[Enhancing education quality management: Leads for ushering in changes in education system management practices](#)

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Quality of education

Educational management

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Within the scope of the** [IIEP-Pôle de Dakar](#) **programme offering assistance in** [quality management for basic education](#)**, four national research teams – from Burkina Faso, Madagascar. Niger, and Senegal – analysed education quality management practices in their respective countries. The studies were conducted in 2019 and lasted for more than six months. They have identified promising areas for the improvement of quality management through concrete actions specific to each country.

Promoting the success of each student

One such area concerns the approach taken for students with difficulties, which needs to be more adapted. In the four participating countries, the political ambition of guaranteeing quality education for all is clearly inscribed in sector policies. There are many initiatives for ensuring a more equitable distribution of learning outcomes, including remedial education and homework assistance. Yet the conditions for their efficacy are apparently far from being fulfilled. First, there is a clear imbalance between pedagogical strategies and the resources allocated for their implementation. Second, the system of support and guidance for teachers remains focused on the verification of formal aspects,rather than the real needs of students and teaching staff.

The investigation conducted in the four countries suggests that new strategies need to be considered, beginning with a better understanding of existing capacities and the pursuit of gradual, adapted, and sustained transformation of pedagogical practices. Those in the field – teachers, trainers, and inspectorates – must work collaboratively to devise new kinds of pedagogical organization that better account for the diverse needs of students.

These new practices that need to be developed may be built on existing elements, such as group

activities around giant blackboards,which brilliantly illustrate students'capacities for autonomous work. By moving from mostly lecture-based instruction – which is, in any case,problematic when classes are overflowing and teachers lack sufficient training – to classroom instruction that relies on techniques of mutual teaching (solo work combined with tutoring in small groups), learning methods may be gradually changed in accordance with local contexts. The conditions needed to ensure the efficacy of these teaching practices must be studied before considering ways to make them more widely available.

> Reinforcement of the social contract between school and community is an essential task for the overhaul of education quality management systems.

Changing the framework of management dialogue

A second area for the improvement of quality management identified through the investigations in the field is the framework of management dialogue, which must be reconfigured. The information systems on which the management of countries'education systems depends are often cloistered and rather unreliable. Substantial innovation is being introduced into these informationsystems, tending to generate growing volumes of data and aiming for more complex analyses to better track student learning scores. Though central administrations are driving these initiatives, with major support from outside partners, investigations show there are rather low levels of local uptake. This contrast reveals that available data are of limited use for education management at a national level, which in turn determines the future success of public administration reform and decentralization processes now underway in each country.

Results-oriented management, the principle underlying the management of education systems, depends on the definition of indicators to ensure accountability before superiors. In this regard, the parties in charge of implementation say they are not sufficiently involved in the definition of goals and targets,which are sometimes felt to be imposed by the authorities.Despite consensus within countries that the definition of educational objectives must take into account realities at each subsidiary level(i.e. school,school district,and educational administrative region),those involved report flaws in the process. It must be recalled that the poor quality of data used to draw conclusions also contributes to the discredit of this mode of governance, and that decentralization is rarely matched with a robust strategy for funding planned activities.

Nevertheless, in practice, accountability is respected at all levels. It is, however, characterized by the exaggerated importance placed on the vertical transmission of often numerical data presented in reports that are later compiled at various levels of the administrative hierarchy. This mode of operation helps give the impression of rapid reform, even though traditional management practices and the distribution of responsibilities are changing only marginally.

The production and use of data on a local level may help break this routine. The task is to establish management dialogue frameworks within which parties may truly communicate with each other, while valuing collective mobilizations where everyone does everything they can with the resources at their disposal. By this logic, a clear emphasis on an obligation of diligence rather than an obligation of results needs to be developed, though data trends should continue to be monitored to draw lessons from practical experience. In other words, this is about making sure that careful attention is paid to those in the field – to learn what drives, worries, and impedes them – rather than simply reporting

data to superiors.

Involving the community in school management

A third area for improvement is community involvement in school management. The participation of the community – in its widest sense: households, networks of associations,local elite, and religious authorities – is vital for schools. Communities greatly shape the structure of education systems, especially when it comes to mobilization and resource management. Their involvement helps ensure the continuity of schooling, by promoting attendance and preventing students from dropping out. Community involvement in the health and well-being of students – through support for school meals, hygiene, and extracurricular activities – also contributes to the quality of education.

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