order skills. It is unrealis-
tic to expect that changing examinations will over-ride the influence of these factors.

The fact that some examination reforms are being driven by mechanisms in-
volving high stakes (e.g., selection, competition, publication of results) raises questions about the negative (if unintended) consequences that might be ex-
pected. In particular, there is a danger that the greatest benefits will accrue
to high achieving students. This will happen if teachers focus their efforts on pupils who are most likely to succeed; if low achieving pupils are retained in grade to prevent them sitting the examination; and, if discouraged, students leave school before completing primary education. These are all serious issues in the context of an EFA policy that has as its objective ensuring that “recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.” The conflict between the traditional function of examinations, which was to select the highest achieving students for further education, and the goals of EFA, which express concern for all students (see Chapter 3), needs to be recognized and steps taken to ensure that examinations do not frustrate attaining the goals. At the very least, public examination systems should not be an obstacle to quality improvement, but should support it (by, for example, extending curriculum coverage, including material relevant to the everyday life of students and the needs of the economy, and ensuring that they reflect their certification function by including content that is appropriate for all levels of student achievement). Limitations of public examinations, which arise from the restricted range of knowledge and skills they assess and from the fact that high stakes are attached to student performance, are to some extent addressed by incorporating teachers’ assessments into the grades awarded in public examinations. While several examination systems have taken or are taking steps to do this, there are many problems associated with the practice, which render it unlikely that school-based assessment can entirely replace external examinations in selecting pupils, as long as the number of places available at higher levels of education systems remains as limited as it is in many African countries.

While the primary purpose of a system or national assessment is to describe students’ achievements, a role in improving educational quality is also envisaged for it. The information obtained in a national assessment about strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and skills students have acquired and about how achievement is distributed in the population (e.g., by gender, location) can play an important role in informing policy and decision-making (relating, for example, to resource allocation, see Chapter 5). A national assessment can also provide information that is relevant to curriculum developers, textbook writers, politicians, and indeed the general public. Following the communication of information, assessment could become a lever of reform as well as a means of simply describing conditions.
A great deal of activity relating to national assessment was generated in Africa during the 1990s. This would seem to be due primarily to the impetus of the 1990 World Conference in Jomtien and resources provided by international agencies. If this is indeed the case, then questions arise about the extent to which policy makers and planners in individual countries perceived a need for assessments, as well as about their sustainability.

The fact that several countries have had as many as three separate national assessments (each sponsored or supported by a different agency) would suggest that the assessments may not have been initiated in response to locally perceived needs and often have not been integrated into the normal structures and activities of ministries. Given the need for such integration, the cost of the activities, and problems in recruiting personnel with the required competence to carry them out, it is clear that there is an urgent need for rationalization. Since national assessments are important for systemic quality monitoring, countries need to devote resources to building capacity for data collection, analysis, and utilization. If the information derived from national assessments is to play a significant role in improving quality, steps need to be taken to institutionalize and integrate them into the structures and processes of government policy-making and decision-making. This will require the establishment of procedures that will ensure that the information derived from assessments is provided to all involved in policy and management. It will also be important to ensure that national assessments are aligned with other major instructional guidance systems in the education system – other assessment systems (including the alignment of standards), curricula, teacher education, school capacity-building, and measures to address inequities.

Few African countries have participated in the several international assessments of student achievement that have been designed for industrialized countries. That is understandable and reasonable. Some of the national assessments that have been carried out in Africa do, however, allow some international comparisons. There are indications that some countries are interested in developing this capacity further. However, the main value in international collaboration would seem to reside, not in comparing the performances of countries, but in the opportunities it provides to pool resources to develop the skills required to carry out assessments at the national level.

Because they are integral to teaching and learning, teachers’ assessment practices in the classroom would seem to have the greatest potential to enhance
students’ achievements. However, these assessment practices are often of poor quality and, in particular, are unlikely to foster the development of higher-order and problem-solving competencies in students. Unfortunately, improving teachers’ assessment practices is also more difficult and expensive than improving or developing other forms of assessment. It will involve (i) improving the assessment skills of teachers in pre-service and in-service courses that take account of the conditions in which teachers work (class size, availability of resources); (ii) providing guidance to teachers in the use of assessment information in making decisions regarding grade promotions; (iii) providing examples of good assessment practices at the end of chapters in textbooks; (iv) developing means of communicating information on assessment reforms to classroom teachers, and providing assistance in interpreting the significance of the information for classroom practice.

It seems reasonable to conclude from the evidence considered in this paper that assessment information can improve policy and the management of resources in education and can shape teachers’ instructional practice, but that success is not assured. It cannot be assumed that better assessment will automatically enhance the curriculum and raise standards, just because poor assessment can narrow the curriculum and depress standards (Torrance, 1997). If assessment procedures are to contribute to the improvement of the quality of student learning, at least two conditions must be met. First, assessment policy should be integrated into a broader range of comprehensive and co-ordinated improvement measures, which assessment reforms are designed to reinforce. And second, since the success of educational reforms ultimately depends on their successful implementation in classrooms, resources should be provided to ensure that reform policy is understood, and acted on, in schools.
Chapter 12. Financing quality basic education

By Bart van Uythem and Adriaan Verspoor

Introduction
Countries have committed to a concept of Education for All that emphasizes not only access but also, and most importantly, completion with a level of learning achievement that is consistent with instructional objectives specified in the national curriculum. The preceding chapters summarize the experience of African countries as they try to move towards this goal and place these experiences in the context of African and international research literature. This chapter explores the key issues that countries will need to address to ensure financial viability and sustainability of strategies that aim not only at access but also at quality Education for All.

The cost of EFA 2015
Bruns, et al. (2003) propose an indicative framework of policy parameters for service delivery and resource mobilization that would allow countries to reach the target of universal completion by 2015 (Table 12.1 below). On this basis they estimate the cost for African countries (and others) of implementing these policies, the resource allocations by governments and the external financial requirements.

The parameter values for the 2015 benchmark goals in the indicative framework were based on those in countries with the highest completion rates. Depending on each country’s initial situation, a gradual process of either increase or decline in each of the above identified key characteristics was simulated to occur between 2002 and 2015. The evolution of student flows is projected in light of the latest data on population trends and on the survival in the system. The framework has been a useful tool for estimating total EFA resource requirements, but obviously every country will need to develop its own set of policy parameters consistent with its own situation and policy objectives.

The cost estimates resulting from the simulation model ran by Bruns et al. (2003) for each country are based upon the assumption that primary education
is completely free to users (no tuition, book charges, teacher supplements, or contributions to construction from the community), while additional subsidies and incentives are included to overcome demand-side constraints for the most disadvantaged children, including a special provision for stipends to HIV/AIDS orphans.

### Table 12.1 Indicative policy framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Variables</th>
<th>Range in African sample</th>
<th>Hi EFA achievers</th>
<th>Simulation targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-teacher ratio</td>
<td>24 - 79</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher salaries/per capita GDP</td>
<td>1.5 - 9.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% rec. spending on non-teacher inputs</td>
<td>4 - 45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% repeaters</td>
<td>1 - 36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource mobilization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. revenues as % of GDP</td>
<td>8 - 26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14/16/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% govt. revenues for education</td>
<td>4 - 33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary ed. share of govt. spending on education</td>
<td>35 - 66</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% pupils in privately-financed schools</td>
<td>0 - 36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bruns et al. (2003)

Resource requirements for all 33 African countries in the sample are then a result of aggregating the cost and resource estimates from each individual country simulation. The gap to be filled with external support for these countries is estimated at about $1.9 billion per year on average. This means about a fourfold increase in the level of donor support, representing by 2015, 45% of total resource requirements. About 60% of these external resources would be for recurrent budget support. Mobilizing these resources will be a considerable challenge for the international community, which has committed itself to ensuring that “no countries seriously committed to Education for All will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources” (World Education Forum, 2000, Article 10). Moreover several analysts have argued that the Bruns et al. (2003) cost estimates are too low.

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57. $ amounts are in U.S. dollars.
This chapter will, first, present and review arguments about the probably higher costs of reaching universal primary education, before examining ways to address the issue of how additional resources for quality EFA could be mobilized. Then a more in-depth analysis into the important option of mobilization of community support will be presented. A main question to be addressed is how and under what conditions can community support be mobilized in such a way that it is equitable? Options to be reviewed include matching fund strategies, targeting, resource management by communities, and the use of school development plans. The chapter will also look at the conditions under which a direct transfer of resources to communities results in an efficient use.

**A lower-bound estimate**

The financing gap calculated in Bruns *et al.* (2003) is a lower-bound estimate:

- About 20 small low-income countries accounting for 6% of all out-of-school children and several conflict-affected countries were not included;
- Capital expenditures do not include the cost of making up for current classroom shortages and rehabilitation of classrooms in poor repair; and
- Cost estimates are based upon an expected reform path supporting a linear trend toward the benchmark goals, whereas the reality will not always allow for this and therefore may be more costly.

The *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (GMR) (UNESCO, 2002a) also elaborates the last point, pointing out that there is probably a timing issue, meaning that the expenditures on quality-enhancing inputs will need to take place up front, while the resulting efficiency gains will only occur in the later years; this will increase the total cost beyond the estimates of Bruns *et al.* (2003). In their simulations they assume the expected transition of any parameter from its current level to its target level to be a linear function between both levels for the time frame between the base year and the target year. This means, for instance, that if repetition is expected to go down from 30% in 2003 to 10% in 2015, the model will find for each year a reduction of 20/12 (=1.66%); in other words, in 2004 it would be 28.34%, in 2005 26.67%, etc. It is more likely, however, that efficiency-improving investments need to be made disproportionally in the early years, while the gains in efficiency will occur largely at the end.

However, the estimates found by Bruns *et al.* (2003), might be low still for other reasons, in particular as regards the expenditures on non-teacher
salaries. The GMR argues that the estimates of the cost of EFA are highly sensitive to assumptions about the rate of economic growth, the speed of policy reform and the extent of fiscal reform and underestimates the cost implications of enrolling all girls and children of poorer households and of responding to HIV/AIDS. In addition, the provision for non-teaching salaries may be too low to ensure quality primary education; in particular as typically a large share of the current allocation is taken up by administrative cost (Rasera, 2004).

Bruns et al. (2003) assume a yearly GDP growth of 5% per year. However, if real GDP growth per year would be only 3%, as the GMR indicates was about the rate during the 1990s for the 33 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, surprisingly the simulation model shows a reduction in the average absolute annual financing gap for the African countries from about $1.85 billion to $1.68 billion (a reduction of 9.5%). However, as a proportion of average yearly domestic resources, the gap increases from 46.4% to 50.4%. The reason for this has to do with the fact that by far the highest cost in the model is the teachers’ salaries, and this is modeled to be linked to the GDP/capita; thus a slower growth in GDP with the same population growth would mean a slower growth in the teachers’ salaries cost.

According to the GMR, the continued under-enrollment of children from poorer households and girls can be explained by the direct and indirect costs incurred when these families send their children to school. They also find that African data suggest that the removal of both direct and indirect costs to the poor may require an increased cost to the public sector of up to 50% of current expenditure per student for the families involved. To implement an effective program for children from poorer households (consider the poorest 10% children) might add at least 5% to the average unit costs of primary schooling. Yet it is not sure to what extent reaching these children will be more expensive. Chapter 9 has discussed alternative learning models that may be appropriate in these situations. Cost data remain uncertain but it is not clear that the cost per learner is much higher than the cost per primary school student.

The GMR further argues that HIV/AIDS is likely to result in lowering GDP growth rates. But this will in fact reduce the external finance requirement used

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58. The growth of domestic resources of 7.5 percent per year, assumed by Bruns et al. (2003), is partially a result of additional ‘resource mobilization’, like an increase in the share of domestic education spending for primary education or an increase in the government budget share that goes to education overall.
in case of the lower growth rate of 3% instead of 5% discussed above. Other potential reasons, according to the GMR, that domestic primary education resource availability would be lower than without HIV/AIDS, are: (i) increased needs for the health sector might make the increase—as expected in Bruns et al. (2003)—in education spending from 17.5% to 20% of national budgets more difficult; (ii) replacing teachers lost due to HIV/AIDS for post-primary education increases the salary bill; and (iii) there might be a higher need for secondary and tertiary education graduates because of more than normal skills loss in the society. The impact of this is, however, uncertain and difficult to quantify, in particular since post-primary education teacher loss due to AIDS may on average be lower than anticipated (Bennell, 2004).

According to the GMR the cost implications of HIV/AIDS for the attainment of EFA goals arise from four broad areas: (i) training additional teachers to replace those dying from AIDS and providing death benefits that education ministries must pay to those who die while still in service; (ii) the costs of training and paying temporary teachers to replace those on extended periods of sick leave; (iii) incremental school and education program costs for mainstreaming HIV/AIDS; and (iv) orphans and vulnerable children costs for social subsidies to encourage or enable the school attendance of children from families affected by AIDS.\footnote{GMR estimates that the total additional annual costs related to HIV/AIDS are in the order of $975 million, or 74\% more than the Bruns et al. (2003) estimate of $560 million per year. The difference is explained principally by making allowance for education program costs and increased coverage of orphans and other vulnerable children.} The GMR also points out that recent history suggests the need to include cost estimates for major complex humanitarian emergencies due to conflict, natural disasters, or other types of instability in at least four or five countries per decade. Since this would require extra educational resources, for instance, to reach refugees or to do reconstruction of facilities, the costs of achieving the EFA goals would be up to 25\% greater than is currently predicted for those

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\footnote{Bennell (2003) however finds from an analysis of household survey data from over 20 countries in SSA that it is not possible to reach broad generalizations about the impact of orphan hood on school attendance. The median attendance rate differentials between, on the one hand, non-orphans and paternal, maternal, and two-parent orphans, on the other, are 4.1, 3.1, and 7.1\% points respectively. The most recent UNAIDS definition of AIDS orphans has also included the children under 15 who lost only their father. Since they represent 45\% of the total number of children who lost one or both parents, the cost estimates by the Bruns et al. (2003) would increase by about $100 million per year, seen they only include children who lost a mother or both parents.}
countries, or between $0.4. $0.5 billion would be added to the average annual costs of UPE.\footnote{This is for all countries together that still need to reach EFA, not only for the 33 African countries.} This would increase the projected total costs for all countries to reach UPE by 2\% to 3\%.

Recent work by Rasera (2004) reviewed the assumption made by Bruns \textit{et al.} (2003) of using a benchmark objective by 2015 of 33\% of the public recurrent expenditure as expenditure on non-teacher salaries. The two specific points of investigation were a review of the composition of the current non-teacher salary recurrent expenditure by African countries and an assessment of whether the 33\% is sufficient to cover all the inputs deemed necessary to ensure that a large majority of the students acquires the knowledge and competencies specified in the curriculum.

Rasera breaks down the non-salary recurrent expenditure – currently estimated at 24\% of total recurrent expenditure, or $9 per student\footnote{The USD 9 is a non-weighted average using the expenditure from the 33 African countries used by BMR; the weighted average (i.e. adjusting for population size differences) is only USD 6.} – into four categories: administration salaries, administration other recurrent costs, school-level non-teacher salaries, and school-level other recurrent costs. The school-level other recurrent costs are found to be only 6\% (about $1.80 per student) of the total recurrent costs for the eight African countries analyzed in detail (Benin, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Togo, Rwanda).

