



Reaching Schools: Where Quality Starts

At the World Forum that took place in April 2000 in Dakar, the demand for quality proved to be the dimension that was emphasized most strongly in pursuing the goal of education for all. Of the six objectives set at the forum, one is specifically devoted to quality and excellence for all, while the other five (integrated approach to early childhood development, full primary education for all, appropriate educational programs for young people and adults, literacy from the perspective of continuing education, gender equity) clearly imply quality as the *sine qua non* of any progress.

But to what extent can national policies combine the goal of improving quality with those of expanding access and promoting equity?

The answer to this question is especially difficult in Africa: the challenges are all posed simultaneously and urgently, while the lack of resources and capacities imposes heavy constraints. In addition, the increasingly rapid growth in enrolment often leads to a drop in quality, and not only in Africa. On these two points, the article by Pape Momar Sow, which describes the use of job specifications in Senegal [see page 10], provides us with a thought-provoking example. The Senegalese experience demonstrates that even in difficult situations it is still possible to come up with innovative, low-cost strategies that poor countries can afford in order to mobilize latent resources in their



Photo: Roger, Dominique/UNESCO

systems and give a substantial boost to educational quality while at the same time making significant progress in terms of access and equity.

What is meant here by “the quality of education”?

The point is not to become embroiled in controversy over the definition of quality; any definition, however, must address three basic questions:

- *What do the pupils actually learn?* What knowledge, skills, capacities and values do the programs offer?
- *For what purposes do the pupils learn?* How useful is their learning, and what is its significance in terms of individual and community needs, which the education system must draw on in order to determine its goals and its relevance in a given context?

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- *How do the pupils learn?* How are teaching and learning strategies linked to pedagogical choices, attitudes and interactions of teachers and pupils, and the climate and environment of the school and the classroom?

Above all, these questions point to the importance of education policy, which is the responsibility of the government. It is the government that determines both the education philosophy (goals and purposes), the education model (the orientation, structure and functioning of

the system) and the resources resource used to achieve them. However, all experienced observers are familiar with the gap that exists between official policy and real practice in the school and classroom. Yet it is in the latter that learning actually takes place and where the quality of education starts. This is why strategies and reforms aimed at improving quality will only be effective if they are grounded in the internal dynamics of the schools and classrooms.

The school and the classroom—gateways to quality

The task is not easy. The unique character of each school, which Diane Prouty rightly points out in her article [see page 3], poses an initial difficulty. The links between the general and the particular are not obvious and prevent any generalization or mechanical transfer of the factors and conditions for success. It is thus necessary not only to improve the understanding of schools based on observation and evaluation but also to give greater responsibility to the actors involved at the school level. Responsibility must be devolved to these same people for decision-making and the use of resources, so that they become accountable for quality in their school. Principals, teachers, pupils, families and communities will then take up the task of developing the school, as it belongs to them. This is the path Guinea has taken. Its experience with decentralization is recounted in the article by Alpha

Mahmoudou Diallo [see page 8] on reflective practices, pedagogical projects, discussion and learning networks (horizontal and vertical). These approaches demonstrate a completely new dynamic that involves actors as they seek to develop their talent for innovation and make their actions more effective.

Transferring the locus of decision-making and the responsibility for quality requires both more autonomy and more support for the school community. This implies, on the one hand, the existence of space for initiative and creativity, and, on the other, strengthening each person’s ability to fulfill their role. In addition to community involvement and the principal’s leadership (an important factor in such quality approaches), the impact of teachers merits great attention.

Teaching differently and better is the main change, but it is also the most difficult to achieve in the search for quality. The process cannot get underway without a critical examination of academic results. One cornerstone is the feedback provided by evaluating what pupils have learned. However, more importantly, a culture of evaluation, follow-up and recognition of academic progress in the school and in the classroom helps to ensure that the approach and activity of teachers will continually promote quality. In this respect, the transition from a normative evaluation—classifying pupils as “very good,” “good,” “average,” “poor” and “hopeless”—to other types

of evaluation—criteria-based, formative, diagnostic, predictive—will inspire teachers with new approaches to analyzing and handling the obstacles to learning [see article on page 5]. These new approaches postulate that each learner can and must meet the goals of learning at their own level. From this perspective, failure becomes unacceptable and calls into question not the learner but the learning situation, condition and environment. Quality for all translates as success for all. The change in paradigm, attitude and approach that this implies for teachers requires that they be given solid support. Some of the tools that can help this process of change include support to peer exchange networks, pedagogical counseling, teacher resource centers, quality circles, research, and the use of information and communication technologies. Central governments and local political and academic authorities, as well as local communities, can also contribute to this process, by reinforcing the efforts of teachers and providing suitable responses to the crucial question: What kind of support is really effective when it comes to facilitating pupils’ learning and results? In Africa the answers to this question must also take into account other crucial dimensions of quality—health, nutrition, and models and levels of aspiration—and give priority to the most disadvantaged.

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Making Classrooms Count

The mismatch between decision-makers' perceptions of education systems and classroom practices often leads to the development of reforms that will not achieve the expected results. Classrooms are at the very heart of the learning process. To improve schools, better knowledge of what happens there and what teachers do is essential.

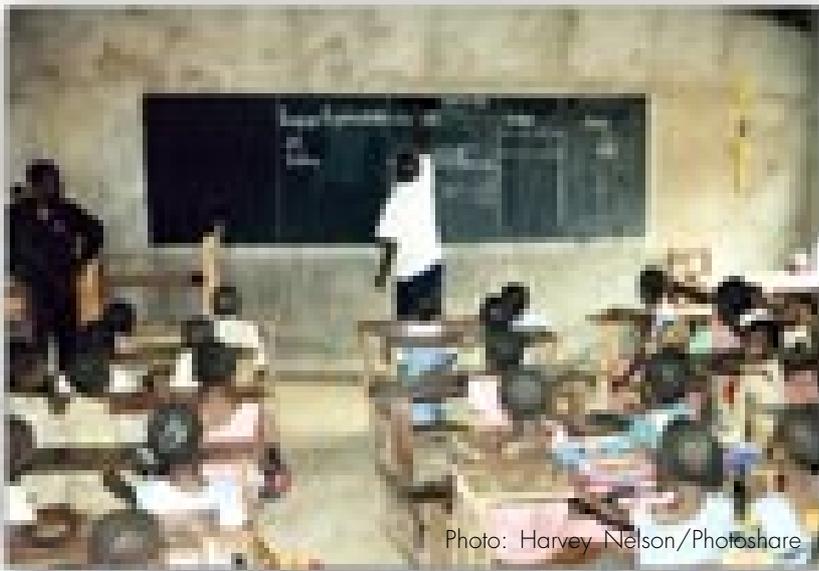


Photo: Harvey Nelson/Photoshare

The math lesson is in progress and the children strain their necks to copy what their teacher is writing on the board. Aminata, a young woman barely out of secondary school, is teaching a lesson on geometric shapes. She first draws a figure on the small chalkboard that covers a small portion of the front of the room and then writes a few short sentences explaining what has been drawn there. She waits for all the children to copy what she has written and then begins the process again: she wipes the space clean, draws another geometric shape and provides a written definition. This continues for much of the period: the teacher writing and the pupils copying. Very little dialogue about what is being written takes place and there is little noise in the classroom as the children struggle to copy what their teacher writes on the board in the poorly lit room. Very few of the children who are squeezed together on tiny benches in front of lopsided tables have textbooks. Although almost all have their own

notebooks, some share pencils or erasers. Day after day the routine is the same. Aminata covers her chalkboard with the essentials that the children must learn and the children transfer what she writes into their notebooks. If time remains to discuss the important points the children engage in lively conversation. But on most days, the plodding exchange from teacher to pupils is mostly the same: the chalkboard is the medium of instruction and learning is contingent on copying it right and figuring it out on their own.

