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EDUCATION FOR ALL IN AFRICA

C H A P T E R 8

New benchmarks for action: top priority for integrated sector-wide policies

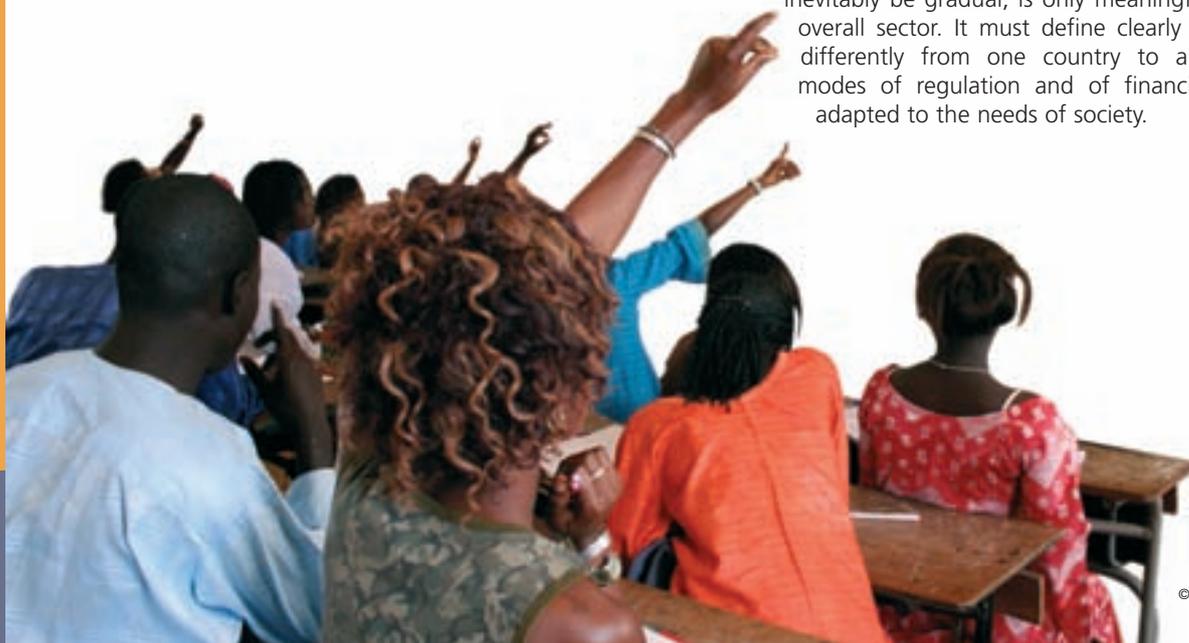
The previous seven chapters have provided the opportunity of putting forward the progress made since the Dakar Forum and the distance still to be covered, and of initiating and fuelling thinking on the questions raised by the development of post-primary education. Chapter 8 is an opportunity to suggest a global road map, which must necessarily be in line with national contexts. Indeed, it is important to stay mobilized around the Universal Primary Education (UPE) goal for those countries still far from it and to develop genuine sector-wide policies that will allow for national priorities and foster an in-depth reform of post-primary education, in order to reach a better balance with the labour market. This reform must also take into account major modifications to financing mechanisms at post-primary levels and will require the development of new, better-adapted management tools. It will only have a chance of succeeding if it is part of a genuine national dialogue to be fuelled and constant.

The updated and documented panorama of the situation of African education systems set out over the seven previous chapters, with all the care made necessary by the relative scarcity and the degree of quality of available data, brings to light true success stories but, at the same time, outlines new and important challenges to be taken up by governments and the international community in the coming years.

The mobilization that has ensued is to be highlighted as one of the successful outcomes of the Dakar Forum, which seems to have finally averted the misfortune of the many earlier summits and the sad litany of deadlines constantly pushed further back. The mobilization for EFA can be measured by the institutional changes characterising the period following the Forum. It is also illustrated by the financial mobilization by the governments and the initiatives of the international community, which have taken the Dakar commitment very seriously, and facilitated a profound change in the conception and modalities of international aid flagged by the emblematic Fast Track Initiative. In concrete terms, the development of primary education in the period following the Dakar Forum was spectacular, when compared to the ten previous years. **Success as such leads to new challenges necessitating the implementation of true sector-wide policies.**

Consolidating the now very real advance towards UPE is undoubtedly the first challenge to be taken up. This concerns, first of all, the road still to be covered for many countries on the way to the goal itself. It then implies the necessary improvement in the quality of learning achievements, considering the fact that African countries are lagging behind developed countries as a whole, but also behind other developing countries. The consolidation process concerns finally the extent and constancy of financial support from the international community, which, already behind schedule, appear most recently to be on a sharp downturn.