In addition to the 24\% of total recurrent public expenditure, however, there exists expenditure on recurrent costs by parents, by donors and by local governments. Since Bruns \textit{et al.} (2003) indicates that the 33\% of other recurrent expenditure assumes that primary education would be completely free of costs for households, this should be added to the 24\%. Rasera estimates the contributions by parents to recurrent non-teacher salary costs to be between $8 and $12,\footnote{This includes for some country estimates costs for nutrition, transport and uniforms/clothing; a cost probably assumed by Bruns \textit{et al.} (2003) to largely stay with parents also after increasing the recurrent non-teacher salary expenditure to 33\%. Therefore that part of the cost component is then estimated by Rasera and taken out.} by donors about $2, and by local governments less than $1. This leads to roughly 38\% instead of 24\% as recurrent non-teacher salary spending. Calculated this way, the total non-teacher salary expenditure is therefore already above the 33\% estimated by Bruns \textit{et al.} (2003), and this is just for maintaining the current situation, without even looking at this being sufficient to ensure an acceptable quality of education.
Reversing the way of looking at the 33%, Rasera defines a list of “basic inputs” (see Table 12.2) needed at the school level to obtain an education of acceptable quality, estimating first a “minimal level of inputs” and second a “desirable level of inputs.” A unit cost of $16 to $19 is found for the “minimal level of inputs” and of $33 to $37 for the “desirable level of inputs.” Adding the costs necessary for system management (i.e., recurrent costs beyond the school level) would bring the total for the “minimal level of inputs” to $26 to $29, and for the “desirable level of inputs” to $43 to $47.

Rasera further finds that the 33% from Bruns et al. (2003) would represent an average expenditure per child of $23 in 2015. Given the many approximations made, this $23 could be seen as very close to the minimal level of inputs,” but without doubt very far from the “desirable level of inputs” (the latter would mean 48% of total recurrent spending instead of 33%). On top of that, the 33% are supposed to also include resources to finance specific actions toward ensuring education opportunities for about 10% of the totality of the children, which are deemed to be children specifically at risk.

The situation would be more challenging still if the 5% annual growth rate assumed by Bruns et al. (2003) would turn out to be only 3%, because then the absolute value of the 33% would become only $17 by 2015 (i.e., much below even the “minimal level of inputs”. This is why Rasera also argues that it would be preferable to put absolute values on the recurrent non-teacher salary unit spending needs rather than looking at them as a percentage of the total recurrent spending. Even better would be a norm by country to take into account the differences among countries.

64. For the detailed costing and explanation of these ‘basic inputs’ see table 5 of Rasera (2003).
65. Currently USD 6 are spent on average per child on administration, of which USD 3 are personnel costs and USD 3 are other recurrent admin costs. Having the admin personnel costs grow at the rate of the teacher salary cost growth assumed by Bruns et al. (2003) would bring this to roughly USD 4 by 2015. For the other recurrent admin costs, Rasera assumes these should at least be doubled in order to allow for effective administration, thus would be USD 6 (2*3). Therefore total admin costs per child are assumed at USD 4+6=10
66. These include for instance girls in rural areas, children from the poorest households, ethnic minority children, children of nomads, disabled children, etc. It does not include orphans seen they are covered in the Bruns et al. (2003) calculations separately.
Table 12.2  Basic school inputs to allow for education of acceptable quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>List of “minimal level of inputs”</th>
<th>Cost per student ($/year)</th>
<th>List of “desirable level of inputs”</th>
<th>Cost per student ($/year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School books</td>
<td>One book per two children in the four main subjects (usable for 3 years)</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>One book per child in six subjects (3 years)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom materials</td>
<td>UNICEF kit used in DR Congo for this purpose (including pencil, pen, etc.)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>UNICEF kit; plus work book, 180-degree protractor, triangle, compass</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionary</td>
<td>One per classroom of 40 pupils (5 years)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Two per classroom of 40 pupils (5 years)</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom library</td>
<td>40 books per classroom (1 per student) (10 years)</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>120 books per classroom (10 years)</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School library</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100 books (school size 300 pupils) (10 years)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumables</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100 sheets of papers per pupil per year</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher guides</td>
<td>One guide per teacher for 6 subjects (7 years)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>One guide per teacher for 6 subjects (7 years)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective school materials</td>
<td>UNICEF kit used in DR Congo for this purpose: $5 for a kit per classroom; $153 for an extra kit for the school (3 years)</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>UNICEF kit used in DR Congo for this purpose, but at higher cost: $11 for a kit per classroom; $348 for an extra kit for the school (3 years)</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone costs</td>
<td>$100 per school per year</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>$100 per school per year</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Per year 1% of construction cost of $8,000</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>same</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (utilities, office materials, etc)</td>
<td>20% of total costs minus salary and administration cost ($12)</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School director</td>
<td>Free of teaching duties for schools with 10 classes or more, salary 1.3 times average teacher salary</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>Free of teaching duties for schools with 6 classes or more, salary 1.3 times average teacher salary</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement teachers</td>
<td>5% of all teachers (for reasons of illness, maternity leave, etc)</td>
<td>(2.80)</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>(2.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guard</td>
<td>One per school (salary 30% of teacher salary)</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>One per school (salary 30% of teacher salary)</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>One per school for schools of more than 12 classes (same salary as teacher)</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>One per school for schools of more than 12 classes (same salary as teacher)</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>33.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rasera (2003)

Finally, and most important, in the same way as already indicated earlier, there is an important timing issue, since the boost to non-teacher salary recurrent

67. Memory item not included in total. If replacement teachers would be included in the provisions made by Bruns et al. (2003), than this would mean that the theoretical 40 pupil/teacher ratio in practice would be roughly 42.
spending has to take place well before the quality improvements from it will take their full effect. The increased provision of the quality enhancing material inputs with an estimated cost of $16 per student (of which an estimated $10-12 would be additional expenditures) is needed now to support immediate improvements in instructional practice, which can then bring about the efficiency gains that the model has projected to occur throughout the period. This would increase the annual financing requirement in the early years by about $700 million, representing an increase of about 50% of the annual financing gap during that period.

In sum, several conclusions can be drawn from the preceding discussion:

• The sensitivity of the projections to economic growth affects mainly non-salary recurrent expenditures.
• The basis of the resources required to cater to the needs of disadvantaged children, including HIV/AIDS orphans, is uncertain, especially since alternative – not necessarily more expensive – learning models to reach these children exist.
• The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and of conflicts may be considerable although difficult to project.
• There is an urgent need to increase expenditures on quality enhancing inputs in the early years of the projection period.

Options for managing higher-than-projected cost
The Bruns et al. (2003) estimates only provide very general indications for action at the country level. Each country will have to construct its own policy framework and decide which combination of resource mobilization and service delivery policies is the most appropriate at a particular point in time. In this section a number of possible courses of action will be reviewed, their potential financial and educational implications discussed, and the sensitivity of the Bruns et al. (2003) estimates to changes in these parameters assessed.

Reduction in salary cost
The scope for achieving a reduction in teacher salary cost from the path projected by Bruns et al. (2003) is likely to be low. The actual mechanics of bringing current levels in line with the Bruns et al. (2003) target of 3.5 times
GDP/capita will already be slow at best\textsuperscript{68} and, according to GMR, for some countries that are far above it, the realism of achieving this 3.5 times GDP/capita as average teacher salary might have to be questioned.

The potential cost reduction of bringing down the average teacher salary from 3.5 to, for instance, three times GDP/capita would be significant, with nearly a 0.4 billion or 6\% reduction in yearly cost, or also 19\% reduction in the yearly financial gap (see Table 12.6). But it is very doubtful that this can be achieved to any meaningful degree in many countries, especially since it may result in undesirable loss of teacher motivation. One area where there might be some scope for further cost reduction is in those countries where currently the salary is less than 3.5 times GDP/capita, and where Bruns et al. (2003) assume it will increase to 3.5 times GDP/capita. This would depend, however, on finding ways to ensure proper quality of teaching by such teachers without increasing their average income level all the way to 3.5 times GDP/capita.

\textbf{Increase target class size to 45}
Increasing the target class size from 40 to 45 would reduce the average annual costs for the African countries found by Bruns et al. (2003) by about \$470 million or 8\%, while the annual financing gap would reduce by almost 25\% (see Table 12.6). EFA cumulative cost estimates and thus also the financing gap would reduce by \$7 billion. Of this \$4.6 billion would be recurrent cost reduction (fewer teachers needed) and \$2.4 billion capital cost reduction (fewer classrooms needed).

It is important to note that a more equal deployment of teachers among and within schools – keeping the variations of the groups of students taught by one teacher within a narrow band around the national average – would avoid the large classes and could have a very significant impact on quality in many countries. The financial cost of such a policy would be limited and the benefits considerable.\textsuperscript{69} This is discussed in this chapter as part of the opportunities for increasing the efficiency of resource utilization.

\textbf{Increase the role of private schooling}
Another option to lower the public costs is to try to increase the proportion of

\textsuperscript{68} Bruns et al. (2003) suggest that recruiting new teachers should be done with the 3.5 GDP/capita as average (trained) teacher salary in mind, while already existing staff would continue to be paid according to the old salary scales in place.

\textsuperscript{69} For a full discussion see Mingat, 2003.
private schooling (Box 12.1.), from the 10% suggested by Bruns et al. (2003) to 15%, for instance. This is a strategy typically most appropriate in urban areas with more affluent populations. The EFA average annual cost estimates for the 33 African countries would reduce by about $228 million, or 4%. The annual financing gap would reduce by 12% (see Table 12.6). EFA cumulative cost estimates and thus also the financing gap would reduce by $3.4 billion.

Box 12.1. Public-private partnerships in Burkina Faso

One example of using public subsidies to attract additional private sector counterpart resources to the education sector is found in Burkina Faso (World Bank, 2001b). A project will finance the construction of 200 additional classrooms at existing private schools under a “matching” scheme whereby each classroom constructed and equipped at existing private schools by themselves will be matched by one additional classroom financed by the project. Only those private schools that demonstrate efforts to improve the quality of education are supported by government through this scheme. The scheme takes into account the experience of a similar project in Burkina Faso at the post-primary level (Maman and Scobie, n.d.) where a lack of interest of private school proprietors made it necessary to review the demands on the private schools, which included repayment for the government-provided classroom (the operator would pay back the cost over 5 years, free of interest), and the requirement that the proprietors build their classroom prior to the government building the matching classroom. The first condition was dropped (i.e., no repayment), and the latter one was changed to require the provider to build a classroom within at most one year after the one constructed by the government.

Source: World Bank (2001b)

Reduce the need for school construction by double use of classrooms. In order to lower classroom construction cost, it might be possible to use classrooms twice for different groups of children. If all classrooms could be used twice (assuming use by different teachers so that the number of teachers and teacher salary cost do not change), the EFA average annual cost estimates for the 33 African countries would reduce by about $363 million, or slightly over 6%. The annual financing gap would reduce by almost 20% (see Table 12.6). EFA cumulative cost estimates and thus also the financing gap would reduce by $5.4 billion, all of it being capital cost reduction.

Higher share of budget to primary education. There is considerable variation between countries in the share of the education budget allocated to primary education. This variation is largely a function of the share of higher education and the share of administrative cost in the budget. Countries such as Senegal, which are high on both counts, may find it difficult to mobilize the resources
necessary for reaching the EFA goals. On the other hand, Uganda has been able to mobilize significant private resources to finance its system of higher education. As a consequence, Uganda has been able to allocate as much as 65% of its education budget for primary education. Such high levels are, however, unlikely to be sustainable in the long run, as the number of primary graduates that seek admission into secondary schools expands, and a growing economy requires increasing numbers of skilled technicians, managers and other higher-level staff.

The simulation model used in Bruns et al. (2003) assumes a 50% primary education share of government education spending. If this would be possible to increase to 55% for the African countries in the period until 2015, the domestic resource availability for primary education would increase by about $263 million, or 6.6% per year, or, in other words, the financial gap would reduce by 14.2% per year (see Table 12.6).

**Increase external funding**

Increasing the share of external support beyond what is currently projected by the financial projection model raises important questions. First, it is not clear that sufficient external resources—especially grant resources—will be available. Second, this level of aid dependency raises significant issues of financial sustainability. Third, several countries are reluctant to finance recurrent cost—especially salary—from external sources, which are inherently unpredictable.

Bruns et al. (2003) find for the African countries an annual resource need between $1.4 and $1.85 billion, or between 32% and 46% of the annual domestic resources available. The GMR puts the annual resource needs for all 47 countries (not only the 33 African countries) at a level that could reach $5.6 billion instead of the roughly $2.5 billion found by Bruns et al. (2003). For the

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70. The GMR argues that for this first a turnaround is needed from the negative trend between 1990-2000 (new commitments have averaged little more than US$600 million per year), with the bilateral and multilateral financing aid to education having declined towards the end of the 1990s, which was particularly heavily felt in sub-Saharan Africa. There is also a significant change needed in donors' priorities and mechanisms through which aid is channeled. The current low level of external support for primary education may also reflect a relatively unfocused commitment to the MDG on the donor side. Only about 20 percent of donor assistance for education is currently channeled to basic education.

71. The GMR argues that this increases to $4.2 billion as a result of including the small countries that were left out in Bruns et al. (2003), by the timing of reform, and by the assumption of economic growth being lower than used in Bruns et al. (2003). Other cost omissions according to the GMR are the need to increase demand incentives for the poorest resulting in $0.5 billion per year; the underestimation of the HIV/AIDS cost adding another $0.4 billion per year; and the extra cost for countries falling to emergencies adding another $0.5 billion.
47 countries this would mean a financial gap to be filled by external support of close to 40% instead of the roughly 17% found by Bruns et al. (2003). If the $5.6 billion gap would be incurred in the 33 African countries in the same proportion as the $2.5 billion gap found by Bruns et al. (2003), then the yearly financial gap for African countries would present more than the total domestic resources they are assumed to make available. 

**Low cost options for service delivery**

Previous chapters, in particular *Chapter 9*, have argued that accelerated progress towards the EFA goals will require providing basic education not only through the traditional model of schooling. It will require alternative ways of providing learning opportunities to children who live in remote areas or whose social or economic environment makes them difficult to reach through the traditional primary school. In many instances these alternative models have used low-cost, community-based strategies to reach these children.

But perhaps most importantly the goal of universal completion of basic education is unlikely to be reached unless the basic education programs are complemented by preschool programs that effectively prepare children for entry into primary-level programs and by adult basic education programs that help parents prepare basic literacy skills and provide a supporting home environment for their children’s education. Few countries have the resources to implement these programs on a large scale with the standard cost parameters of the formal system. Several countries are developing low-cost community-based models that will allow them to reach large numbers of children and adults with these programs at relatively low cost.

*Early childhood development programs (ECD).* In order to assess if community-based preschool programs should be undertaken, it is necessary to assess whether those programs would be affordable and cost-effective. The cost per pupil in community based activities is likely to be lower than that observed in a formal setting, but what also makes a difference is that preschools in community-based programs are currently only partially subsidized by the government. Therefore, community-based programs are in general less costly in terms of public resources than formal public preschool programs, as shown in
Table 12.3 below. The data also suggest that, if there exists a wide variety in per-pupil public spending in the formal system of preschool, this seems to be much less the case for community-based programs: all 4 countries analyzed by the study are situated between 3.5 and 5.7% of the per-capita GDP of the country.