[Classroom observations, Mali]

Classrooms are the backbone of education systems. Indeed, for most pupils, they are the backbone of learning, and what takes place there defines for many the essence of their understanding of a world beyond their village or home. Unfortunately, for far too many children, classrooms take on the tone and rhythm of Aminata's classroom, in which learning is stilted, passive and borders on meaningless. It's not Aminata's fault that she teaches in this fashion. She's doing

the best that she can under very difficult circumstances. With very little formal training, and on her own much of the time, Aminata is simply doing what her own teachers did, taking her cue from cultural templates of what constitutes good teaching practice—a role that has been played out for decades. What can be done to make a difference for her and her students? How can things be changed?

At a recent World Bank workshop for education professionals working at the national level in over 50 countries around the world, participants were asked when they had last visited a classroom to observe what was taking place there. Out of nearly 70 participants only a very few—less than five—had been in a classroom in the past six months. Most had not observed a classroom in over a year, and a few confessed that they really couldn't remember when they had last visited (let alone observed) a primary or secondary level classroom. Yet, these are the people

Few countries have systematic mechanisms in place to help decision-makers learn about what is happening in classrooms in any structured way. They also lack communication systems allowing classroom teachers to inform policy-makers about factors that influence their commitment to their work.

who regularly make key decisions on what is taught, how it is taught, how teachers are trained and what kind of support

teachers and pupils need to improve their performance. Very few of the countries represented have systematic mechanisms in place to help decision-makers learn about what is happening in classrooms in any structured way. They also lack communication systems allowing classroom teachers to inform policy-makers about factors that influence their commitment to their work. Finally, although most countries have parents' councils or community school boards, these mechanisms are seldom used to garner information about what is taking place at the school level. In short, these policy-makers are *effectively handicapped* when it comes to knowing what is taking place in their countries' schools and classrooms.

One of the major themes emerging from two decades of research on school effectiveness is that "schools matter, that schools do have major effects upon children's development and that, to put it simply, schools do make the difference" (Reynolds and Creemers, 1990, p. 1). Although some experiences are transferable from one place to the next, most researchers stress the differences that country traditions and context make, and caution against general application of findings. It is now widely recognized that if national policy is to have the greatest impact and take account of the unique nature of each school, systems need to be put in place to gather information on a regular basis from a wide range of schools. Consequently, *practice must inform policy* at the country level.

The pivotal role of teachers

But how can this be done? Over the past decade, our views on the construction of effective learning, and hence good teaching, have gradually shifted from a "behaviorist" to a more "constructivist" stance. This emerging viewpoint has led some to conclude that teachers need to become more involved and more empowered in determining what and how their professional development should be framed. Among the key components of this approach are the strengthening of school leadership and building of teacher support teams, which require the

formation of networks where teachers can talk about instructional and pedagogical issues. The principle that underpins this approach is that policy decisions having an impact on teaching, curriculum assessment and student testing should be based on better understanding of what takes place in classrooms and schools; in this way, decisions will be grounded in knowledge of actual classroom conditions. The practice of having teachers and head teachers collaborate with other educational professionals to examine what is taking place in classrooms and schools has provided critical information on how to improve teaching, learning and the support provided to schools.

Models of such "twinning" of education professionals do exist. USAID's Improving Education Quality (IEQ) project has a decade of experience in building local capacity to gather information about classrooms and what takes place there and to develop mechanisms so that national decision-makers can access this information and make fully informed policy decisions.

This experience has shown that, to create efficient mechanisms and build local capacity to supply information about classrooms and schools, it is necessary:

- to foster dialogue among the different levels of the education system to analyze the information collected in classrooms and discuss what measures should be taken;
- to link these mechanisms to any educational reform efforts;
- to establish partnerships that maximize the capabilities of participating educators, researchers and other stakeholders concerned about schools and student learning;
- to accept that improvement is an iterative process with changing outcomes over time; and
- to allow enough time for the slow process of change to work.

(Schubert, 2002)

In an Orwellian fashion, Maeroff (1993, p.2) cautions against the folly of imagining that there will ever be far-reaching change in schools without involving teachers in this task: "The most

grandiose plans will have scant impact when teachers are unequipped to carry them out. The truth is that any attempt to provide support to students must work through teachers. If teachers do not endorse an approach, believe in it and know how to put it into practice, it will have little chance of surviving".

Over and over, educational professionals have seen that making classrooms and what takes place there count can make all the difference. It enables those working for educational reform to move from a handicapped situation to one of empowerment and validation for all involved.

Teachers are meeting in an empty classroom in a remote village in Ghana. For the past month they have been getting together on a regular basis with their mentors—an instructor from a teacher training college and a curriculum development advisor. They are talking about ways to bring the use of Ghanaian languages and culture into their teaching in a more meaningful way. Ken, the teacher training instructor, is taking notes on ways to incorporate their comments into the methodology classes he teaches at his school near Cape Coast. Jerome, the curriculum development advisor, is also writing furiously, hoping to capture all that the teachers are saying. "I have never seen how my curriculum materials are being implemented into the classroom before. My work will never be the same. I have learned the importance of visiting schools and talking to teachers on a regular basis. They are the ones who make my work come alive."

[Field observations, Ghana]

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Maeroff, G. (1993), *Team Building for School Change: Equipping Teachers for New Roles*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Reynolds, D. and Creemers, B. (1990), "School Effectiveness and School Improvement: A Mission Statement." In *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, 1 (1): 1-3.

Schubert, J. (March 2002), "The IEQ Cycle to Improve Teaching and Learning." In *Pathways to Quality: The Improving Educational Quality Project*. Arlington, VA: USAID.

Continuous Assessment: A Key to Quality

Under pressure from global competition and globalization, education systems and schools are compelled to improve their performance. Student assessment, an effective tool for measuring learning in schools, is drawing increasing attention from decision-makers.