The second challenge facing African education systems is the necessary reform of post-primary education. More than by the pressure of the growing number of primary enrolments, this reform is justified, above all, by the low relevance of these levels of education at the present time and by the incapacity of most governments to finance future expansion at current pace and costs, while at the same time ensuring consolidation of UPE. At this stage, it is not meaningful to take post-primary education into consideration as a whole and it is important to distinguish (i) lower secondary education which is certainly bound to be progressively incorporated into a cycle of basic education, (ii) technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the forms and management modalities of which have to be defined in accordance with the priority to be given to the economic integration of young people, (iii) upper secondary education and (iv) tertiary education which is to be redefined with regard to international standards. Such a reform, all the more urgent as it will inevitably be gradual, is only meaningful if it covers the overall sector. It must define clearly and undoubtedly differently from one country to another, priorities, modes of regulation and of financing, and content adapted to the needs of society.



The issues of financing and of the modes of regulation in access to the different levels and forms of education are connected. Managing these two issues, within policies defined for the overall education sector, constitutes the third challenge facing African countries and the international community. Free primary education, and no doubt free basic education in due course, and the financing of actions more precisely targeted at supporting schooling for the poorest, are fully justified in view of the social and economic benefits the less developed countries can expect from same. For many countries, even with higher levels of development, reforming post-primary education funding is justified by the incapacity of the governments to provide full financing while maintaining appropriate levels of quality and relevance. It is also justified incentive-wise. The public education sector has an important role to play in restructuring the supply of education, in partnership with the private sector. However, the development of the private sector is not in itself an alternative to maintaining the provision of free public education. The reform on financing must also be accompanied by measures to promote equity: firstly, in the name of social justice, since it is important for such a reform not to exclude the poorest individuals from going on to longer courses of education when they have the necessary capacities to do so; secondly, in the name of effectiveness, since a reform in education financing that does not take equity into account is doomed to failure.

For all the aspects mentioned above: consolidation of UPE, reform of post-primary education, and reform of orientations and financing, it is obviously difficult to propose a unique framework for action for every country. Countries differ greatly in terms of structures and types of education, enrolment dynamics and situation of the labour market. This chapter intends, nevertheless, to suggest different alternatives and to outline what is involved in terms of strategy, defining and piloting the reforms. **Setting up true sector-wide policies, and probably multi-sector policies as far as technical and vocational education or tertiary education are concerned, will require new instruments and probably new frameworks for action. These will be dealt with in the conclusion of this chapter.**

1. Maintaining the priorities not already met

The analytical elements, tackled in chapter 2, highlight the variety of schooling coverage in primary education, and especially the fact that some countries are very much behind, as far as attaining the Dakar objectives is concerned. The goal of quality UPE must be reaffirmed as the development priority of the systems: a complete primary education is a necessary condition for sustainable literacy.

1.1 Confirmation and consolidation of the quantitative goals of UPE

We have seen in chapter 2 that, at current pace of intake and of survival, 28 African countries would not be in a position to reach the goal of universal primary completion on the 2015 horizon, and 22 out of those 28 countries could be well below 75% completion at that date. The 15 countries that look like reaching the 2015 deadline must stay on course. While most of them have solved intake problems within the cycle¹, some still have only moderate levels of survival. The education policies in these countries should therefore target actions aiming at improving conditions of pupil retention in the course of primary education. The 28 countries currently «off-track» for reaching the Dakar goal in terms of UPE, encounter diverse levels of intake and survival problems. Table 4.1 resumes the situation of these countries on these two aspects.

Table 8.1: Intake and survival in the 28 countries not likely to reach UPE in current enrolment conditions (2004/05 or closest year)

	Problem of intake (AIR of below 90%)	No intake problem (AIR over or equal to 90%)
Average survival (between 75% and 90%)	Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Mali, Sudan, Togo	Congo, Morocco, Namibia
Low survival (below 75%)	Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Djibouti, Niger, Guinea	Ethiopia, Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Chad, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Swaziland, U.R. of Tanzania, Zimbabwe

Source: Authors' classification based on sector analysis and UIS data

For countries with an intake rate of over 90%², the efforts, aimed at increasing school coverage, should specifically target pupil survival until the end of primary education. For those countries still far from universal access, actions combining improvement in access and in survival must be envisaged.