Table 12.3  Per-child public spending in formal and community-based preschool programs in four countries (per-capita GDP units)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>a) Formal preschool</th>
<th>b) Community-based preschool</th>
<th>Ratio a) / b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Verde</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Authors’ estimates based on pupil/teacher ratio and teacher salary for all countries except Cape Verde. Source: Jaramillo and Mingat (2003).

The data on the benefits of community-based preschool programs are scarce, particularly regarding the impact of these programs on the frequency of repetition and dropout in the course of primary education. According to Jaramillo and Tietjen (2001), who analyzed the cases of Cape Verde and Guinea, there is little difference on average in the spheres of outcomes in comparison to formal preschool programs, although the community-based programs tend to outperform formal preschool programs.

Adult basic education programs. Evidence from programs in different countries suggests that there is a place for this kind of training in the broader goal of trying to ensure literacy for all. Adult literacy courses can be a contributing factor to improving the home learning environment of school-going children who would otherwise not have any support at home from adults with some degree of literacy (see Chapter 9 and Chapter 11).

As to the cost-benefit analysis of adult literacy programs, several approaches are possible. When for instance comparing costs of such programs to costs of formal primary education, there are two possible viewpoints: one is to measure the unit cost of both types of programs to provide the same number of hours of instruction under similar conditions; the other is to look at the differences in outcomes for given unit costs of both types of education, while
acknowledging that the public inputs received under both types of programs may be substantially different (Table 12.4).

**Table 12.4  Comparison of cost per learner in non-formal education programs and two years of primary schooling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cost per NFE learner (a)</td>
<td>$ 27.6</td>
<td>$ 37.1</td>
<td>$ 20.4</td>
<td>$ 98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total base cost per learner for two years of primary school (b)</td>
<td>$ 41.9</td>
<td>$ 41.9</td>
<td>$ 32.3</td>
<td>$ 117.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage (a) of (b)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*This estimate was made in 1999. The World Bank Implementation Completion Report of 2002 found $58.

Important is also to look at outcomes and to make adjustments as a result of, on the one hand, course completion and, on the other hand, effective learning. Table 12.5 compares for the case of Senegal the impact on unit cost per completer of the NFE program as a result of different assumed completion rates. Not surprisingly, given the different instructional objectives and delivery modes, the cost of adult literacy programs in comparison with the per fourth-grade completer cost of primary education, which incorporates the effect of drop-out and repetition, remains low, even under conditions of completion rates being significantly less than perfect.

**Table 12.5  Cost per NFE program completer (Senegal)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completion rate from literacy program</th>
<th>Cost per completer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Senegal SAR (World Bank. 1996. Annex 2, pg. 4)

Note 1: The assumed equivalence between grade 4 and NFE completion has no empirical basis.

Note 2: The Senegal adult literacy project aimed to offer each enrollee just 300 hours of instruction, while four years of primary school officially entail some 4,000 hours of class work over an officially wider range of subjects. In terms of cost per hour, primary schooling costs $0.06 per hour per student, while NFE programs cost $0.21 per hour per student.
What are the outcomes that can be expected from these programs? In terms of what adults learn for this price, there is some evidence from different studies. In Nepal, a graduate of a nine-month basic adult education program could master some of the literacy and numeracy skills of a grade 5 or grade 6 primary school pupil, as well as demonstrate advances on development indicators (Comings et al. 1997). In Uganda, formerly non-literate graduates of literacy programs outperformed grade 4 primary school pupils in reading and math and were not far behind in writing (possibly reflecting low effectiveness of instruction in many primary schools) and were significantly ahead of non-literate neighbors in ‘modern’ knowledge, attitudes and practices” (Okech et al. table 6.16). Therefore, although primary education of good quality should be the preferred means of instruction for all, at least some of the important development effects of primary schooling can be attained through a year or so of adult basic education at a relatively low cost for those who – despite all reasonable public efforts – did not terminate primary education.

Reductions in construction cost through community management. From a recent review of school construction in developing countries (Theunynck, 2002) it is clear that community-based approaches to construction are cost-effective, irrespective of the source of financing (ministry of education, local governments, social funds). Community-based approaches are also demand-driven and thereby can contribute to communities gaining ownership through their participation in implementation (Box 12.2.).

In the case of maintenance, approaches based on communities’ involvement are promising. However, the full cost of effective maintenance is often beyond the communities’ capacities. The most effective approach is to complement their contribution with the transfer to them of a minimum package of resources tailored to and earmarked for maintenance.

Impact of various policy options

Table 12.6 on the following page shows the impact of the options that were discussed above (and that can be quantified within the Bruns et al. (2003) model) on the total cost, domestic resource requirements and the financing gap. The financial impact, especially of a combination of policies, could be considerable and – when all would be done at the same time – could reduce the yearly average financing gap by more than 60%, or in absolute total amount from $23.5 billion to $5.8 billion. However, while several of the options may be considered, especially as ways to overcome short- and medium-term shortfalls in
Box 12.2. Mauritania: Community-managed classroom construction

In a case study from Mauritania, where communities managed the implementation of the national classroom construction program, unit costs were cut from $18,000 to $4,600 eventually for classrooms with simpler architectural standards but with the same size and similar life expectancy. Communities were fully responsible for construction, just as if they would build with only their own resources, even though the government provided 70% co-financing. Building decisions were left to the communities; the standard design was simple and sturdy enough to overcome community resistance to building with local materials not commonly used for school construction; a project financing system was used that was transparent, easily understood by communities, and that made it difficult to misuse funds; and communities were supported with technical assistance. Payment of grants was made on a tranche basis, according to whether satisfactory progress had been made in line with project criteria. In general, strategies for the success of community-based construction include: (i) use of locally available materials, (ii) use of construction techniques familiar to villagers and to local craftsmen and contractors, (iii) design improvements limited to those necessary to ensure standard durability and safety, and (iv) well defined duties and responsibilities of partners. Regular technical supervision will help in ensuring that quality standards of construction are met, but does not substitute for close monitoring by communities.

Source: Theuyninck (2002)

domestic or external resource availability, most of these options will not be easy to implement without jeopardizing quality-improvement objectives in the longer term. Moreover, the cost of non-teacher salary inputs may be more than anticipated, and the resource requirements of related EFA objectives, in particular early childhood and adult basic education programs, are not included in these projections and, unless carefully managed, may be considerable. It seems therefore that exploring the possibility to mobilize communities to help finance and operate formal and alternative programs (e.g. for preschools and non-formal education) and implement low cost strategies, for instance for construction, will be an essential part of the education finance strategy (see Chapter 9).

Increasing the efficiency of resource utilization

Mobilizing additional resources is an important element of the EFA financing strategy. But, as important is ensuring that all available resources are used with optimal efficiency. This means, first, reducing the variation in the level of allocation of resources among schools and, second, enhancing the efficiency with which resources are used at the school level to stimulate learning by spending
resources on inputs (Chapter 5) and processes (Chapters 6-8) that are known to be strongly supportive of student learning. Mingat (2003b) has analyzed these issues in some detail in a recent paper, focusing in particular on the variation around the average pupil-teacher ratio between schools and calculating the degree of randomness in teacher deployment within countries for 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Graph 12.1). While it will never be possible to eliminate all variation in the deployment of resources, there is a strong case that reducing the variation can contribute to enhanced quality and efficiency.

Table 12.6 Impact of different measures on expected annual EFA cost, domestic resource availability and the financial gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>33 African countries</th>
<th>EFA Cost (annual)</th>
<th>Domestic resources (annual)</th>
<th>Financial gap (annual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% change</td>
<td>$ change (million)</td>
<td>% change</td>
<td>$ change (million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary cost change from 3.5 to 3 times GDP/cap</td>
<td>-6.4%</td>
<td>-373</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of primary education spending from total change from 50 to 55%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil/teacher ratio 40 to 45</td>
<td>-8.0%</td>
<td>-469</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double classroom use</td>
<td>-6.2%</td>
<td>-363</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private school enrollment from 10 to 15%</td>
<td>-3.9%</td>
<td>-228</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL MEASURES COMBINED</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
<td>-1182</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The progress towards the EFA objectives may require an increased allocation to schools with low resources and low scores, which can be expected to result in an increase in the lowest scores and a reduction in the variation of the scores and of the resource allocations. The challenge here is not so much to eliminate variation but rather to reduce it and use variations in resource allocation purposely to give extra support to schools that work under difficult circumstances or cater to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Partnerships for resource mobilization**

The World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990) and the World Education Forum (Dakar, 2000) recognized the significant resource implications of the EFA objectives and called for broad partnerships for resource mobilization.

*If the basic learning needs of all are to be met..., it will be essential to mobilize existing and new financial and human resources, public, private and voluntary (World Conference on Education for All, 1990, article 9.1).*

*Achieving Education for All will also require more creative and sustained mobilization of resources from other parts of society. (World Education Forum. 2000, par. 46).*
These partnerships are broadly conceived, including not only the international community but also parents and other citizens concerned about education and development. In fact, parents and communities have always made important contributions to education. In many countries they have been solicited to contribute to the construction of school facilities as well as expected to pay formal and non-formal school fees, purchase textbooks, school supplies, and school uniforms. For many parents and communities these demands have exceeded their financial possibilities. Others, however, have been able to find the resources to enroll their children in private schools.

**Equity and community financing**

In many instances “community support” has involved the mobilization of resources – in cash and in kind – often from the poorest communities. This obviously raises fundamental issues of equity and has created a strong movement to ensure that basic education will be free. But many countries will not be able to mobilize in the short term all the public resources necessary to meet the financial demands of the Education for All program with the quality performance objectives as currently formulated. They may, as a first step, want to establish a policy that ensures that no child shall be excluded from basic education because of inability to pay. Such a policy would encourage the mobilization of local resources for the financing of basic education while ensuring that it does not affect the ability of children to enroll and complete their education.

It is clear that community support to education is substantial in many African countries (*Box 12.3.*). GMR, finds, for instance, that in six African countries (Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia) private household expenditures on education per pupil during the 1990s were, on average, slightly less than half the level of public recurrent expenditures per pupil. Rasera (2004) estimates that for the 33 African countries used by Bruns *et al.* (2003) the household contribution per child for only primary education is about $8 to $12. The government recurrent expenditure on non-teacher salary for these same 33 countries was found to be about $9. This clearly indicates the importance of household contributions to primary education.

73. In some occasions this includes also expenditure for clothing/uniform, for transport and for food.
Box 12.3. Community financing of education

A study on community schools in Mali, Senegal and Togo found that the average monetary income of a large number of rural families rarely surpasses 50,000 FCFA per year. On the other hand, schooling in a fully self-funded community school costs at least between 5,000 and 15,000 FCFA per child, depending on the grade level (evidence from Mali and Togo). In the case of Senegal (community schools PAPA), the yearly cost per child is 40,000 FCFA. It is clear that it is very difficult for the average family to send all children to school, especially because there are many other basic needs that require resources from them (water, health, etc.).

Communities have in many places also “mutualized” the education expense, so that it does not exclusively need to be borne by the current parents alone; voluntary contributions of all adults are collected. However, this still does not suffice in many cases.

Source: Marchand, 2000

All in all, communities do contribute significantly to education, but this may create inequities. Some recent household surveys looked at household contributions to primary education, separated by geographic area (rural/urban) and by asset or wealth quintiles, which gives an idea about both monetary and non-monetary (e.g., labor, materials) contributions by households to primary education in a number of African countries.

For the monetary contributions, the results from this admittedly small sample (Table 12.7) seem to be a somewhat mixed bag. The urban and the richest quintile households spend a slightly higher percentage of their income on primary education, with the notable exception of Malawi. However, as the results for Kenya show, this picture might be already different when taking the expenditure on education as a percentage of only non-food expenditure instead of total expenditure. This turns around the results for Kenya and thus might do so as well for the other countries. Furthermore, leaving the richest quintile aside (where there is a good chance the result largely has to do with access to private schooling), it is often the lowest quintile that spends the highest share of its income (or expenditure) on education.

When looking also at non-monetary contributions to primary schooling, the picture is very clear. Households in rural areas and at the lowest socio-economic levels contribute in a very disproportionate way to schools and even to teachers with their labor, materials, and food (Table 12.8).
Table 12.7  Household monetary contribution to primary education as a percentage of household income (or expenditure)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In percentages</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
<th>Zambia</th>
<th>Burkina Faso</th>
<th>Kenya**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.1*</td>
<td>3.0 (15.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0 (21.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.5 (20.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.0 (16.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.1*</td>
<td>5.9 (12.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.8 (14.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In the case of Burkina Faso, these are the groups “poor” and “non-poor” instead of quintiles.
** In the case of Kenya, this represents the results for both primary and secondary education instead of only primary. The number in parentheses indicates education expenditure as a % of only non-food expenditure.

Source for household (HH) education spending: ORC (2003a, b; 2001a,b); WB education sector review draft for Kenya “Education and Training in Kenya” from 2003 (based upon DHS 1998).

Table 12.8  Percentage of parents or guardians whose households have contributed materials or labor to primary schools and/or teachers within last year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By urban / rural</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Urb/Rural</td>
<td>Materials Urb/Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>19 / 73</td>
<td>10 / 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>8 / 40</td>
<td>9 / 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>25 / 72</td>
<td>6 / 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>8 / 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By quintiles</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Lowest/Highest</td>
<td>Materials Lowest/Highest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>76 / 14</td>
<td>44 / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>77 / 40</td>
<td>19 / 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ORC 2003a, 2003b, 2001a, 2001b

In a number of instances the contributions of poor communities or poor households have been in kind rather than in cash. The most common example is the contribution of labor towards the construction and maintenance of school
infrastructure facilities. Some programs assign a monetary value to these contributions and account for them as part of the matching funds.

A study on financing of education finds that for capital works (i.e., one-time investments), many communities have a tradition in which fundraising collections are possible. For recurrent funding needed regularly and in a predictable way to keep schools running, this fundraising option is much less feasible, because continually donating is less appealing to potential donors than a construction, which is more easily visible (Bray, 1995).

Support is also most likely to be 2004 where the community has negotiated the parameters of support, where there is confidence that the intervention will be completed, and where contributions will remain in the community and be used transparently and effectively to meet collectively identified needs. In many cases, concerted awareness and capacity-building efforts are needed before communities can play a more active education role. Therefore, using participatory approaches in the planning and early implementation stages and establishing a process of “learning by doing” can create the skills, confidence, and cohesion necessary to sustain collective support for the school. There must be recognition that community support is a process, not an event (Watt, 2001).

A further threat to equity objectives is the proliferation of community initiatives across different sectors. Government ministries and different donor agencies often work in isolation from each another (see Chapter 4). This results often in a distribution of service provision that does not reflect national priorities. It can also result in unrealistic total demands on communities and may force choices between basic needs; for example, “should a household pay towards the installation of a water pump by withdrawing a daughter from school?”

Moreover, within the rural areas there are not only differences among communities in their ability and capacity to contribute to education but also among individual households within a particular community. The policy challenge is to mobilize resources from those parents and communities that are able to contribute and at the same time ensure that children whose parents and communities are not able to do so are provided with equivalent opportunities to learn and complete the basic education cycle.