For decades, ministries of education have routinely collected and published information on how education systems are working and changing. This information is generally quantitative: the number of schools and facilities, the enrollment rate, and indicators of efficiency, including student-teacher ratios and repetition, dropout, and completion rates. Yet this mass of information includes few data collected on a regular and systematic basis that provide substantial information on students' performance, and this gap explains why it is so difficult to assess the quality of the education provided.

This uncertainty is becoming a matter of increasing concern to education sector decision-makers the world over, who are facing increased global competition, shrinking budgets per student and

steadily growing numbers of children to be educated. These forces are compelling governments to provide at least a minimum level of educational quality.

At the same time, one of the goals of Education for All is to improve the quality of education—a monumental challenge for Africa. To achieve this improvement, measures must be introduced to provide greater understanding about what teachers are doing, how students are learning and how they are performing. Therefore, ongoing assessment of student performance is a key to improving quality (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1996).

What should be assessed, and for what purpose?

Assessment provides a means for measuring success at several levels:

- *Individual success*: How well has this student learned?
- *Instructional success*: How effective was this teaching method?
- *Curriculum success*: How well is the curriculum addressing students' learning needs?
- *Program success*: How well is the instructional program working?
- *Comparative success*: How does the school's performance compare with those of other schools, districts, regions and countries?

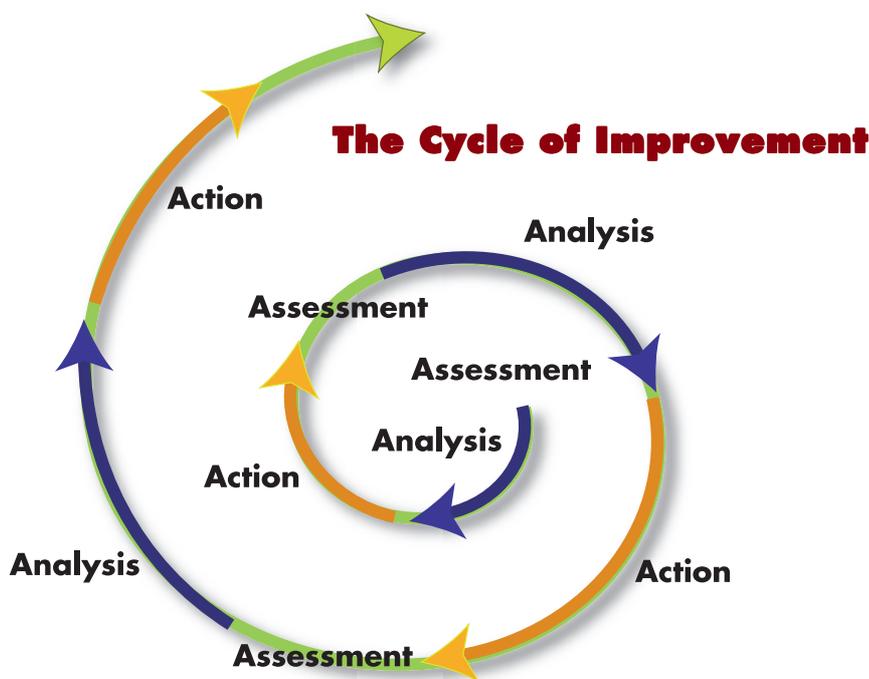
At the classroom level, student assessment procedures, whether designed by the teacher or by the ministry, improve instruction in various ways:

- *Diagnostic assessment procedures and tools* help teachers determine what the students know and what they can do before and during the learning process.
- *Formative assessment tools* provide information about the teaching and learning processes, which can guide instructional decisions, time allocation and the use of teaching tools and resources.
- *Summative assessments* provide precise information about specific education programs at a specific point in time and evaluate schools' effectiveness in helping students learn.

In addition, each of these forms of assessment can help parents monitor how well their children are doing.

At the school, district and regional levels, student assessments provide decision-makers with information they can use to make program adjustments, including ongoing teacher training, curriculum revision and implementation, scheduling, staffing and resource allocation.

Finally, at the national level, data provided by assessments of student and teacher performance can lead to informa-



Source: Schubert, J. (2002), "The IEQ Cycle to Improve Teaching and Learning." In *Pathways to Quality: The Improving Educational Quality Project*. Arlington, VA: USAID, p. 8.

tion critical to the shaping of policy and legislation. The bottom line for all stakeholders involved in education is that collecting data on what is happening in classrooms—monitoring and assessing performance—comprises an essential part of the effort to achieve quality education (Carr and Harris, 2001).

As student assessment is an effective means of measuring student learning, all people working in education systems—particularly teachers, who constitute the vital link in successful implementation—must have a thorough understanding of the various types of assessment procedures. Any lack of clarity about the various mechanisms for managing educational quality, and about the concepts of continuous assessment, testing, and examinations, further complicates a procedure that is already fraught with anxiety.

Ensuring the effectiveness of assessment systems

What steps can educators take to introduce effective assessment measures? Experience shows that the following recommendations should be borne in mind:

- Identify the purpose of the assessment measures: What do you want to measure? Why do you want this information? Who will you report to about the process and results of the assessment?
- If you plan to use tests that have been externally developed, which are often required for accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, identify what resources you will need, where they will come from, and how they will be used.
- Determine what aspects of the curriculum you want to focus on, by subject and grade level.

The key to achieving quality lies in the link between results and teaching methods. Teachers grasp this when they are provided with the tools and skills to see this link and to leverage the improvements lying within their purview.

- Determine what psychometric procedures will be used to design assessment materials, how often the assessments will be administered (quarterly, twice a year or annually), and how the data will be analyzed, reported and utilized.
- Make sure that the curriculum objectives fit the assessment period, in other words, that the test assesses what is being taught during the testing period.
- Decide upon the format of the assessment materials.
- Develop assessment tools and try them out on small groups of students to ensure that each item effectively measures what the student does or does not learn.

Teachers, who constitute the vital link in successful implementation—must have a thorough understanding of the various types of assessment procedures. Any lack of clarity about the various mechanisms for managing educational quality, and about the concepts of continuous assessment, testing, and examinations, further complicates a procedure that is already fraught with anxiety.

- If resources permit, broaden the field testing of items as they are revised.
- Administer the test, analyze, score and report on the results in a manner that accomplishes your purpose. Lastly, you should ensure that the assessment will contribute to the objective of improving educational quality. This means you must:
 - *Make the invisible visible.* Identify components of teaching and learning that you want to learn more about and collect data on those components.
 - *Indicate clearly where improvement is needed.* Collect only that information which will help you move

forward. Gathering too much data, particularly on matters that cannot help you to improve, is counterproductive.

- *Celebrate successes.* Focus on improvements and what is being done well.
- *Identify achievable goals* and accept incremental improvements. Systems take time to change. Being overly ambitious can undermine success.
- *Disseminate and replicate what is being learned.* Learning through sharing of experience is one of the most effective ways to improve a system.
- *Stress the link between performance and professionalism.* The key to achieving quality lies in the link between results and teaching methods. Teachers grasp this when they are provided with the tools and skills to see this link and to leverage the improvements lying within their purview.

Education for All is not only a desirable goal, it is a necessity. But it must not distract us from the real goal: providing quality education to *all children*. In our efforts to achieve this end we must remember that “*Quality is a standard; quality is a measurable goal, not a vague sense of goodness; quality is a result.*” (Schmoker, 1999, p. 54).

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DuPlessis, J. et al. (2002). *In My Classroom: A Guide to Reflective Practice*. Arlington, VA: American Institutes for Research.

Greaney, V. and Kellaghan, T. (1996). *Monitoring the Learning Outcomes of Education Systems*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

McTighe, J. and Ferrara, S. (1998). *Assessing Learning in the Classroom*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

For more information on assessment, consult the website of the International Commission on Testing at www.intestcom.org

WG on Books and Learning Materials

WGBLM is once again supporting the participation of members of one of its key African partners, the Pan-African Booksellers' Association (PABA), at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair from July 29 to August 2. Booksellers from nine African countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) will be at the *Indaba* (meeting) to celebrate Africa's 100 Best Books, and will participate in the buyers' and sellers' meetings of the African Publishers' Network (APNET). PABA will also take advantage of this opportunity to hold its Annual Booksellers' Convention during the fair in Harare, which will be preceded by an ADEA-sponsored workshop on marketing. The purpose of WGBLM's support to PABA and APNET is to improve the publishing/bookselling interface in Africa.

WG on Higher Education

The Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE) has issued a competitive call aimed at collecting proposals for the development of institutional policies in African universities. The objective is to address the lack of systematic policies and initiatives in key areas, such as the fight against HIV/AIDS among university staff and students and the use of new information and communication technologies. To date, seven universities in six countries (Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Uganda and Zimbabwe) have submitted successful proposals and won awards to help them develop the proposed policies.

WG on Distance Education/Open Learning

The Working Group on Distance Education/Open Learning (WGDE/OL) is planning a one-week capacity-building workshop for countries planning to implement DE/OL policies. The workshop is scheduled for November 2002 and will bring together about 50 policymakers from sub-Saharan Africa. The findings of a study on critical success factors in Distance Education and Open Learning will underpin the workshop.

WG on Education Statistics

Kees van den Bosch, who has served as leader of the WGES for the last two years, is leaving Africa to take on new responsibilities in Asia. The ADEA extends its warmest thanks to Mr. van den Bosch for his remarkable contribution to the WGES, which has fostered the development of a growing network of statisticians and information system managers in Africa.

ADEA welcomes Wim Hoppers, currently a counselor at the embassy of the Netherlands in Pretoria, who will temporarily replace Mr. van den Bosch as leader of the WGES.

The Working Group's NESIS program has developed a new technical module for the collection, processing and analysis of statistical data. The module consists of a series of software tools that handle the collection, entry, automated printing and multidimensional analysis of statistical data. It will be made available to countries, along with technical support to help them adapt it to their specific requirements and implement the system.

Africa Education Journalism Award

In recognition of their participation in the Africa Education Journalism Award, the four prize-winners (from Benin, Rwanda, Nigeria and Uganda) and their editors-in-chief have been invited for a study visit to Paris, London and Washington from September 1 to September 15. During this trip, they will participate in training seminars on key education issues and visit agencies (UNESCO, the World Bank) and major media organizations which have departments devoted to education (Radio France Internationale, Le Monde de l'Education, BBC, the Times Education Supplement, the Washington Post, and allafrica.com).

WG COMED

The Working Group on Communication for Education and Development (COMED) held a training workshop for journalists and communication officers in Liberia from June 21 to 27. Twenty-six journalists and six communication officers from the Ministry of Education and an NGO took part in the workshop, which allowed them to strengthen their journalistic skills and learn more about institutional communication and advocacy techniques. On completing the workshop, the participants decided to form an association of journalists and communication officers in education.

WG on Female Participation

The Forum for African Women Educationists, the lead agency for the ADEA Working Group on Female Participation (WGFP), has moved into its new offices at Fawe House, Chania Avenue, near Yaya Centre, Nairobi.

New address:

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Guinea: Teachers at the Center of their own Professional Development

In 1994 Guinea launched a program for continuing teacher training that makes teachers the central actors in developing their own professional qualifications. The program, whose purpose is to improve the quality of instruction in primary schools, is an outstanding example of decentralization, underpinned by an efficient organization that has helped to establish a constant dialogue between the grassroots and the central authorities.



The priority given by the Guinean government to education and training since 1984 has been reflected in a number of important policy and pedagogical actions. The broad guidelines and main avenues for action by the Guinean government were announced in the September 1989 Declaration of Educational Policy and implemented through a far-reaching two-stage action plan called the Sectoral Adjustment Program for Education (PASE). PASE I ran from 1990 to 1994 and PASE II from 1996 to 2002, with the former emphasizing expansion of the educational system in anticipation of a rapid and significant rise in primary school enrollment, the latter focusing more on improvement of access, quality and equity. Implementation of these two plans has brought remarkable results, especially with regard to the gross enrollment rate, which climbed from 28% in 1989-90 to 53% in 1999-2000.

In both of these programs, the continuing qualification of primary school teachers was a main concern of the education authorities and the development partners. In response to this concern, a program of continuing education for primary school teachers, called the Program for Small Grants to Schools (PPSE), was implemented in 1994.

The program was intended to address: (i) the criticisms made by education officials, who had noted the mediocre results obtained by primary schools; (ii) teachers', dissatisfaction with existing teacher training and the lack of support provided to them over the course of their careers.

Activities developed by teachers improve teaching practices

The program consists of a set of activities developed and implemented by teams of teachers in collaboration with training institutions and decentralized bodies of the national education system. Teams of four to ten teachers, organized into units for educational reform (CREs), analyze their needs and define the activities that they would like to organize to improve their skills and teaching practices. They draft projects for educational reform (PREs) that will give them the opportunity to use new methods and techniques in class, to deliver more relevant content, and to facilitate student learning. For example, the PPSE has transformed teachers'

conception of reading at the primary level, giving priority to comprehension rather than to the mechanics of reading.

From an organizational standpoint, the PPSE involves a project preparation and selection phase, followed by the implementation of selected projects. The preparatory period is spread over one school year, while the implementation takes place over one or more years. A regional jury selects the projects that deserve to receive funding. Support is provided through a workshop at the beginning of the school year to help teachers get started, regular supervision by a facilitator, and a formative assessment by an evaluating supervisor. Results are presented at the end of the school year by the teachers who devised the projects.

It is the responsibility of the regional coordinator, supported by a technical committee chaired by the regional school inspector, to see that the program in each region functions well pedagogically, administratively and financially. Central oversight lies with a technical committee presided over by the National Director of Elementary Education.