This challenge has been addressed by (i) strategies providing assistance to communities or schools and (ii) targeted support for disadvantaged children.
These strategies and some different ways in which they have been operationalized are reviewed below.

Support to communities and schools
Matching-fund strategies are designed to provide an incentive to communities to mobilize local resources by matching them in a given ratio with centrally provided subsidies. The greatest challenge in designing these strategies is making sure that the poorest communities and households – often with very limited cash resources – are not asked for levels of contribution they cannot possibly afford.

A possible response to this issue is found, for instance, in the Tanzania Community Education Fund project (*Chapter 10*), where more favorable financial conditions for the weak schools were introduced and more active involvement of district councils for these schools ensured. In fact, the very small contribution of the poorest communities was topped by district funds, and this total amount further matched with central funds. Several project reports also mention that weak schools needed more technical assistance in needs assessment and grant design than had originally been programmed.

Devolving responsibility for setting contribution levels for matching funds down to the community may help address this problem. If the community decides how much it can afford as a matching grant, and the poor have the voice in this decision-making, this process becomes an important safeguard against inappropriately high grant requests. Roberts-Schweitzer *et al.* (2002) find that communities can find ways to identify the poorest (and largest families) in order to avoid excessive burdens on those at risk by waiving fees and providing support to meet other school expenditures. Community approved self-imposed transparent school contributions seem to be a better instrument of school financing than the hidden fees and levies that are often lost in the pockets of school principals or the finance officers of district administrations.

On the other hand, however, planning capacity at the community level is usually weak, and contributions are often set at levels that the most vocal and privileged members find affordable. Unless community education programs include safeguards against such practices, community support can produce inequities. In any case, whether contribution levels are set by government or by the community, equity objectives can be met only if program design is flexible.
enough to allow contributions to be adjusted between and within communities according to ability to pay.

Yet the problems often go beyond the initial commitment to contribute resources; operating procedures and mechanisms are equally important. From a cash-matching grant scheme in Ghana under the Community Initiative Project, a number of interesting lessons were learned (see Bray, 1995):

- During periods of high inflation it is essential to make prompt payments to communities and to adjust grant levels (in the local currency) frequently.
- To maintain morale, disbursements for sizeable projects should be made in stages rather than in large lump sums on completion.
- Approval and payment processes are better decentralized because central authorities cannot be aware of all local conditions.

School development grants are an increasingly common way to provide direct support to communities (see Chapter 10). The grants typically provide financing for school development plans prepared by school staff, community education committees or school management boards, following a screening process with awards on a competitive basis. However, the challenge again is how to ensure that poor communities with poorly resourced schools can participate fairly. The Guinea Program for Small Grants to Schools (PPSE) discussed in Chapter 8 is an example of such a scheme.

Roberts-Schweitzer et al. (2002), analyzed school development grant programs in 37 World Bank supported projects. They found that specific ways to address equity issues include:

- Allocating specific grant funds for categories of schools that are deprived or include marginalized populations;
- Targeting the grant program to poor or otherwise deprived areas;
- Dedicating increased time and technical assistance to weaker schools/districts, to allow them to better be able to benefit from and compete for funding; and
- Clustering schools to enable them to support each other in proposal development and implementation.

Twelve out of 37 projects reviewed included a competitive screening process for the grant proposals. This competitive process – unless focused on certain types of schools only – can work against schools with weak organizational capacity, which may be well motivated but have little capacity or skills. Often it will be necessary to reserve a proportion of the awards for schools in the most
disadvantaged communities, as was done, for instance, in the School Improvement Project in Uruguay (Box 12.4.).

**Box 12.4. Targeting in the school improvement project in Uruguay**

A demand-driven approach was used where grants were awarded to schools depending on the validity of their proposal. However, in the grant allocation process an overall balance was maintained on the basis of schools’ socio-economic classification. Of the total number of grants, 54% were allocated to high-risk schools, 30% to average-risk schools and 16% to low-risk schools. One of the outcomes was that it helped to reduce the gap in academic achievement among schools in more favorable and in more disadvantaged areas. However, it was also clear that the impact was greater on average in schools that had already a more positive internal climate and greater interaction between teachers and parents. On the other hand, the impact was lower on average in schools with high turnover of teachers and principals.

*Source: Roberts-Schweitzer, (2003)*

Cluster schemes, where weaker schools can be assisted by others, can also work to address this equity need. The grant project in Cambodia (Roberts-Schweitzer, *et al.* 2002) used the concept of clustering for on average five to eight schools. But in some circumstances the equity challenge was transferred from the school to the cluster level, as progress among clusters was uneven. Clusters that are weaker, as a whole, needed more technical support and more resources in implementation. Additional difficulties may occur when within a cluster the resources may not always be directed towards addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged schools.

**Providing direct support to students in difficult circumstances**

In several instances issues of education disadvantage have been addressed by interventions targeted at individual students or groups of students. This support can be provided in the form of scholarships or income transfers linked to the attendance and performance of the designated children in school. Ideally it should be progressive and related to the poverty of the household. The most common intervention of this kind has been the provision of scholarships for girls (*Box 12.5.*) but other examples include interventions for HIV/AIDS orphans. On a large scale these interventions are often costly. Sustaining them will often require a careful targeting of those students who need it most.
Box 12.5. Providing support to girls in Malawi

In Malawi, during the 1990s, the Girls’ Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) program was set up with assistance from USAID (UNESCO, 2002). To reduce the costs of schooling, fee waivers for non-repeating primary school girls were introduced, and a new policy on pregnancies was adopted, allowing school girls to return to school after having had the baby. Enrollment and retention of girls in schools was positively affected, with a 13% enrollment increase per year compared to only 8% among boys. Villages where information campaigns had been held witnessed unprecedented increases in enrollments. The key to success seems to have been the way in which various factors constraining the participation of girls in school were tackled simultaneously.

Table 12.9  Effect of incentive programs on primary unit costs for six African countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Intended recipients of subsidy</th>
<th>School children receiving incentive (as % total enrollment)</th>
<th>Proposed size of subsidy per beneficiary (in $ PPP)</th>
<th>Increase in primary unit cost (as %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Rural girls in disadvantaged areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Rural girls from disadvantaged backgrounds</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>Rural girls</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Rural girls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Rural children, particularly girls</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Rural girls (sanitary protection)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Column 1 describes the intended recipients of the subsidy; Column 2 gives the percentage of total enrollment represented by this group in the base year (in each case, in the mid- to late 1990s); Column 3 shows the proposed size of the subsidy (in purchasing parity dollars) for each recipient; and Column 4 shows the percentage increase in the base-year average weighted unit cost of the proposed incentive program assuming the reported level of coverage (Column 2) and base-year enrollment levels (GMR, 2002).

Source: Unesco (2002)

Table 12.9 above from the GMR (2002) suggests that effective incentive programs for girls or for children from poorer households in general to attend school might add at least 5% to the average unit cost of primary schooling. In the 47 countries included in Bruns et al. (2003), this would add about $0.4
to $0.6 billion to the average annual additional expenditures required. These would increase the size of the average funding gap presently projected in the World Bank study by perhaps as much as 20% (UNESCO, 2002).

Effective targeting depends on robust and up-to-date data available at different levels of desegregation, which provide a clear picture of the means and needs of each education stakeholder. Yet often these data are unavailable or are not put to good use in planning and implementation, either because of capacity constraints or because the link between data and effective planning is not fully appreciated. Even where good quality data are available and are used, targeting public subsidy poses major challenges. Income thresholds for determining eligibility are notoriously difficult to define and implement (Watt, 2001). In practice, targeting has been effective where the beneficiaries are clearly identifiable or where broad geographical criteria have been adopted. More precise targeting of individual beneficiaries (poor households within a community) is much more difficult and may only be feasible where communities are ready to fairly identify the most needy households.

**Conclusion**

Reaching the EFA goal of universal completion and acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the national curriculum by all children is an objective that will require more than policy reforms aiming to increase the efficiency of resource utilization, mobilize additional national resources and increase support of the international community as specified by Bruns *et al.* (2003). It will require a larger-than-projected investment in essential inputs in the early years of the simulation period to create the preconditions for improvement in instructional practice and outcomes.

In many countries it will also require a determined effort to build partnerships with communities and civil society that will make it possible to mobilize additional resources to complement those mobilized by governments and external agencies. Moreover, to ensure that all students are reached with meaningful and equivalent opportunities to learn, it will often be necessary to carefully target public resources that exceed average national expenditures per student on the poorest and most disadvantaged students and communities.

Partnerships with communities and parent organizations are an important way to broaden ownership and strengthen the resource base for programs that aim to make the provision of quality education a reality for even the poorest
and most disadvantaged children. Parents and communities often contribute significant amounts to the education of their children. The financial challenge of the Education for All programs is to ensure that what parents can and do contribute is complemented effectively by public funding in such a way that no child is unable to access opportunities for quality learning. Emerging experience suggests that two policy areas are important in this regard: (i) meaningful involvement of communities in decisions on the allocation of the resources available at the school level, and (ii) effective targeting of adequate public resources at the most disadvantaged based on local level identification of need and ability to pay. Countries will need to analyze different options and variations of the indicative policy framework proposed by Bruns et al. (2003) to ensure that their national EFA policy framework provides the resources necessary to reach all children with quality education opportunities and do so in a financially sustainable way.
Education has become the linchpin of development. Economic progress, social development, peace and democracy all are inextricably linked with a nation’s ability to educate its children. The underperformance of education systems throughout sub-Saharan Africa has been an important factor in the failure to accelerate development. Without the ability to generate and apply knowledge, sub-Saharan Africa cannot hope to lift its people out of poverty.

Major strides have been made on the continent to expand opportunities for children to enroll in school. But the opportunities to learn in school have not expanded at the same pace. As a result less than a third of sub-Saharan African children complete primary school without the knowledge and the skills specified in the national curriculum (Chapter 1). Recent studies find economic growth to be associated not only with the number of years of school attendance of the labor force, but more importantly with what workers have learned (Hanushek and Kimko, 2000; Barro, 2001). Building a quality education system therefore is a critical development imperative, which no country can ignore. But without a quality foundation in basic education this challenge cannot be met. There can be no doubt, that quality improvement in basic education must be the number one education development priority for virtually every country on the continent.

Quality improvement is a challenge that many industrialized countries have struggled with for several decades. There have been many disappointments and failures; at the same time much has been learned and there is an increasingly solid knowledge base on promising reform strategies (Chapter 2). It is this knowledge base that this volume is trying to strengthen and enrich, focusing on the experience of sub-Saharan countries.

This chapter returns to the central question that this book investigates:

What are the options African countries can consider for improving the quality of instruction and learning achievement in basic education in a financially sustainable way?
Clearly this question has no single or simple answer that applies equally to all countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Every country will have to assess its own situation, reflect on the challenges it faces and formulate a strategy that aligns national priorities and local conditions. Yet country experiences and the research evidence presented before suggest that there are important conditions for, and elements of, successful policy and action that apply widely across the region. The particular combination of these elements—the pillars—of policy and action that constitute effective strategy will not be the same in every country. The relative priority will vary, the combinations will be different and each country will have to invent key parts of its own “wheel”.

Successful quality improvement has two elements (Fullan, 2000). The first is a shared vision among educators in the country on the process of teaching and learning, which makes explicit the pedagogical assumptions regarding how children learn, what level of performance is expected and which instructional strategies are effective under which conditions. This provides the foundation for a “culture of quality,” which will guide the “what” of a quality improvement program. The second is a strategy of implementation, providing the “how” of the reform program. Experience suggests not only that implementation matters (Bah-Lalya and Sack, 2004), but that in fact it is of the essence.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the analyses in the previous chapters. It highlights sub-Saharan African and international experience with those elements of quality improvement in basic education that have been found essential to policy and strategy for action. It then examines the features of a “culture of quality” and the building blocks of a strategy for the implementation of quality improvement programs.

**The seven pillars of quality improvement**

The more than 30 background papers and the 22 case studies that have been commissioned by the ADEA quality taskforce (Annex 1 and Annex 2) document the wealth of experience that has been drawn upon in the preceding chapters. As in the industrialized world, the path of quality improvement in sub-Saharan Africa has often been rocky and strewn with obstacles. There are experiences that provide warnings and lessons about the obstacles to avoid. But also, and perhaps most importantly, there are promising experiences that offer lessons on the way forward. These experiences are summarized here in terms of seven pillars of quality improvement: create the opportunity to
learn, improve instructional practice, manage the challenge of equity, increase school autonomy and flexibility, nurture community support, ensure a realistic financial framework, and respond to HIV/AIDS and conflict situations.

**Create the opportunity to learn**

Many sub-Saharan African children never have a real opportunity to learn. Their parents are often poor and illiterate and do not know how to support learning. Many students are in poor health, malnourished and hungry. Few have had preschool experiences to prepare them for formal schooling. The schools they attend lack the essential inputs necessary for effective instruction.

*Home support and school readiness.* Successful learning is strongly influenced by the interaction between home and school. Efforts to improve the quality of education are greatly enhanced by a supportive home environment. Such an environment helps the child to be ready when schooling starts—most often around age 6—ensures attendance and supports learning during the schooling period. “Learning begins at birth” and “the pre-conditions for educational quality, equity and efficiency are set in early childhood years, making attention to early childhood care and development essential to the achievement of basic education goals” (World Conference on Education for All, 1990b). The period up to 8 years of age is of supreme importance for emotional, intellectual and social development. Interventions at this stage can have a strong and lasting impact on the health and welfare of adults, and on performance in school. And many of these effects are greater for girls and children from disadvantaged communities. The care and education of young children (ages 0-3 years), a period when critical functions develop in the brain, is, first and foremost, the responsibility of parents, but governments can help parents acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out this role effectively. For children ages 4-6, the issue of school readiness becomes critically important; this is the time where care-givers help children to develop the perceptual, intellectual and social skills that will enable them to learn to read and write with facility during their first few months in primary school. The evidence on the effectiveness of early childhood development (ECD) programs—including preschool—(Hyde, Karin A.L. Hyde and Margaret N. Kabiru, 2004) from the industrialized and the developing world—including Africa is compelling. Effective ECD leads to increased enrollment at primary and secondary levels and improved progress and performance.
Even poor and illiterate parents can support the education of their children. One the strongest effects of adult basic education programs is the motivation of parents to enroll their children in school, provide a supportive home environment and make sure they stay enrolled. They can also provide parents with information and training on effective child rearing practices. The family literacy programs discussed in Chapter 9 may be a promising way to strengthen the home-school linkages.

Quite clearly strategies to improve the quality of basic education have to look beyond the primary school for support by adult basic education, early childhood and preschool programs. The issue then is not whether adult basic education or ECD programs can have a positive effect on students’ performance in school. There is considerable evidence (Chapters 5 and 9) that well-designed programs do. The challenge is to develop and test delivery mechanisms that are replicable and affordable (Chapter 12) by (i) targeting public support on the most disadvantaged groups who need these programs and can afford least to contribute in cash; and (ii) ensuring community management and support for these programs. Adult basic education programs in Senegal and Uganda (Chapter 9) illustrate ways to do this. In several countries, for example Mauritania, community-based approaches are being tested which, when taken to scale, would require less than 5% of the basic education program budget.