Remarkable results

The PPSE has reached a scale rarely attained by training programs in Guinea or in other countries in Africa. In six years the program has trained some 300 supervisors capable of leading training and skills development activities at school level and supporting teachers in their efforts to obtain training and to change their methods. Nearly all primary school teachers (about 15,000) have been made aware of the PPSE program and trained to draw

up projects. More than half of these teachers have taken part in writing final project proposals, and more than 6,000 of them, working within 1,200 reform units, implemented a PPSE project between 1996 and 2001.

Above and beyond these quantitative results, the PPSE has helped to improve the professional qualifications of Guinean teachers and also to develop new skills among the teaching force. It has tested teachers' ability to analyze problems related to their practice and to identify those that might be resolved by educational reform projects. Subsequently, they have drawn up project proposals, implemented them, assessed project impact, and accounted for the use of grant funds.

Six years of implementation provide the perspective needed to draw the lessons from Guinea's experience and to identify the factors that have allowed its success:

- The way the program was organized enabled constant dialogue between schools and the central authorities;
- The program fostered rigorous

standards imposed by action-oriented research;

- A climate of confidence prevailed among the parties involved, particularly between teachers and their superiors;
- Teachers were given responsibility and recognition;
- Supervisors' capabilities were strengthened;
- A spirit of healthy competition stimulated teachers to write project proposals;
- At each stage of the program, emphasis was given to evaluation;
- Seminars and workshops were held regularly to report on results and the problems encountered;
- The ministry's centralist attitude gave way to genuine decentralization, in which people at all levels of the system took on greater responsibilities.

Lessons learned and key success factors

PPSE may be regarded as general framework to support local initiatives that are proposed by teachers and communities

The impetus given by the grants program to the notion of continuing education for teachers has forced people to look at teachers differently, viewing them not just as consumers of innovations and pedagogical models but rather as actors who can craft their own professional development.

to improve education quality. It has encouraged regional and local educational authorities, who had previously been limited to an administrative oversight role, to take the lead in pedagogical matters. This is fostering the gradual development of a culture and practices of autonomous management in primary schools. PPSE has also given teachers an incentive to reflect on their teaching methods and to find solutions to the problems inhibiting teaching and learning processes.

The program is a process of ongoing improvement, and Guinea plans to go still further in improving the quality of elementary education. As part of the ten-year Education for All program, the Program in Support of Educational Reform in Guinea's Schools (PAREEG), designed along the same lines as the PPSE, is in the initial stages of implementation.

BASED ON A PAPER¹ BY ALPHA MAHMOUDOU DIALLO, KARAMOKO CAMARA ET AL.

1. Paper presented at the ADEA Biennale (Arusha, October 2001). A.M. Diallo is National Director for Elementary Education, Ministry of Pre-University Education and Civic Education, Guinea. K. Camara is National Coordinator of the Program for Small Grants to Schools (PPSE), Guinea.

Guinea

Surface area	246,000 km ²
Total population (million)	7.3
Population growth rate	2.5%
Life expectancy at birth	47 years
Urban population	32.8% of total*
GDP	3.1 billion US \$
GNI per capita	450 US \$
Public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP	1.8%
Public expenditure on education	25.8%
Estimated literacy rate, adult male	52%*
Estimated literacy rate, adult female	24%*
Gross primary enrolment ratio	59%
Gross primary enrolment ratio, male	72%
Gross primary enrolment ratio, female	45%
Net primary enrolment ratio	46%
Net primary enrolment ratio, female	37%
Private enrolment as percentage of total enrolment (primary)	9%*
Pupil-teacher ratio (primary)	49*
Percentage of female teachers (primary)	25%*

Sources:

1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Sub-saharan Africa regional report 1998

2. *UNESCO Institute for Statistics: UNESCO's World Education Indicators 1996 (<http://www.uis.unesco.org>)

Using Job Specifications to Manage Primary Education in Senegal

In 1996 Senegal set up a unique program based on the use of job specifications. This program promoted greater professionalism among teachers, school administrators and inspectors and led to improved academic results. The Senegalese experience has been part of an effort to improve the quality of education and rebuild the reputation of the school system.



Senegal has been determined for many years to raise the level of education of its people and has launched a serious effort to build a school system that provides quality education. Numerous reforms have been undertaken to address the constantly changing environment. The process of change has encountered a number of obstacles: political will existing in words more than deeds, institutional instability, and resistance to reform. However above all, problems related to quality have been most difficult to solve, particularly since the overall expansion of schooling and the economic crisis of the 1970s.

The Senegalese school system went through difficult periods, especially between 1990 and 1995. The gross enrolment rate at primary level, which rose steadily during the first three decades after independence (1960-90), underwent its first decline between 1992 and 1995, falling from 58% to 54%. At the same time there was a steady decline in academic

results: high repetition rates (13% in the first five years of primary school) and a disturbing dropout rate (5% in the first five years). In addition, for the 1990-95 period the average success rate on end-cycle examinations at primary level was estimated at 29%, one of the lowest rates in the sub-region. A study also revealed large inequalities between regions, districts and schools and a weak correlation between the factors that were supposed to lead to success (class size, textbook availability, teacher experience, etc.) and actual results.

Faced with this situation, Senegal introduced in 1996 an innovative system for managing primary education based on results through a program using job specifications. This occurred just as the decentralization law was introduced in March 1996, which gave regions, municipalities and rural communities legal status and financial autonomy. The law was intended to ensure better, less remote management and to enhance the roles and responsibilities of local actors.

Goals of the project

Education authorities targeted five goals: improving results; strengthening the organization of schools and inspectorates; mobilizing educators, the community, the media and other partners, based on school performance and academic results; enhancing the professionalism of the teach-

ers, administrators and inspectors; and developing a management system that uses more effective tools.

They examined the organization of the system, particularly the roles and responsibilities assigned to teachers, school administrators and inspectors. For each of these three categories of personnel, groups of professionals specially chosen for their expertise drew up job specifications for tasks and actions considered indispensable to improving results.

This process took place in four phases. Initially, those assigned to the task drafted job specifications. They turned these over to those who would use them, in coordination with their direct superiors. Thereafter, seminars were organized



Photo: Forbes, Inez/UNESCO

to assess their use. An “open-door days” event for basic education was organized to express appreciation for the most deserving teachers, administrators and inspectors, as well as the mayors, local officials and parents associations who had shown the greatest commitment to improving pupils’ results. Finally, lists of the best schools in the country were published, along with the results-based classification of the regions and districts, which was greeted warmly by the population.

Results

A few figures suffice to indicate the results obtained between 1995 and 1999:

- The success rate on the test for the end of primary education certificate rose from 30% to 48%.
- The average repetition rate fell from 15.6% to 14.8%.
- The enrolment rate for girls, which was 40% in 1995, rose to 63% in 1999.
- The number of teachers inspected was multiplied by four and the number of supervised principals by thirteen.

Management’s use of job specifications strengthened the professionalism of

the teachers, administrators and inspectors by institutionalizing performance commitments for each post and by requiring a report on results every year at every level of the whole system.

The new management tools and the results-oriented approach led to changes in the way schools are organized. School-wide projects were implemented, and the notion of the “pedagogical team” gradually took hold. Partnerships were built between local communities, local government, NGOs, mayors, and other actors. Finally, schools opened up to the surrounding environment. This process, which had begun before 1996, picked up pace with the advent of “open-door days” and the “basic education week.”

While the overall results were positive, those pushing this reform had to face a certain number of obstacles. These included the conservatism of the teachers, a militant union spirit, and varying levels of enthusiasm for the reform among the different groups involved in the process. In addition, the lack of any real training in results-oriented management and the lack of logistics to carry out rigorous monitoring held back progress. Finally, the determination and enthusiasm

By promoting reflection about the job and the ways and means for achieving the results expected from each job position, the use of job specifications fostered a new spirit and led to an innovative approach to classroom and school management

of some was undermined to some extent by institutional instability (turnover at the head of the ministry). Nevertheless, a certain basic support for the change took root and is still present today.

Lessons learned and key factors for success

Political determination was one of the key factors for success. Carrying through a reform requires that high-ranking authorities bring together the various parties involved in the project and create the values needed to keep alive the desire for change. In addition, this experience reiterated the importance of well-organized networks in disseminating and sustaining an innovation. Success would not have been possible without the motivation of all those involved. This is why it is important to help the various actors see the opportunities for personal and career development (career, mobility, promotions) that the reform can create. Negotiating was another key to the success of this project, as it is the only way to ensure the broad support of those who are involved in or will benefit from the reform. Finally, getting media coverage of the results helped arouse broader interest and promote individual and collective involvement.

**BASED ON A PAPER
BY PAPE MOMAR SOW***

SPECIALIST IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING,
SENEGAL

* This paper was presented at the ADEA Biennale in Arusha, Tanzania in October 2001.

Senegal	
Surface area	196,700 km ²
Total population (million)	9.5
Population growth rate	2.7%
Life expectancy at birth	52 years
Urban population (% of total)	47.4%
GDP	4.4 billions US \$
GNI per capita	500 US \$
Public expenditure on education as % of GDP	3.4%
Public expenditure on education	26.9%*
Estimated literacy rate, adult male	46%
Estimated literacy rate, adult female	26%
Gross primary enrolment ratio	70%
Gross primary enrolment ratio, male	76%
Gross primary enrolment ratio, female	63%
Net primary enrolment ratio	59%
Net primary enrolment ratio, female	54%
Private enrolment as percentage of total enrolment (primary)	10%*
Pupil-teacher ratio (primary)	56*
Percentage of female teachers (primary)	26%*

Sources:
1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics: Sub-saharan Africa Regional Report 1998
2. *UNESCO Institute for Statistics: UNESCO’s World Education Indicators 1996 (<http://www.uis.unesco.org>)

Education for All: Status of National Action Plans

In April 2000, the World Education Forum was held in Dakar. For the countries that had not yet achieved the goal of Education for All, a new target date was set : the year 2015. Countries were encouraged to draw up national EFA plans or to strengthen existing plans by September 2002. The following article reviews progress of these activities.

Two years after the World Education Forum in Dakar, what progress has been made in the implementation of National Education for All Plans (NPs)?

In April and May 2002, the UNESCO regional bureau in Dakar (BREDA) conducted a survey to assess the state of progress of the first phase of implementation of the Dakar objectives: drawing up, validating and negotiating National EFA Plans. It sent a questionnaire to all 44 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Thirty countries responded: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, the Comoros Islands, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Central African Republic, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe.

The survey revealed the broad trends in the following aspects of the preparation of the national plans: establishing

an administrative steering body; making resources available to prepare the plans; technical preparation of the plans; organizing consultations concerning the plans; organizing seminars to validate the plans; major difficulties encountered by the countries; priority requirements for finalizing the plans.

Establishing administrative steering bodies

Nine of the 30 countries that responded to the questionnaire had entirely finished setting up a steering body for EFA programs, and another 20 were nearing completion [see figure below].

Twenty countries had nearly completed the establishment of a steering body for Education for All programs. In many of these countries, this was the same body that had assessed EFA progress during the preceding decade (1990-2000), although these fora had been expanded to include other members of civil society and been given broader responsibilities.

Often the ministry of education retains overall supervisory powers over the forum and a high-ranking civil servant has been appointed to coordinate it.

Most of the ten countries which have made the least progress in the NP preparation process have appointed a national coordinator but still need to appoint the members representing the various partner groups and to reach an agreement on the operating procedures needed to achieve their objectives efficiently.

Availability of resources

Of the 30 countries that responded to the questionnaire, only Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea had managed to mobilize all the resources required for drawing up the EFA plan and starting up the activities of their national fora [see figure, page 13]. For the bulk of the remaining countries (21), the search for funding is proving difficult: less than 50% of the resources needed to prepare the NPs have been raised. The Central African

Progress in the preparation of National EFA Plans (NPs)

Countries that have completed their NPs	Senegal	1
Countries that have organized all the seminars to validate their NPs	Djibouti	1
Countries that have completed the technical preparation for their NPs	Angola, Cameroon, Djibouti, Senegal	4
Countries that are finalizing the technical preparation for their NPs	Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Togo, Zimbabwe	7
Countries that responded to the questionnaire	Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, the Comoros Islands, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe	30

N.B.: The above table presents the results of the survey conducted by BREDA (April-May 2002).

Republic, Djibouti and Togo were finalizing their search for funding. Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe had mobilized 50% to 70% of the required resources.

Technical preparation

Only Angola, Cameroon, Djibouti, and Senegal had completed this phase. Seven other countries were finalizing their technical preparations. Six countries (Benin, Cape Verde, the Comoros Islands, Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe) were in a worrying situation, having made very little progress. Mali is an exception in this respect, as it already has a ten-year program for the education sector.

Consultations

Only Djibouti had finished organizing consultations with all stakeholders in the education system. Four other countries (Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal and the Seychelles) had nearly completed the

consultation process. In most of the other cases, a commitment by the government or by technical or financial partners had not yet been secured.

Validating the National Plans

Only Djibouti had completed the validation phase, and only 10 other countries had begun to organize seminars for this purpose. The remaining 19 countries have not yet undertaken any activity in this phase.

Major difficulties encountered

In preparing their National EFA Plans, countries had encountered many difficulties, which explain to a large extent their relatively unsatisfactory state of progress. For instance, most of the countries indicated a lack of financial support from external partners, pointed to material difficulties, and emphasized the low level of institutional capability in terms of co-ordination, planning, communication and decision-making.

Assistance is needed in many areas, and countries are also confronted, though to a lesser extent, with insufficient financial support at national level, with difficulties in developing a dialogue among the sectors concerned and with a lack of local specialists.

Priority requirements

The requirements most frequently cited as priorities for completing national action plans are financial support, training workshops and specialized expertise. Other needs, including technical support, documentation and information, are also far from negligible.