Essential inputs and supplies are in place. An adequate supply of essential inputs is a necessary but clearly not a sufficient condition for learning. Several times in the previous chapters the case has been made that inputs by themselves do not result in learning without effective process of instruction. At the same time it is quite clear that without an adequate supply of inputs attempts at school improvements will be doomed. Chapter 5 has identified a set of inputs that have a particularly strong relationship with learning achievement. Chapter 12 provides some cost estimates. Table 13.1 below summarizes theses analyses.

Quite clearly such a summary table can only be indicative and every country will need to consider what its list of essential inputs will look like given its financial resources and the demands on its education system. But a key first step in every quality improvement process must be a strategy that ensures that every school has at least a package of essential inputs that allow it to function productively.
**Improve instructional practice**

There can be no quality learning without effective instruction. Improving the instructional process goes to the heart of better schooling. Quality instruction cannot be mandated. It must be adopted, adapted, and applied by individual teachers. *Chapters 6-8* have reviewed the knowledge and experience that has been gained with different strategies that can help teachers improve their practice. In this section four are highlighted.

**Table 13.1 Enhancing learning achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Promising avenue</th>
<th>Blind alley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Using African languages as medium of instruction in early grades</td>
<td>“Colonial” languages Discovery learning and open ended instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content organized in a limited number of subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct instruction with supporting structured materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning materials</td>
<td>A textbook in core subjects for every child</td>
<td>Computers in classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notebook and other supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sundry classroom supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>1000 hours of instruction</td>
<td>Double shift use of teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular teacher presence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrangements for substitute teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Community managed classroom construction</td>
<td>National competitive bidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Double shift use of classrooms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and schools</td>
<td>Continuous in-service training and support</td>
<td>Lengthy pre-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More female teachers</td>
<td>Centralized management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distance education for teachers</td>
<td>Inspections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School-based management</td>
<td>Specialist teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training school heads as instructional leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support by pedagogical counselors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>School lunches</td>
<td>Nutrition and ECD Services provided by central government agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community managed ECD and preschool programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School health (micro nutrients and parasites)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>School management committees with authority on resource allocation and school organization</td>
<td>Decentralization of responsibility without resources Mass campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult basic education focused on learning needs and interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on Lockheed and Verspoor, (1991), Fuller (1994)
A relevant curriculum. A relevant curriculum is one that connects learning to the child’s experience and environment, responds to parental expectations and demands, and at the same time prepares students not only for today’s world but for society as it will develop in the next fifty years. Connecting to the students’ context means in sub-Saharan Africa first and foremost moving to mother tongue instruction—at least in the early grades. It also means a content that builds on the local environment and culture. The experience of Zambia, Mali and Burkina Faso with the use of African languages as the medium of instruction demonstrates how these challenges can be tackled.

Responding to the labor market expectations of parents and society means that the curricula will need to emphasize the acquisition of basic skills. More than 35 years ago W. Arthur Lewis—winner of the 1979 Nobel prize for economics—observed in a paper presented at the 1966 IIEP symposium on the “qualitative aspects of education planning with particular reference to developing countries” that “the students’ need for flexibility is matched by society’s needs where the nature of jobs to be done is subject to change”. Basic education, he continues, “ought to lay a foundation which will enable a worker to change his skills as opportunities change” (Lewis, 1969). Rapid technological change and an economic environment that is globalizing make this case for a curriculum that emphasizes the acquisition of generic cognitive skills in basic education even stronger today than it was in 1969.

Competent teachers. The classroom is where inputs are transformed into learning. Without a competent teacher no curriculum can be implemented effectively. In sub-Saharan Africa, improving teaching practice will require changes in the traditional rote learning methods that still dominate the vast majority of classrooms. In light of the well-documented difficulties faced by efforts to shift instructional practice towards open-ended approaches, e.g., child-centered, activity-oriented teaching, in both sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world, a shift towards instructional practice that is more direct and explicitly focused on learning appears as the most realistic option. Regardless of the approach adopted, however, there is need to be cognizant of the reality of the African classroom with often very large student numbers or multi-grading. Promising instructional methods for these situations do exist—they include the use of highly structured self-directed learning materials accompanied by the explicit teaching of new content, as in Escuela Nueva and BRAC.

Whatever instructional practice is adopted by a country as desirable has implications for how teachers are prepared, at both the pre-service and in-service
levels. In this respect, very significant changes are taking place in the way teachers are trained, hired, and remunerated. Many sub-Saharan countries are recruiting teachers with more general education, shorter pre-service preparation, and more classroom-based teaching experience (see, for instance, the case of Guinea in Chapter 7). In many countries new teachers, with or without pre-service preparation, are hired as contract teachers often by district authorities or communities. This places new demands on the in-service training systems, which must respond to the needs and the wants of an increasingly diverse teaching force. Uganda and Guinea have tackled this challenge with programs that reflect a strategy of decentralized program delivery aiming at continuous improvement of teaching practice instead of the traditional centrally directed occasional in-service events (Chapters 7 and 8).

School heads as instructional leaders. Central to the task of quality improvement will be the head teacher. Often his role has been reduced to an administrative one. Yet there is ample evidence that successful quality improvement is a whole school process led by the head teacher. Instructional leadership is the new challenge for which few head teachers are well prepared. Improving the selection of head teachers to become a process that is competence based rather than seniority based is a first step. In addition, the training programs that a few countries have launched (Chapter 7) to prepare head teachers for the demands of this role are examples of promising practice that can contribute significantly to the goal of quality education for all.

The early years. The first two years of schooling are particularly critical to a child’s educational future, for in these years the foundations of the basic literacy and numeracy skills are built. Gauthier et al. (2004) cite research that suggests (for the US) that the level of reading competence at the end of the first year of schooling is a highly reliable indicator of future successful learning performance. And yet, many children are particularly poorly served in these early years. The classes – often with a very high proportion of repeaters – are often large, much larger than in the later years when many children have dropped out. The teacher is often inexperienced – more senior teachers teach the higher grades to prepare students for national end-of-primary school examinations. The language of instruction is often unfamiliar. The routines of schooling are usually unknown to the child and inappropriate for his or her age. Unsurprisingly, failure rates are high.

A convincing case can be made that quality improvement strategies will need to give special attention to the early grades. Avoiding large classes by
combining upper grades and splitting the first grade, assigning experienced teachers to first grade and using the mother tongue as the language of instruction are measures that are not particularly costly and can improve learning performance of many children. For example, the Zambia “break through to literacy program” cost only about $1 per child, per year. An important priority will be to improve the quality of reading instruction (Gauthier et al., 2004). With competent teachers and appropriate class sizes, there is no reason why an African child taught in the mother tongue would not be able to master basic reading and writing skills by the end of grade one, as is common in other regions of the world.

Manage the challenge of equity

Education will contribute to poverty alleviation only to the extent that it reaches all children, including poor and rural children—especially girls—who do not have access to education at all or only to low quality learning opportunities. The quest for quality must therefore be equity based. An equitable strategy is one that aims at the same set of core instructional objectives for all children (Chapter 3). But it does not follow that the education process and delivery mechanisms will have to be the same. Quite the contrary. It is clear that it will be impossible—and not even desirable—to try to reach all children with the traditional model of the six-classroom/six-teacher school. Flexibility in delivery mechanisms and in instructional process is central to meeting the equity objectives embedded in the EFA agenda, provided that such diversity is placed within an integrated system where all children have a real opportunity to learn and achieve at a level that gives them a fair chance to pursue their education, contribute to society and further their family’s social and economic well-being.

Many countries have developed alternative ways of reaching children (Chapter 9), though often these programs take place on a small scale and are outside the government school system. Some alternative programs have become firmly embedded in the communities they are designed to reach, but others have had difficulty moving beyond the pilot stage. Many remain dependent on external financial support. Few have become an integral part of national EFA strategies and financial frameworks. There are exceptions, such as Senegal where the literacy program and the écoles communautaires de base are

74. The Nigeria nomadic education program is a good example.
75. Ndiaye, 2003
fully integrated in the national EFA plan and supported financially by several donors in the framework of a 10-year investment program. Much of the evidence on the effectiveness of multi-grade instruction and on the use of African languages comes from experiments in schools that are outside the traditional system. In some—but too few—cases these experiences have resulted in national policy.

Yet major challenges remain in helping government school systems adopt a policy of diversity and encourage schools to consider flexible and affordable delivery mechanisms that provide a common core curriculum to children in diverse environments. Documentation and analysis of costs and learning outcomes of alternative programs remain deficient in many cases. Many programs have not been able to provide children with a chance to move into the formal system. Many programs receive little support from the national budget and are heavily dependent on the willingness of external donors—often NGOs—to provide essential financing. This situation needs to be reversed if the goals of EFA are to become a reality. Programs with high cost per learner cannot be accommodated even within an expanding sector financial framework. A parallel system with perceived unequal, dead-end outcomes will—as in the past—be rejected by the public. The challenge is to demonstrate the programs’ cost-effectiveness to national authorities—including the Ministry of Finance—and to donors, and to convince parents, teachers and other stakeholders of the equivalence of learning outcomes.

Increase school autonomy and flexibility
National policy can provide an enabling environment but ultimately quality improvement will depend on action taken in schools and in classrooms. This requires that the authority and the resources to act be shifted to the school level. Many African governments are recognizing this and are supporting a gradual move towards school-based management (Chapter 10). At the same time they are reconsidering the nature of school supervision.

School-based management. Large changes in the way education is managed are taking place throughout the region. Virtually all countries are decentralizing management functions to regional or district offices of the Ministry of Education or to local authorities. Schools in sub-Saharan Africa are expected

76. ADEA, WGNFE, 2003
77. For example the “pédagogie convergente” in Mali is now national policy
to become increasingly self-managed and make decisions about curriculum, budgets and resource allocation and staff and students. Within nationally defined standards and operational parameters, schools have increasing flexibility to adapt school organization and instructional practice to local conditions. Teachers are being encouraged to adapt reforms and innovations to local conditions and student learning needs. The resource transfer takes place as conditional block grants (Uganda and Tanzania), as support for school development projects developed at the school level (Guinea, Madagascar and Senegal) or through subsidies to community owned and operated schools (Chad and Mali). There is a large variation in the way these processes are being implemented, and progress is almost always uneven and slower than anticipated. Government financial procedures are often poorly adapted to the demands of decentralized financial management. But, most important, it is the lack of experience and capacity constraints at the school level and in the school management committees that has often limited the expected results. At the same time there are several promising experiences that have been documented in Chapter 10, which suggest that a persistent effort at building capacity for planning and experimentation at the school level can help to create an environment highly conducive to quality improvement.

**Monitoring, supervision and support.** The move towards school-based management has important consequences for central ministry offices. Their role is evolving towards (i) setting norms and standards; (ii) providing adequate financing; and (iii) monitoring policy implementation and assessing progress in student learning. The latter function is particularly critical in a context where quality improvement is the key focus of policy reforms and education development programs (*Chapter 11*). SAQMEC, PASEC, MLA and NESIS\(^78\) have helped countries strengthen their capacity to collect and analyze data on trends in system performance and student learning. This is of critical importance. Reliable data—including data on quality enhancing inputs, processes and learning results—are essential to the successful management of quality improvement programs, especially in a context of scarce resources. In such an environment learning from experience can become increasingly driven by evidence based on qualitative and quantitative data.

Monitoring progress through quantitative surveys and statistics will not suffice. Schools will need support and supervision as they address quality issues. This requires changes in traditional supervision functions. In many countries

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the role of inspectors is increasingly one of pedagogical support and counseling and less one of administrative supervision (Chapters 8 and 10). In some countries the two roles have in fact been split to avoid role confusion that may reduce the effective performance of either function (Brunet, 2004).

In sum, increased school autonomy and flexibility are enabling countries to shift the operational responsibility for quality improvement to the school level. The school is recognized as the unit of change (Chapters 8). The central ministry offices are changing their role and responsibility gradually to create the conditions that will enable schools to play this role by providing the necessary resources and professional support for improvement in instructional practice, monitoring progress, and taking remedial action when necessary. These processes have started in many countries, but they will need to be intensified and continued to ensure a sustained process of quality improvement.

**Nurture community support**

As noted above, quality improvement results from the interaction of parents, communities and schools. Increased school autonomy is a policy that almost always has been pursued in conjunction with a strengthened accountability towards the community. In several cases, parents have established schools and then obtained additional support from the government. In others, school management committees were established or existing PTAs were empowered to participate in decision-making about issues such as the preparation of school development programs or the allocation of school resources.

Traditionally communities have contributed to school development mainly through contributions for the development of physical facilities and equipment. But increasingly their role is broadening and they are becoming partners in school development including efforts to enroll and retain children, set expenditure priorities, discuss curriculum adaptations and sometimes even get involved in school management. In Mauritania, for example, teachers’ eligibility for a “remote location bonus” is contingent upon community certification of regular presence. In other countries communities are involved in the identification of eligibility of fee waivers or scholarships for poor children (Chapters 10 and 12).

But in many instances communities have not been able to contribute as effectively to the improvement of education opportunities as had been hoped. Lack of personal experience with schooling, little knowledge about financial
management, and confusion about the authority, role and responsibility of community-based institutions have often thwarted the potential of community involvement. On the other hand, where these issues are dealt with effectively through agreements between stakeholders on organizational and financial management arrangement, information sharing and training, real partnerships between governments and communities can be established and good results can be achieved (Glassman and Millago, 2004). NGOs have in many instances been instrumental in facilitating this process.

**Ensure a realistic financial framework**

The resource requirements of quality education for all are considerable (*Chapter 12*). Mobilizing these resources will require a consistent effort sustained over time. Many countries will need to increase the allocations in government budgets for basic education. The international community will need to live up to the commitments it made at the World Education Forum in Dakar. In many countries communities will need to add to these resources. It will be important, however, to provide the inputs and establish processes necessary for effective teaching and acceptable learning achievement and to ensure that no child will be excluded from school because of his or her parents’ inability to pay. The governments’ allocation of resources within the basic education sector will inevitably involve difficult choices to ensure that:

- About $10-15 per child per year are allocated for non-teacher salary school level inputs.
- Salaries are established at a level that attracts and retains competent teachers and allows the country to reach its education for all objectives.
- Class sizes are manageable.
- Community contributions are set at a level that members can afford and that are based on a consistent and equitable policy throughout the country.

The financial challenge of quality basic education is such that countries cannot hope to make measurable progress towards the goal of universal completion and learning unless they also make serious progress to increase the efficiency in the allocation of resources. This implies, first, investing as a matter of priority in those inputs that are known to have a strong positive impact on learning achievement and provide these at levels of optimum effectiveness (*Chapters 5 and 12*); and second, it implies reducing the degree of random variation in the allocation of per student resources between schools (*Chapter 12*).
Considerable progress has been made in strengthening the ability of countries to analyze the financial choices they have. More than 15 countries have developed financial projection models, which have helped officials look at the financial implications of policy decisions and carefully consider the trade-offs that need to be made. Quality is not free. On the other hand, poor quality implies a waste of public resources, which in the long run will be even more expensive.

**Respond to HIV/AIDS and conflict**

HIV/AIDS and armed conflicts are undoing in many countries whatever progress has been made in education development. Resources potentially available for education development have had to be diverted to health care or defense expenditures. Teachers and students with HIV/AIDS and students, whose parents have the disease or have died from it, have difficulty attending school regularly. Schools in war zones close or function only intermittently. The number of orphans and displaced children is increasing dramatically. Education, and in particular quality education, will remain an impossible dream for many children living in precarious conditions. This threatens the long-term development prospects of countries even when the spread of HIV/AIDS slows and conflicts end. In past years messages about the threat of HIV/AIDS and the potential impact on the education system have alerted education officials and political leaders in many countries (see Box 6.3 for an example from Uganda). Emerging data suggest that information campaigns and the availability of ARV drugs have resulted in prevalence and mortality rates that are lower than was feared a few years ago. This is encouraging and it provides a strong incentive to continue and intensify these programs.

Children in difficult circumstances in sub-Saharan Africa have often been able to fall back on the support provided by the extended family and community members. But with the dramatic increase in numbers of HIV/AIDS cases, many families find it increasingly difficult to do so. At the same time, public resources that would take some of the burden of families and communities that care for these children are limited and will rarely be able to fully respond to their needs. Ensuring acceptable education opportunities for children living under these circumstances will require effective partnerships between governments, NGOs and communities. Community-funded and operated schools, which functioned for example in Uganda and Chad during the civil strife of the 1980s, provided a basis for rebuilding the system. In countries affected by conflict, where governments often ceased to provide education services, com-
munities have often banded together and provided the resources that made it possible for schools to continue to function, often in the absence of even the most minimal instructional materials and often with dramatically underqualified teachers. Unsurprisingly, in these situations levels of learning are usually very low.

Similar examples can be found outside Africa, for example in El Salvador (Box 13.1.), where publicly supported but community-owned and operated schools have become an important part of the education system.

**Box 13.1. Peace in El Salvador**

After a decade of civil war had devastated the country but left no clear winner or loser, peace accords were signed in 1992. During the war, the government had no effective control over large parts of the country and no public education services had been offered there. Instead, communities established community schools, bearing the cost themselves, paying teachers when they could. At the end of the war, El Salvador’s basic education system faced low enrollment, high repetition (50%+) and high dropout (20%). The Ministry of Education (MOE) quickly identified expanding access to, and quality of, basic education as a central policy objective both to rebuild national unity in the post-war era and to promote long-term economic development. Using the schools established by parents as a model, the government began a program of support and expansion for ‘Educacion con participacion de la comunidad’ (EDUCO) to improve access and quality of schooling in targeted rural areas. EDUCO also sought to reinforce the sense of shared responsibility for education among national authorities, non-governmental and community organizations and organized parent groups.

EDUCO was set up as an autonomous, parallel management unit within the Ministry of Education, dedicated to supporting designated EDUCO schools. The key feature of EDUCO schools is self-management. Each EDUCO school is operated by an elected Community Education Association, which receives a direct transfer of funds from the Ministry and is also able to obtain funds from other sources.

The improvements have been dramatic. By 1999, more than 237,000 children were enrolled in the EDUCO system, up from 8,400 in 1991. In EDUCO schools, dropout rates have plunged. Fewer students fail; the portion of students repeating grades fell from 23% in 1994 to just 15% in 1998. EDUCO has shown that underprivileged students from rural areas perform as well or better than more privileged students at government-run urban schools.

*Source: World Bank (1997)*

Dealing with the consequences of HIV/AIDS and war is often best done by community organization with the financial and technical support of NGOs. Communities can play a key role in the targeting of public support to the
poorest and most disadvantaged children in the community (Chapter 12). School management committees could be involved in budgeting resources that would allow the school to hire locally substitute teachers in cases of justified teacher absences such as those caused by HIV/AIDS-related illnesses. But they will often need support to organize themselves, establish procedures and define criteria for the identification of those most in need. NGOs are often best placed to provide this kind of support.

**A culture of quality**

Building a national strategic framework considering these seven pillars is critical to improving quality. Equally important, but much less well understood, is the development of a culture that explicitly aims to promote quality and learning and that consistently drives forward a quality improvement agenda. Such a culture is driven and sustained by a set of values and beliefs in the process of teaching and learning – a theory and practice of education and a vision of educational practice – that is widely shared. The most important responsibility of the leaders of the education system is to establish such a culture, make sure that it is widely shared, and model and encourage behaviors that put it into practice. Key features of such a system are:

- values that place learning in the center;
- a belief that failure is not an inevitable part of the education process, and that all children can learn given time and appropriate instruction;
- a commitment to equitable outcomes and a readiness to vary inputs and processes to achieve these;
- an improvement process that does not simply define outcomes and standards; but that relentlessly, on the means – on the processes and the skills required to bring about quality results; and
- a dedication to universal quality learning with diversity and flexibility in delivery mechanisms and instructional practice.

Such a system has little to do with the “machine bureaucracy” (Minzberg, 1978), the industrial-age model that has long been typical of the schools in the industrialized world and that still survives in many developing countries. In fact, education systems are much more like “living systems”. The new management systems that are emerging are inspired by this new metaphor (Wheatley 1999; Senge, 2000). Such systems are self-producing; they have the capacity to re-create themselves; they continually grow and evolve; they react and adapt continuously to changes in the environment; they have a large...
diversity as each part of the system reacts to information from its environment. Managing such systems means recognizing that the industrial age command and control models no longer work. Such systems grow, develop and change through incentives, through changes in the environment and by each element adapting and adopting successful practice. They are learning organizations. The change in metaphor for the education system is important. It indicates a different way of thinking and a different set of beliefs, a different mental model about what is important and how change occurs (Senge, 2000).

**Leadership in a culture of quality**
These kinds of organizations have a high degree of local control. They encourage and support local initiative. They emphasize, “improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning and the ability to develop shared learning and shared understanding of complex (…) issues. It is these capabilities that will allow learning organizations to be both more locally controlled and more well coordinated than their hierarchical predecessors” (Senge, 2000). Instead of mobilizing school-level stakeholders to respond to mandates from the top, upper levels now encourage, respond and support grassroots-level initiative.

Managing a system that sets out to promote a culture of quality in a top bottom partnership, means identifying very clearly what everyone in the system is supposed to do, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and means, and creating a work environment that motivates them to actually do it. Helping everyone in the system – from the Minster to the teachers – gain a sense of efficacy and responsibility, and encouraging them to do their best job with the resources available. Several of the country cases report experiences that move in this direction. For example, Senegal has established agreed job descriptions for all education sector staff. Benin has defined fundamental quality standards.

**Prevention of failure is the starting point**
Parents, teachers and education administrators have come to accept failure – made explicit by repetition, drop-out and non-learning – as a normal part of the education process. Sometimes high failure is seen as reflecting high standards; drop out has been seen to reflect low demand; and non-learning as the fault of the student. These assumptions are wrong. There is consider-

79. An example from Malawi cited in Moulton et al. (2000) is reported in Wolf et al. (1999).
able evidence that demonstrates the ineffectiveness of repetition as a way to enhance student learning (Chapter 5). Similarly, experience throughout the world has demonstrated that drop-out occurs most often when students and parents recognize that students are not learning (Chapter 1). And finally many pilot projects have demonstrated that even disadvantaged students learn when they are taught well. In a culture of quality, successful learning is the norm, failure the very rare exception.

**Benchmarking good practice**

Many businesses use “benchmarking” as a way to increase their productivity and the quality of their products. Benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices from high performing organizations to help an organization improve its work processes and products. Improving by learning from others is the short description of this tool. It involves examining how similar institutions achieve their performance levels and understanding the processes they use. In this way benchmarking helps explain the processes behind excellent performance.

Benchmarking is particularly appropriate for the education sector. In a culture of quality there is a continuous search for better ways of teaching and organizing the school environment. Teachers learn from other teachers, schools from other schools. Many school improvement efforts provide for opportunities for teachers from different schools to exchange experiences and learn from each other. Systematically studying how student learning can best be supported can strengthen these processes.

**Continuous learning is key**

Building a culture of quality involves continuous learning from experience and a commitment of people throughout the system to do their work differently. This process often begins with a careful assessment of where the school stands in relation to its quality goals, where it wants to be, how it is going to get there, and what each stakeholder can do to get there. Change often starts small and grows organically. But it is only sustainable if it involves learning, and learning requires that teachers, principals and others have opportunities to acquire the means and skills for new practice and new behavior.

80. [http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk/about_bench/whatisit.asp](http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk/about_bench/whatisit.asp)
82. Many of these ideas are from Senge, 2000.
Leadership in a culture of quality requires a vision, accepting personal responsibility, and modeling of behavior and attitudes. It implies changing the discourse around schooling from one that bemoans failure to one that celebrates success. But it also requires making sure that people involved at the grassroots level with basic education programs can do what they are expected to do. This means that objectives are formulated through a participatory process, that these objectives are set at a realistic level of change, that the instructional materials necessary are in place, and that technical support is readily available at the school level or close to it. But it also means that teachers accept responsibility for learning and that “downward accountability” (Chapter 10) becomes the system norm.

**Implementation is of the essence**

Implementation has long been recognized in developed and in developing countries as the Achilles heel of education policy reform, especially reform that aims at large-scale changes in the process of teaching and learning. Many carefully designed projects and programs have floundered on the rocks of implementation. Most of the education change literature documents the lessons of implementation in developed countries (Berman and Mclaughlin, 1977; Elmore, 1996; Fullan, 1991). Reviews of the implementation experience in developing countries (Verspoor, 1989; Dalin et al. 1994; Moulton et al. 2002; Bah-Lalya and Sack, 2004; Samoff et al. 2001) are few but testify similarly to the complexities of the implementation of large scale education change. The discussion of this literature in Chapter 2 and the country experiences reviewed in Chapter 8 highlight the complexities associated with the implementation of education reforms that aim at quality improvement, especially changes in classroom practices and improvement in student learning achievement. In most cases investment programs have been designed to bring about improvement in the conditions of teaching; yet in only few instances has there been improvement in the practice of teaching in the classroom on a large scale.

The implementation of education reforms in SSA is particularly complex as most reforms have multiple objectives combining policy for resource mobilization, expansion of access and improvement of quality in a single program. Moreover Verspoor (1989), Moulton et al. (2002) and Bah-Lalya and Sack (2004) all note the (i) disproportionate emphasis on program design as compared to implementation; (ii) “single recipe” approach to education change.

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83. Moulton et al. (2000) make this point explicitly.
and (iii) centralized nature of the planning and implementation processes. This undoubtedly reflects the mental model that many staff in donor agencies and education ministries have of the education system as an industrial-age machine bureaucracy, and that shapes – often tacitly – their implementation theory and assumptions. The reviews also suggest that governments – and sometimes agency field staff – may prefer to move disagreements on policy objectives or design specifications to the implementation phase when donor dominance is often less, reforms can be tackled piecemeal and compromises to water down onerous donor conditions worked out more easily.

Design assumptions often deviate from the local realities in several important ways:
- resource availability is typically overestimated;
- priorities for implementation sequencing are rarely defined;
- complexity of innovation is rarely considered from the teachers perspective;
- stability in the economic and political environment is assumed;
- the almost “chaotic” (Bah-Laya and Sack, 2004) nature of change is not recognized;
- capacity to manage logistics is almost always overestimated; and
- stakeholder – in particular teacher – acceptance and support is taken for granted.

The assumption that change is an orderly, rational and linear process that provides centrally defined fixes for the quality problems of schools is one that has been found to be false in almost every instance. In fact, there is an emerging consensus in the literature that:
- change is essentially a local process with the school as the unit of change;
- local learning and adaptation are key;
- developing local capacity – at the school, the community and the district level – is a condition sine qua non for success; and
- progress is incremental and uneven.

Implementation depends on application by thousands of teachers working inside the classroom. Good practice cannot be mandated. Fullan (2000) defines the challenge as one of “large scale reform grounded in local ownership”. Based on their reviews, Verspoor (1989) and Moulton et al. (2000) argue for an implementation model that provides for flexible and incremental implementation strategies; includes arrangements for learning from experience; allows the development and implementation of several innovations; recog-
nizes and values local level experience; and considers policy development and implementation as continuous, iterative and mutually reinforcing processes. Ultimately it is the coherence of the triad student learning, teacher learning and development, and school capacity building that will determine the effectiveness of particular school improvement policies.

The country case studies prepared for this publication include several examples of programs that are moving in this direction. The trends towards school-based management, the use of locally prepared school development plans as a basis for resource allocation, the decentralized teacher-demand driven in-service training and support programs, and the participatory approaches to program development (discussed in Chapters 8, 10 and 12) provide strong indications of the changes in the “mental models” of school improvement that are occurring in agencies, education ministries and other stakeholders. For example Tanzania and Uganda are providing substantial discretionary resources to schools to be managed locally; Senegal and Guinea are experimenting with the funding of school development plans. In-service teacher development is delivered in a decentralized locally responsive way in Guinea and Uganda; and Mauritania prepared its current education development plan through a participatory and iterative process that involved a wide range of local stakeholders and agencies.

These developments are promising. But two areas of concern remain that may jeopardize the ultimate success of this emerging implementation model. First, insufficient attention is being paid to issues of capacity development, especially at the community, school and district levels. Fullan (2000 p.56) argues that a decentralized framework for change implementation is essential but for this to work at least three conditions need to be satisfied: a rigorous downward accountability mechanism, a deliberate system of innovation stimulation, and, most importantly, the provision of opportunities for advancing the knowledge and the skills of all local stakeholders.

Second, systems for monitoring implementation progress and learning lessons from experience remain woefully inadequate. Educational statistics and management information systems rarely provide relevant, reliable and timely information. Educational statistics in many countries are unreliable and available with significant delay. NESIS has been able to redress this situation in several countries. But a considerable effort will be required to sustain, institutionalize and expand its activities. NESIS has also initiated the development of a statistical model for the collection and analysis of quality related indicators,
but this is still at the experimental stage. PASEC, SAQMEC and MLA have helped countries build a capacity to regularly collect data on schooling and student learning achievement. But the capacity for analysis remains weak in many countries and when developed is often difficult to sustain (Obeng et al. 2004). There rarely is a systematic effort to collect data to inform the policy process at the design phase and even more rarely during implementation.

In sum, a culture of quality is central to successful and sustained quality improvement. There is now substantial evidence that allows planners, policy makers and stakeholders to identify the pillars of a culture of quality that best fit a country’s context and education development priorities. But it will also bring to the fore the challenges of implementation, which need to be addressed if policies and strategies are to bring results in the classroom.
Evidence gathered for the study presented in this book suggests five important conditions that will need to guide and underpin effective action on quality improvement. First, a national commitment to a vision of quality education for all that is shared with all stakeholders and used as a beacon for action. Second, a readiness to select and sequence priorities for action in a way that reflects the ability of the education system to change while keeping a perspective on large-scale improvement and long-term development. Third, a determination to both utilize existing capacity and develop new capacity to carry out old and new tasks effectively. Fourth, a resolve to establish strong local and international partnerships. And, finally, a recognition that unless processes for continuous learning from practice are in place, quality improvement and enhanced learning achievement will remain an elusive goal for many countries, and much of the efforts to ensure commitment, strengthen partnerships and mobilize resources will have been in vain.

Many of these issues have been discussed in previous biennial meetings (Boxes 14.1, 14.3, and 14.4.). In fact, exhortations to garner political will, design simple projects, build capacity, strengthen partnerships, and ensure sustainability have been ubiquitous in the literature and in international meetings. But attempts to operationalize them have been few. The following sections look back at the findings of the preceding chapters and the earlier ADEA biennial meetings in an effort to elaborate on these conditions for action.