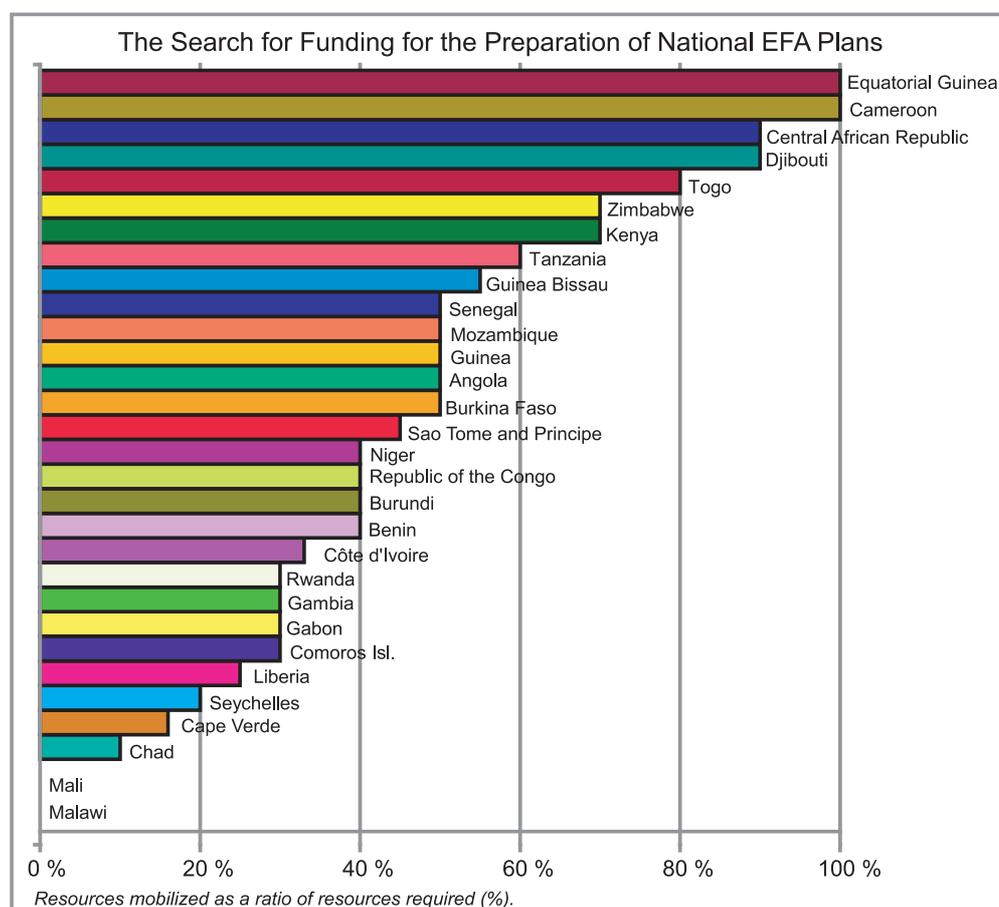
To date, the only country to have completed its National Action Plan is Senegal, in March 2001. Development of the national plan and establishment of a functioning national forum constitute the first phase in the implementation of an Education for All program. For the countries involved, this stage represents an initial test of their political will and especially of their credibility in the eyes of the various partners. Two years after the Dakar conference, the state of progress made in this respect by the countries in sub-Saharan Africa gives cause for concern.

More encouragement is needed to prevent the momentum developed during the Dakar meeting from withering. Let us hope that the next education meetings in Africa (the high-level group on Education for All in November 2002 in Abuja, and MINEDAF VIII in December 2002) will help us get back on course.

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In Search of an Ideal School for Girls

In its fight to improve girls' education, the Forum of African Women Educationists (FAWE) has opened Centers of Excellence in Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania, in regions where girls' enrolment is particularly low.

How can families be encouraged to enroll their girls in school and allow them to complete the educational cycle? How can the school experience prepare girls effectively for the challenges they face in the outside world? How can this be achieved in an effective way, taking into account the unique socio-cultural and educational circumstances of individual girls and their environments?

Girls are often not involved in identifying the problems they face in education. This often means that policy reforms seldom address their needs and end up having little or no impact on their education. The Forum for Africa Women Educationalists (FAWE), which is the lead agency of the Working Group on Female Education (FAWE) enjoys a reputation for successfully lobbying ministries of education and communities in Africa to adopt policies favorable to girls. Now, as recorded in *In Search of an Ideal School for Girls*, FAWE has adopted an additional approach to improving girls' education: building Centers of Excellence to demonstrate "how concerns in girls' education can be addressed holistically through application of a package of effective strategies."

Since 1999, four Centers of Excellence have been established in the Kajiado district of Kenya, the suburbs of Kigali, Rwanda, Morogoro in Tanzania, and Diourbel in Senegal. Each of the centers is a public secondary school (some are co-ed) that serves a geographic area in which girls' enrollment rates are lower than normal. A major purpose of the center is to attract more girls to enter and stay in school. Each center offers the same package of interventions, including adequate classroom and boarding facilities, pedagogical materials and equipment, counseling services, teacher training programs, sensitization workshops, bursaries,

girls' clubs (for empowerment), and a computerized school-management system. The centers' staff work with communities to adapt these interventions to the school.

In addition to improving the education of the girls served by these schools, the Centers of Excellence have two goals. One is to address practices deemed as detrimental to the continuing education of young girls, such as female genital cutting and forced marriages at a young age. Recognizing the deep cultural bases for these practices, the centers engage community members in the schools' activities and work with them on both school and social issues. The other goal is to prepare for the mainstreaming and replication of the package of interventions they have introduced in the four centers.

The booklet presents an overview of the policy environment for girls' education in Africa, FAWE's response to that environment, the link between policy and the Centers of Excellence, and the philosophy and structure of the project. Each of these descriptions follows the same format: the background on the education sector, the context and characteristics of the center, activities undertaken in the intervention packages, constraints and challenges, and lessons learned.

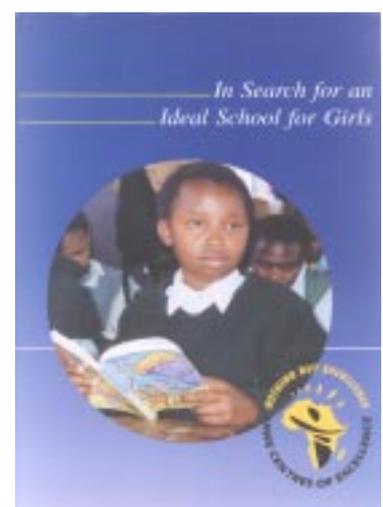
A number of positive local results are witnessed in this booklet, such as a workshop held in Kenya to sensitize Maasai chiefs to the value of girls' education and the work of the center in that region.

The support given to the centers has been remarkable. FAWE has provided training and technical assistance linked to several of the interventions. Communities are helping and eager to do more. Local organizations and international agencies have contributed both funds and material goods, depending upon the center's needs. In Rwanda, Tanzania, and

Senegal, high-level officials in the ministry of education have given moral and sometimes material support. That these centers can rally such varied sources of support speaks well of FAWE and the center managers.