National commitment to quality

“Success in education development requires just as much passion as it does substance. Innovations need highly placed champions who can garner the support and commitment of change agents. The successful development of education requires the “buy in” of the highest political leadership. Innovations that are placed high on the national political agenda are most likely to register success” (Marope and Sack, 2001). This conclusion of the 2001 ADEA biennial meeting is widely accepted. The theme is one that recurs in almost
Box 14.1. 1999 ADEA Biennial Meeting (Johannesburg, South Africa)

What works and what’s new in education: Africa speaks

Factors identified as helping to ensure the success of various reform initiatives are:

- **Democratization and the norm of equality**: Macro-political contexts which nurture equity are the most conducive to educational development.
- **Political vision, conviction and commitment**: There must be a high-level commitment to provision of primary education.
- **Readiness to develop “as you go”**: Planning must not be allowed to delay implementation; refinement can be achieved en route.
- **Consultative and inclusive policy development and programming**: Plans need a broad consensus for success often garnered through consultation.
- **Relevance and sensitivity to needs**: Even very poor communities are ready to invest in education provided they understand and appreciate its value for them.
- **Decentralization of management and control of education**: There is a new basis for decentralized responsibility.
- **Information and analysis-based policy and programming**: Many successful cases have benefited from having a data and analytical research base.
- **A holistic multifaceted approach**: Successful interventions are usually multifaceted.
- **Cost-effective resource utilization**: Success may stem from innovative cost-savings.

Source: ADEA (2000)

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every discussion on policy implementation, be it slow progress towards the EFA goals or persistent education disadvantage for girls. Already, at the 1995 ADEA biennial meeting, political will was identified as the key to effective policy.

“Political will” may be a relatively straightforward trigger for policies that can be implemented from the top down over a short time. It is, however, often difficult to sustain, given the many competing priorities. Translating a political commitment to quality improvement into results in the classroom demands more than a statement by the country’s president or a decision to eliminate fees, and involves much more than “the will to act.” To transform a system that has for a long time considered failure as normal into a system that is committed to success for all requires a sustained commitment over time as well as a determination to nurture participation by all stakeholders.

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The political will to act may perhaps be best seen as the initial step towards a broad-based and long-lasting national commitment to a shared vision that embraces quality and equity and that provides the foundation for a “culture of quality.” Such a commitment is not only reflected in public pronouncements of policy, it is also made concrete by:

- Allocation of adequate resources;
- A focus on quality and learning in political discourse;
- Participation of all stakeholders; and
- Effective communication strategies to build broad-based support.

Building a consensus on the broad objectives of education policy that cuts across the political spectrum often is a daunting task. But it is one that a responsible polity cannot shirk, since the time horizon for education reform usually exceeds the one of democratically elected political leaders.

**Setting priorities and going to scale**

Quality improvement is by its very nature a complex and multi-faceted process. The gap between the ambitions of central level reformers and the reality of the field is frequently identified as a cause of low performance (Moulton et al., 2002). The World Bank’s Operation Evaluation department has identified for many years “complex and ambitious project designs” as a source of failure and advocated “simple projects.” At the same time governments are looking for ways to scale up projects that have been successful. But the challenge of scaling up has proved difficult to achieve (Samoff, 2001).

Quality improvement strategies thus need to deal with two distinct dilemmas. One is the definition of priorities, and the other is how to reach a meaningful number of students with innovations that have an impact on student learning. The definition of priorities in most cases is a matter of choice about scope and sequence of innovations. It is not a question about what to do and what not to do. It is answering the question of where to start and what to do later. The experience documented in the country case studies and the preceding chapters suggests the following for the selection of program priorities:

- Developing a sense of ownership of the quality-improvement process at the school level involving school staff, parents and community-level stakeholders is an essential precondition for action at the school level; intervention strategies conceived as a menu of options for local choice and

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85. See for example Ridker (1994)
adaptation to local conditions will give meaning to this ownership; the implication is an increase in the functional responsibilities at the school level and increasingly ambitious objectives for school-based management.

- Improvement in classroom practice based on the recognition of the teacher as the linchpin of quality improvement and the entry point for change; making effective teacher development, provision of essential instructional materials and the development of an effective school environment are critical; quality improvement will not succeed when teachers do not have the means or the skills to apply successful instructional methods.

- Reforms of curriculum content and method as a continuous process, recognizing that dominant practice changes only gradually; teaching methods that do not deviate too abruptly from existing practice, such as direct instruction, may be more readily adopted and applied.

Beeby (1966) has argued that the most severe constraint on the scope of innovation is the capacity of the teacher to change teaching practice. He proposes a gradual process of teacher capacity building, which he calls the “stages of growth” and which will determine the pace of development of the education system. Hopkins (2001) tackles the issue of sequencing by proposing different intervention strategies according to the school’s capacity to adapt, adopt and apply change (Chapter 8). Verspoor develops Beeby’s ideas further (Verspoor and Leno, 1986) and proposes a framework for the stages of quality improvement (Table 14.1). The framework is, of course, not intended to provide a precise recipe for the sequencing of interventions but rather to suggest how the different elements of the education process need to evolve in a coherent way. The model is school-focused and is intended to highlight that different schools will have a different capacity to change and that consequently progress will be uneven and often inequitable. To mitigate these effects, implementation strategies will need to target the weakest schools for special assistance and support.

A strategy reflecting these priorities would include elements of what Senegal does with its job description program, Benin with its program to define standards for Fundamental Quality Inputs, Guinea (PPSE) and Uganda (TDSM) with their decentralized teacher development and support systems, moves towards school-based management in Tanzania and the community mobilization efforts in Madagascar and Mali. The Fundescola program in Brazil (Box 14.2.) is an example of the way different elements of quality improvement have been phased and combined into a coherent strategy in that country. The sequence is
Table 14.1 Stages of quality improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>I - Unskilled</th>
<th>II - Mechanical</th>
<th>III - Routine</th>
<th>IV - Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEACHERS</strong></td>
<td>Ill-educated, untrained questionably trained in subject content or teaching techniques; often isolated and poorly motivated.</td>
<td>Basic general education, but little professional training; moderate subject mastery; incidental contact with colleagues through in-service training.</td>
<td>Adequate general education; trained; incidental contact with colleagues; interested in improving student performance.</td>
<td>Well educated; well trained; good subject mastery; frequent contact with colleagues; reader of professional publications; interested in improving student performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRICULUM</strong></td>
<td>Subject content narrow and unfamiliar to teachers; emphasis on three Rs. Low standards. High wastage accepted.</td>
<td>Highly structured. Emphasis on three Rs; standards imposed by examinations; repetition accepted as a means to maintain uniformity.</td>
<td>Curriculum broadening, but still driven by examinations; some adaptation is attempted. Little attention to emotional/creative development. Aim is prevention of failure.</td>
<td>Meaning and understanding stressed in wider curriculum. Allowance for variety of content and methods. Automatic promotion. Attention to emotional/creative development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEACHING TECHNIQUES</strong></td>
<td>Recitation, rote learning and memorizing; students copy from blackboard. No individualization.</td>
<td>Memorization; Strict adherence to syllabus and curriculum sequences. Emphasis on short-term activities and objectives; rigid application of one instructional technique.</td>
<td>Memorization still important, but attempts to introduce &quot;learning-by-doing.&quot; Teachers begin to use textbooks and materials in a more goal-oriented way. Limited variation. Some tracking of students.</td>
<td>Self-generated habits of learning; ability to investigate new ideas; longer-term instructional planning allows teacher to adapt use of materials and curriculum sequence to student needs. Individualized or multi-group instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPERVISION/SUPPORT</strong></td>
<td>Sporadic, focused on administrative control and compliance with regulations.</td>
<td>Occasional; focused on compliance. In-service training available infrequently, focused on dissemination of structured programs. Training emphasizes application of curricula and materials.</td>
<td>Supervision and in-service training becomes more frequent and less oriented towards compliance. Training emphasizes the application of teaching. Role of headmaster as source of knowledge more important.</td>
<td>Headmaster becomes source of pedagogical support. External support and assistance is available as needed. Training emphasizes the development of professional skills, allowing teachers to select appropriate approach in each situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEACHER REACTION TO INNOVATION</strong></td>
<td>Ignorance, confusion and non-application.</td>
<td>Uncertain about use: focused on personal mastery. Dilution in order to adapt innovation to personal, professional capacity and motivation.</td>
<td>Skeptical about immediate effects, but willing and able to make honest effort; will try to adapt innovation for ease of classroom management.</td>
<td>Needs of pupil is central focus. Willing to try and test alternative approaches, confident about own ability to master and adapt innovation to fill needs of particular students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEASIBLE CHANGES</strong></td>
<td>Strengthen supervision and support; bring order to the school; provide structured textbooks, teachers’ guides, and essential instructional materials; train teachers in subject matter and basic teaching techniques. Help teachers perceive need for and possibility of improvement.</td>
<td>Broaden curriculum, increase subject mastery; training; introduce a few additional, still relatively simple techniques. Teachers’ guides and textbooks set standards enforced by exams. Increase confidence of teachers through training and school-level support.</td>
<td>Teaching more focused on understanding; some diversity and flexibility introduced in the curriculum. Objectives can be broadened to include some attention to emotional/creative development. Promote professional exchange between teachers.</td>
<td>Innovation becomes permanent feature. Teachers behave and perceive themselves as professionals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Verspoor and Leno, 1986
one where initial investments in ownership and essential inputs are followed by the preparation of school development plans, which, over time, become increasingly ambitious. This strategy allowed the government to tie together national objectives for quality improvement in a flexible package with strong local grounding.

Box 14.2. Providing resources and strengthening capacity for school improvement in poor communities in Brazil

Brazil’s Fundescola School Improvement Program (Roberts – Schweitzer and al., 2002) is an example of the use of the school development plan approach, which is encapsulated in a highly developed support structure and stepwise approach. The program goal is to align local government policies and engage the public to support the reduction of disparities in education quality across primary schools and to increase the effectiveness of schools. There are three levels of intervention: the school, the local government’s education secretariat, and the broader public.

At the school level, there is a four-step process. The first step is to increase parents’ and teachers’ sense of ownership of the school by transferring limited amounts of financial resources to the elected school council over which they have discretionary decision-making power. The second step is to assure that each and every school operates at least at an agreed minimum functional level in terms of staffing, materials, furniture, and infrastructure. This step also involves a transfer of funds to the school council but along with it a detailed technical specification of what needs to be done to bring that school up to the agreed standard. In the third step schools – with the community’s involvement – prepare their own strategic school development plan, with the support of their local government’s education department. School principals initially undergo an intense training program, addressing such issues as community mobilization, resource management, target setting, and monitoring. Students, parents, teachers and school principals work together at every stage of the plan’s development to reach concrete goals for their school. The school councils receive additional funds once the school development plan is ready. The fourth step directly targets instruction and learning in the classroom. It uses pedagogical and managerial models proven to be successful in increasing student learning achievement and couples it with a targeted, technical support program from the local department of education and the ministry of education. Local governments need to see the school as their principal client, for instance, by carrying out more effective school monitoring and support. The intervention with the broader public directly is seen as a crucial element to achieve turning the school improvement efforts upside-down by putting the school rather than the government in the driver’s seat.

Source: Roberts-Schweitzer et al. (2002)

The second dilemma is devising a strategy that will result in improvements in the quality of instruction and the level of learning for a large number of students, including those that are poor or otherwise disadvantaged. This is the
The challenge of going to scale that was discussed at the 2001 biennial meeting in Arusha (Box 14.3.). The case studies commissioned for this paper and some others provide illustrations of the main going-to-scale strategies that have been identified in the literature: “scale by explosion” and “scale by replication.” The first strategy is being used in Mauritania to introduce a number of well-defined changes in the way resources are allocated and instruction is organized. Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania used it to abolish fees and introduce universal primary education with a “big bang.” Burkina Faso used it to introduce results-based school management and support.

Box 14.3. 2001 ADEA Biennial Meeting (Arusha, Tanzania)

Reaching Out, Reaching All

How to sustain and expand policies and practices that have proved effective was one of the two themes of the meeting. Several lessons emerged from the discussions:

- Taking an innovation (or reform) from the pilot stage to a larger scale is a complex process that is difficult to complete. Success is rare, and the obstacles are numerous: different contexts, lack of local demand, inadequate capacity to manage and carry out the innovation, social resistance and opposition.
- A determined leadership, adequate resources, relevant communication strategies, delegation of responsibility to – and capacity building of – local players are all key factors for success.
- In some cases the success of the innovation may depend on the small scale of its implementation, in which case it may not be possible to expand it.

What matters most is to recreate the conditions that nurtured the successful experience and the local roots that can sustain it, rather than its content and the specific elements.

Source: ADEA (2002)

The challenge of this strategy is that it is very difficult to introduce in this way changes that are educationally demanding – especially those that affect the core of the instructional process referred to in Chapter 7 as the “grammar of schooling.” On the other hand, it may be possible to use an explosion strategy to introduce a series of small innovations over time; the accumulation of these

86 Myers, R. (2000) also suggests a third strategy, namely expansion by association where local institutions pick and choose innovations that appear of particular relevance and interest to them. This strategy – unless accompanied by well-designed incentives – makes it difficult to align national objectives and local initiatives. Yet, a bottom up school development strategy could be designed to provide schools with information on other initiatives that may be of interest to them. Guinea PPSE is an example of a case that has this potential.
small innovations will over time result in substantive change. But under these circumstances progress will almost inevitably be uneven and remedial interventions and support will be necessary.

Most common is going to scale by replication – think big, start small. The cases of Mali and Zambia reform are illustrative of this strategy in the country cases commissioned for this paper. They are examples of the few pilot projects that go to scale (Healey and DeStefano, 1997). The key features and the conditions under which they can be successful are discussed in Samoff et al. (2001). The Zambia **Breakthrough to Literacy** program suggests that an innovation can be taken to scale successfully when the innovation is rather narrowly focused and demonstrably effective, when the costs are carefully controlled, and the support structure well managed. The *pédagogie convergente* in Mali involving the introduction of 13 African languages of instruction in the early years is an innovation that is more ambitious in objectives and more complex in its logistics. After a much longer period of experimentation than the Zambia case, it is now moving to scale and is experiencing the challenges of increased demands of logistics management and pedagogical supports. But the attention paid to cost management and outcome evaluation would suggest that – assuming the institutional and managerial can be dealt with – the innovation can be taken to scale successfully.

The Guinea case of pre-service teacher education reform demonstrates an example of a large-scale change that was being evaluated and adapted continuously, which, with a careful analysis of the financial implications and evaluation of effectiveness, has moved within five years to general adoption. Virtually all cases, but especially Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia, illustrate how the education change process is essentially a learning process where the lessons from experience are fed back into the project design. This sequence of several cycles of learning and adaptation may be what is most characteristic of successful change and innovation.