Furthermore, FAWE is tracking the impact of these interventions on girls' learning and has set up a built-in evaluation procedure with performance indicators, which facilitates the sharing of lessons learned from both positive and less effective approaches. These critical observations have helped the newer established centers gain from the experiences of others, while recognizing the challenges ahead.

In Search of an Ideal School for Girls is a testament to both a new approach to affecting girls' education policy and to the collaboration between FAWE and local communities in demonstrating what a well-designed program can do for disadvantaged girls. It deserves a sequel, when these four centers have had even more experience and new centers have been built. ■



Forum of Africa Women Educationalists (2001), *In Search of an Ideal School for Girls*. Nairobi, Kenya, 47 pages.

Using Assessment to Improve the Quality of Education

A survey of national evaluation systems: objectives, characteristics, advantages and drawbacks, and their use for the improvement of education.

During the 1990s the international focus on expanding and improving the quality of basic education encouraged many countries to attempt to assess the performance of their education systems. In some parts of the world, the road to education reform is littered with broken-down information systems that include data on student assessment. In other places, where national assessments of student achievement have been successfully implemented, governments and educators find themselves caught up in controversy over the meaning or value of the assessments.

In *Using Assessment to Improve the Quality of Education*, Thomas Kellaghan and Vincent Greaney offer a calm and cool presentation of the major decisions involved in planning a national assessment and of the technical considerations and the political issues and risks attached to each decision. The first decision, which is not always made with a clear consensus, is on the purpose of conducting a national assessment. Is it to raise or maintain standards? To aid decisions about the allocation of resources? To assign accountability? To alter the balance of control of the system (i.e. centralize or decentralize)?

This short book is a tightly packed overview of the concepts and characteristics of a national assessment, which is contrasted with continuous assessment in the classroom and with public examinations used to select students for promotion. When done right, with direction from a steering committee that represents stakeholders' interests and with the technical expertise required to develop valid and reliable testing methods, a national assessment is a cost-effective means of improving education; it can help to revise a curriculum, to redistribute resources to those who are not being reached, or to otherwise correct faults in the system. Yet

it is not an inexpensive undertaking, and, unlike teachers' continuous assessment, it does not have as its "primary and immediate objective the facilitation of student learning."

Among the complex issues entailed in a national assessment is that of "accountability." Stakeholders in the education system sometimes believe that a national assessment will help to hold schools accountable for the achievement of their students. The authors point out, however, that "holding schools primarily accountable for student's achievements is problematic for at least three reasons." Teachers work within a larger system that has its own limitations. The characteristics of students and circumstances within which a school operates are also beyond their control. Finally, the "accountability" push may engender pedagogical practices such as "teaching to the test" and other distortions that do more harm than good to the teaching-learning process.

The effort and expense of a national assessment are largely wasted when the results are not effectively reported, often aborting their use in the kinds of policy decisions for which they are intended. "There is abundant evidence from many countries in which assessments have been administered that the information derived from them is not being effectively communicated and so is not being integrated into decision-making structures in ministries of education or at other levels of the education system."

The book offers such warnings of unintended consequences of national assessments, as well as their possible pay-offs and potential pitfalls. International assessments are also discussed, such as those sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and the OECD's Program for International Student

Assessment (PISA), and the pros and cons of participating in them.

A downside of the book is a limited exploration of real-world examples, especially examples of assessments in countries in Africa and other poorer regions of the world. (One exception is references to SACMEQ, the regional assessment in Southern Africa, which is held up as a good example of its kind.) Frequent reference is made to the national assessments of the United States, England, some European countries and the larger countries in Latin America. Though national assessment efforts in Uganda, Kenya, Namibia, and Zambia are mentioned, they are not discussed in depth. However, an excellent list of references in this book can lead the reader to some case studies and other recent publications on assessing student learning. ■



Kellaghan, Thomas, and Vincent Greaney (2001), *Using assessment to improve the quality of education*. Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning.

ADEA Activities

July 24-27, 2002

WG on Female Participation
SMT (Science Mathematics and Technology) Workshop for teachers in Rwanda
Kigali, Rwanda

July - August 2002

COMED
Technical assistance to the Federation of African Parent/Teachers' Association (FAPE): "School for Parents" radio project.
Date and venue to be determined

August 1-2, 2002

WG on Books and Learning Materials and Pan African Booksellers' Association (PABA)
• Workshop on marketing/bookselling
• Annual Booksellers' Convention
Harare, Zimbabwe

August 4-15, 2002

WG on Female Participation
Asian Gender Equality in Education Network study visit to FAWE secretariat and national chapters

September 2002

WG on Education Statistics
• Policy dialogue seminar: Using quantitative methodologies for education policy
• Steering Committee Meeting
(dates and venue to be determined)

September 2-15, 2002

Africa Education Journalism Award
Winning journalists' study tour
Paris, London and Washington

September 9-11, 2002

WG on Early Childhood Development/UNICEF
Sub-regional meeting to launch the 'Policy Studies Project' in three Francophone countries: Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mauritania.
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (date to be confirmed)

September 16-17, 2002

WG on Female Participation
14th Technical Committee Meeting,
Nairobi, Kenya

September 23-27, 2002

WG on the Teaching Profession, francophone section
Annual meeting of national teams
Conakry, Guinea

September 26-27, 2002

WG on Higher Education
Meeting to decide on a strategic direction for the WGHE
Accra, Ghana

September 27-29, 2002

WG on Books and Learning Materials
Bookaid: Workshop on Book Development
Kampala, Uganda

October 22-25, 2002

ADEA
• Bureau of Ministers Meeting
• WG Leaders and Coordinators Meeting
• Steering Committee Meeting
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

November 22-23, 2002

WG on Female Participation
24th Executive Committee Meeting
Nairobi, Kenya

October - November 2002

COMED
• National training workshop for journalists and communication officers
Accra, Ghana (dates to be determined)
• Workshop for PANA (Pan African News Agency) journalists.
(date and venue to be determined)

The views and opinions expressed in authored articles of the ADEA Newsletter are those of the authors and should not be attributed to ADEA or to any other organization or individual.

Other Activities

July 29 - August 2, 2002

Zimbabwe International Book Fair
Indaba
Harare, Zimbabwe

August 25 - 30, 2002

17th World Congress on Information Technologies
Montreal, Canada - www.ifip.or.at

August 26 - September 4, 2002

World Summit on Sustainable Development
United Nations
Johannesburg, South Africa

September 9-10, 2002

International Literacy Day Roundtable: The Future of Literacy—A Literate World in the 21st Century?
UNESCO, Paris, France

October 1-2, 2002

International Conference on Education for All: Towards Equality, Quality, Access and Excellence in Literacy
UNESCO/Kebangsaan University
Selangor, Malaysia



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