These experiences lend support to David Korten’s (1980) suggestion for a learning model of going to scale. He suggests that a strategy for going to scale will have to go through three phases (i) learning to be effective; (ii) learning to be efficient and (iii) learning to generalize. Most education pilot programs

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87. This is in fact a combination of the explosion and functional scaling-up strategy discussed by Samoff et al. (2003). An example of this approach is the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) in India; see Pandey, (2000).
in Africa focus on the first step. But few do actually develop convincing evidence on learning outcomes and cost or prepare for the day when the human, the institutional and the financial large-scale applications preclude the kind of nurturing and close-up support that allows a pilot program to be successful.

Maybe there is a case to rethink the design requirements of pilot projects. Many pilot projects try to introduce teaching methods that deviate considerably from existing practice and anticipate teacher skills and instructional materials that are not likely to be available in many schools. Would it not be preferable to design innovations of a limited scope that do not deviate too far from existing practice, that can be adapted and applied by a large number of teachers without too much difficulty and support implementation over time of a series of those innovations? Gradually increasing the capacity of schools to change would in fact combine the functional and the explosion strategy and be a real learning strategy.

**Building capacity**

“Weak capacity” is consistently identified as one of the main constraints on development in Africa and capacity development is the commonly recommended response. Capacity has a symbiotic relationship with education: Poor education produces weak capacity and weak capacity produces poor education. The consensus on the importance of capacity building has not produced a lot of progress in addressing it. In fact, if anything, the challenge has become greater as the circle of stakeholders involved in education has enlarged. Capacity-building strategies in a context of decentralization and democratization can no longer focus exclusively on the central services of the ministry of education but need to include teachers, administrators at the decentralized levels, community members involved with school management and NGOs involved in the education sector. Michael Fullan (1993) describes “capacity” in the education sector as:

> The ability at every level in the system to learn and bring about successful change. The old hierarchical, bureaucratic models of the past will not be able to do this in the future, nor will any single alternative model. Building capacity involves providing a variety of sources of knowledge and expertise from which teach-

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89. See chapters 10 and 13.
ers and schools can select the most appropriate to solving their particular problems.

Capacity building\(^{90}\) has often been equated with off-site, one-shot training, the benefits of which are difficult to sustain in work environments that run counter to what trainees learn. Or it is limited to introducing new functions, such as management-information systems and performance-monitoring systems. What is left out is the improvement of existing functions and the activation of existing resources. Existing management functions and structures are often not adequately analyzed. When a function falters, foreign technical assistants are brought in to keep things running, without the assurance that these foreigners will take the time to leave behind capable staff people with the resources they need to do their job. Moreover, capacity-building strategies often do not set out to identify and mobilize latent capacities from inside and outside the system. Effective capacity-building strategies begin by creating an environment that encourages the utilization of existing capacity. Management audits and decentralization are among the promising approaches in this regard.

A management audit is an analysis of organizational arrangements, including an identification of dysfunctions in how work is organized. Its purpose is to provide detailed information and extensive support for improvements in work structures and practices. Burkina Faso, The Gambia, and Ghana have each conducted a management audit in the preparation of World Bank projects. UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (Sack and Saidi, 1997) and the World Bank (World Bank, Global Education Reform website) have each produced written guidance for ministries of education that want to conduct management audits.

The decentralization of education services is the move of many administrative functions to meso – or intermediate – level ministry offices. It also entails school-based management and the empowerment of communities to monitor school performance and bring the school into the life of the community. Efforts to increase the capacity of ministry field offices, schools, and communities can be seen in most countries, though most are at an early stage. Decentralization is not in and of itself a capacity-building process, but it permits the sharing of responsibility among a larger number of management units. It can mobilize additional participants in the education development processes and create new

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\(^{90}\) The ideas in this section draw very heavily on a background paper prepared by Jeanne Moulton (2003)
approaches to the going-to-scale challenge discussed above. At the same time, it requires that the new participants be provided with the skills, the means and the organizational structure to contribute in a meaningful way.

The emerging models of decentralization and school-based management models discussed in Chapters 10 and 13 are characterized by (i) schools as “learning organizations,” (ii) a richer array of organizations at the meso level that help schools improve quality, and (iii) a narrower though critical role for the central or national level of the system.

**Schools.** A “learning organization” is one that can continually respond to its changing environment by trying new approaches and adapting its functions and structures (see Chapter 13). Some may argue that a learning organization model of a school is too ambitious for many parts of Africa, but the consistent failure of the industrial-age “machine” model provides a strong justification for testing alternative approaches.

**Meso-level organizations.** The key to this alternative approach is building at the meso level new types of organizations that actively engage with schools. These would not be arranged in a hierarchy; quite the opposite, they would work in parallel across the meso level, effectively flattening the education system. They would include:

- **Networks**, which have already proven useful in Africa. In particular, the ADEA Working Groups serve as networks among educators in teacher development, sector assessment, non-formal education, and other sub-sectors and issue-oriented aspects of the sector;
- **Research and training centers**, some at universities, others being attached to other government or non-government organizations;
- **Professional organizations**, including teachers’ unions, which can encourage professionalism among teachers;
- **Social and community projects**, often supported by NGOs, which can help teachers practice their role as community leaders and help schools become integral to the communities they serve; and
- **Ministry offices.** While the flattening of the education bureaucracy would not eliminate district, regional, or provincial offices of education, it would change their role. Meso-level ministry offices would continue to communicate and enforce policies and regulations and to monitor school performance.
Central—or national—level organizations. It is tempting to think that central administration has a secondary and less demanding role to play in a decentralized system. This would be a mistake (*Chapter 10*). There is a change in its role, but the work is equally if not more demanding than in a centralized system. As schools and meso-level organizations gain more prominence and autonomy in managing education and develop their capacity to change, the role of central administration becomes one of system regulation to ensure equity in resource allocation, opportunity to learn and achievement. This requires, among other things, that technical capacity be developed at a central level to regulate the system and to support and stretch meso-level organizations. This includes, for instance, benchmarking good practices in various areas of education (*see Chapter 13*). This can be quite demanding as diversity of needs and capacity characterizes a decentralized system.

**Strengthening partnerships**

The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (World Conference on EFA, 1990a) called for “new and revitalized partnerships.” The 1996 mid-decade review noted that greater and more active partnerships, particularly in Africa, have been one of the most successful outcomes since Jomtien (UNESCO, 1996). The Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2000a) pursued this theme and called for “broad-based partnerships within countries, supported by co-operation with regional and international agencies and institutions.” These calls for “partnership” have not gone unheeded. ADEA devoted its 1997 biennial meeting to the issue (*Box 14.4*).

Partnerships happen at different levels in the system and with different purposes. There are partnerships at school and community levels, largely aiming to support the delivery of education services, often to the most disadvantaged populations. There are partnerships that shape development cooperation and education aid. Important changes are underway in both.

At the school and community level, the process of deconcentrating responsibility (*Chapter 10*) elevates the importance of civil society in the local triumvirate of administrative offices, schools, and communities. Civil society’s role in empowering communities to participate in a strong and capable education sector has been described earlier (*Chapters 4, 8 and 10*). Its ability to play that role effectively is usually assessed in terms of the strength of local civil society organizations (CSOs), including private sector representatives, trade
unions, and women’s groups. Prominent among CSOs are NGOs, with social agendas that often serve and represent non-government actors in the sector. The past decade has seen the proliferation of NGOs, as the importance of their role in the education sector development – as well as in other sectors – became more obvious. NGOs range in capacity from that of well-supported international NGOs with country offices, such as CARE, Save the Children or Oxfam, to small fly-by-night operations. International NGOs often partner with small local NGOs in a synergistic sharing of external funding and experienced management with local commitment and expertise. In this process, NGOs have often gained a stronger voice in policy decisions and become a source of reliable community-level implementers of education sector program activities. The government role here is often an enabling one.

Box 14.4. 1997 ADEA Biennial Meeting (Dakar, Senegal)

Partnerships for capacity building and quality improvement in education

Calls for partnerships in education development have become commonplace. What does partnership mean in terms of the actions and responsibilities of the partners? ADEA’s 1997 Biennial Meeting concluded that productive partnerships have some common features:

• Active participation of all partners;
• Mutual trust and respect;
• A high degree of openness of the process;
• Full availability of information;
• Shared understanding of operation procedures and the knowledge base that determines their operations;
• The role of governments varies; it will be an enabling or a leading role depending on the nature of the partnership; and
• Often partnerships are more than a means to an end; they often become part of the result, especially if the result is to be sustained over time.

Source: ADEA (1998)

At the national level the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) is changing the way education development programs are financed and managed (Chapter 4). Within the SWAp framework all significant funding for the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure program under government leadership, adopting common approaches across the sector, and progressing towards reliance on government procedures to disburse and account for all funds. About 15 ministries of education in Africa have introduced a SWAp. Ethiopia, Uganda, and Zambia began around 1998 and have the most experience. The ministry of
education in Mauritania has established a national capacity-building program with a broad agenda, including technical assistance on macro-economic planning, poverty diagnostics, monitoring and evaluation, and public expenditure management. In more and more countries governments are taking the lead in these partnerships. They convene partnership meetings, define criteria for participation and define the priorities on the national education development agenda.

Experience of the past decade suggests, as documented, that partnerships do not happen by themselves. At all levels partnership is a learning process with mechanisms and procedures that continuously evolve as experience is gained. But these learning processes need to be nurtured and supported. Shaeffer and Govinda (1996) make the point that community-school partnerships do not easily happen by themselves – they must be planned for and trained for. Quality improvement programs will need to recognize this and include provision for the design and delivery of programs to train community members and local education staff on their roles and responsibilities in the partnership.91

Similarly SWAp partnerships require that ministry and agency staff members are trained for their new roles. It also requires that partners exchange experience and have the opportunity to “reflect in action.” Analytic work such as that supported by the ADEA working group on sector analysis and networks of “like-minded donors” are important instruments in this respect. These learning opportunities for ministry and agency staff are essential to ensure that “learning from action informs future action” effectively.

**Learning from practice**

The country case studies underpinning this paper and the analyses in the preceding chapters clearly demonstrate that quality improvement is a multi-faceted and complex process – in the industrialized world and in Africa. Yet unless the EFA and fast-track policies result in increased learning, the EFA emperor will have no clothes. Fortunately, experience is accumulating and lessons are being learned as countries are pursuing a “quality education for all” agenda. But the path towards quality is context-bound and often uncertain.

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91. The India District Primary Education Program (DPEP) made explicit and significant financial provision to develop training materials, prepare instructors and deliver training and support to members of village education committees, teachers and local education administrators. Much of the program activity in the early years was focused on this activity (see Pandey, 2000).
What works in one place does not necessarily work in another place. In this final section of the paper four elements of strategy that dominate the practice of quality improvement on the continent are highlighted.

**A system of learning institutions**
The dominant trend in Africa – and not only there – is clear: School systems are increasingly transformed into a system of schools, and in some instances there is an attempt to move even more ambitiously towards a system of learning institutions. It is this vision that is inspiring increasingly the moves towards decentralization and school-based management. Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique are introducing a system of per-student grants to be managed at the school-level. Senegal, Guinea and Burkina Faso are introducing management systems that place the responsibility for the design and implementation of quality improvement strategies at the school and district level. Alternative learning systems are being established in Nigeria and Burkina Faso to try to provide an equitable opportunity to learn to children in remote areas and children who are otherwise disadvantaged. Flexibility in delivery mechanisms and equivalence in instructional objectives are increasingly being recognized as key ingredients of national education for all strategies.

**Learning centered**
The emphasis on learning that permeates such a system is what gives it coherence. It characterizes a system with a culture of quality. Many African countries now monitor student learning through participation in international or national survey programs. Benin has attempted to define Fundamental Quality Inputs. Sector development programs are designed to increase expenditures on non-teacher salary inputs. Teacher development programs in Guinea, Uganda and Zanzibar are explicitly designed to help teachers identify obstacles to student learning, propose remedial action and monitor the impact. Zambia, Mali and Burkina Faso are introducing African languages as the medium of instruction in the early grades as a way to ensure that students master basic literacy skills in their own language before changing to English or French. Namibia and Swaziland are introducing strategies of continuous assessment of student learning as a way to enhance achievement.

**Continuous improvement**
The African experiences discussed in this paper demonstrate quite clearly that there are no quick fixes to the quality problems of education in Africa.
Quality improvement is not an event; it is not an intervention that can be centrally mandated. It is a process that needs to be embedded in a system-wide culture of quality. There is no substitute for a sustained effort over time that builds up the capacity at the school level, develops the decentralized support mechanisms and sustains the provision of national leadership. What is needed is a process of continuous improvement, a process of continuous learning. In many countries – Mauritania, Uganda, Mali and Tanzania to mention just a few – education development now is defined in the context of a ten-year sector development program with an agreed policy framework and performance indicators. Improvement in student learning achievement and significant reductions in repetition and elimination of drop-out are part of all of these plans. What is often less clear is how these goals will be achieved: What is the underlying vision of learning and what is the strategy of implementation? The central challenge for countries will be to take advantage of the long-term perspective that is provided by these plans to tackle quality issues through gradual but continuous improvement in input availability, teaching processes and monitoring learning outcomes.

Evidence-based strategies
But continuous learning from experience requires information. Where rigorous evaluations using quantitative and qualitative information are absent, learning becomes based on anecdotes, opinion and prejudice. These are poor substitutes for authentic information that provides the basis for learning-based planning and policy making. Examples from Guinea, Mali and Zambia illustrate how a careful monitoring of program cost and outcomes can help the process of going to scale. PASEC, SAQMEC, MLA and NESIS are programs that are helping many countries to develop a database that can inform policy and action. But much more is needed. National statistics should provide information on the availability of inputs. Household surveys provide information on educational attainment, school attendance and education expenditures. Examinations results can provide feedback to schools on student performance. Assessments can provide policy makers with information on the overall performance of the system. Continuous classroom assessments can help teachers identify the need for remedial instruction. Sample surveys are often very useful to gather evidence on the performance of particular programs. There has been considerable progress in these areas. But significant challenges remain. The capacity to collect data has increased dramatically; but the capacity to analyze these data often lags. Most importantly, the available
information is often not used in the policy process. Where it is done the results have been remarkable. Mauritania has formulated an ambitious and complex ten-year development plan on the basis of a detailed analysis of the system. Difficult choices were made based on these data. Detailed analyses of cost and outcomes allowed Zambia and Guinea to move ahead rapidly with potentially controversial language and teacher education reforms.

The quest for quality

Quality improvement in basic education is an imperative for all African countries that want to participate in the global information society of the twenty-first century and lift their people out of poverty. The challenge of quality improvement in basic education is central to the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All targets formulated at the World Education Forum in Dakar. Several initiatives have brought the quality issues to the fore. Many countries are actively testing programs to improve quality. Sharing lessons from experience and learning from each other’s successes and disappointments is essential if policy makers and practitioners in the region are to work together in a community of learners.

The African experience discussed in this paper clearly shows the common directions that countries are exploring. But at the same time they also show the rich variation in the way these common directions are being put into practice as countries adapt them to different socio-economic, cultural and education conditions. It is also clear that quality improvement is a multifaceted process that is continuous and comprises educational, economic and financial and cultural aspects. There is no single intervention that will produce quality learning. But perhaps the most important lesson is that the success of the quest for quality will be determined in the classrooms and schools of Africa by teachers who create opportunities to learn for their students, who work in enabling school environments and who are supported by the local community and by local and national administrators and policy makers. The quest for quality is very clearly the responsibility of all involved in the education enterprise.