It is only possible to target access and survival when the education systems and the issues of school supply and demand are thoroughly apprehended. Indeed, it must be asked why children are not attending school. Does school adequately address schooling demand or is school rapidly deserted by pupils for different reasons? CSR-type sector analysis has now participated in identifying these issues in a certain number of countries. A supply policy, aimed at bringing school physically closer, can certainly improve intake but additional efforts may be needed to incorporate the characteristics of the demand, in order to improve pupil survival and guarantee their schooling through to the last grade. Some of the time, the problem is directly to do with the demand from the families who show reluctance towards

¹ In this group, only Cape Verde and Gabon show intake levels between 90 and 100% in 2004/05; the other countries are over the 100% mark.

² Senegal is the only country in the group with an intake level close to the lower limit, all the other countries being over 95%.

the educational supply proposed³ (school considered to be of low performance and not immediately income-generating, of questionable morality, decrepit facilities, inadapted school year, etc.). When a policy of supply aimed at improving school coverage does not take into account the characteristics of the demand, this can lead to increasing the number of available places in school, without improving attendance.

The above suggests that educational policies must specifically grasp the characteristics of supply and demand and their consequences on intake and survival, in so far as there is no single model that can ensure quantitative improvement in school coverage, in all circumstances and in all contexts. It is also obvious that national solutions must be differentiated within the country, as there can be a wide variety in terms of supply and demand within the same territory. It therefore seems necessary to have recourse to sound sector diagnosis upstream before defining or revising sector policy and turning it into action plans.

Chapter 2 of this report has also shown that a change in dynamics, in terms of a higher level of primary completion, has been observed in many countries since 2000, even when this still remains very low. First and foremost, it is essential to pursue the efforts already put in with a view to ensuring regular expansion of the systems, before targeting more ambitious goals, which could be risky for the political and social sustainability of the measures already taken

1.2 Quality to be a priority

Would it be satisfactory if UPE were to neglect the quality of learning achievements? The answer to this question is clearly negative. If children go to school, it is for them to gain knowledge and skills defined by society, which will be of use to them in adult life and will enable them to contribute to the development of their country. The results, set out in chapter 4, remind us that school learning is at the core of the problems encountered by African education systems. Quantitative and qualitative goals therefore go hand in hand in the progression towards UPE.

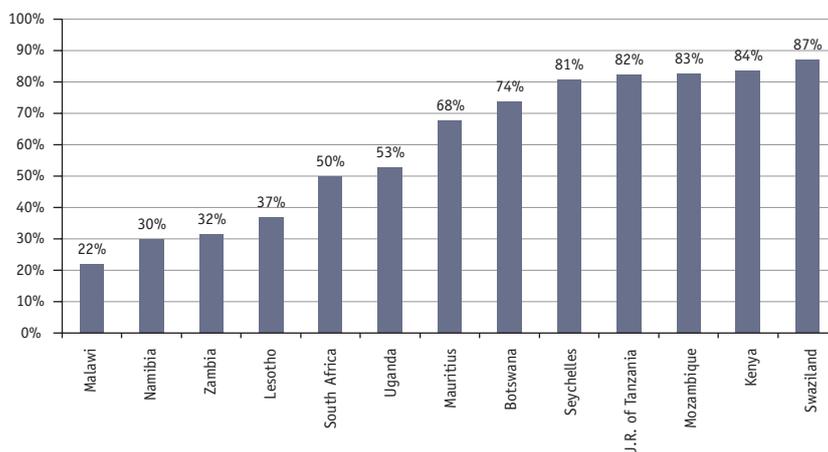
While indicators on school learning achievements are lacking, it is however possible to define thresholds corresponding to a minimum base of learning from data available in the PASEC and SACMEQ assessment programmes. The fact that the two programmes use different tests means that it is not possible to define a common threshold, but it is however possible to identify in each case the situation of a number of countries compared to the objective of quality primary education.

As far as the 13 countries for which SACMEQ data is available, there are several different possible levels of assessment as to the command of reading⁴. The selected threshold (level 4) corresponds to a desirable minimum for all pupils. This indicator makes it immediately obvious that some countries are very far from the desirable situation, including some countries that have achieved universal enrolment (cf. graph 8.1).

³ CREA (2003).

⁴ Out of the eight levels of Reading performance considered by SACMEQ, reaching level 4 is taken into account here (cf. chapter 4).

Graph 8.1: Proportion of 6th grade pupils reaching level 4 Reading in the SACMEQ II tests



Source: SACMEQ

For French-speaking countries that have participated in the PASEC assessments, the selected indicator is the proportion of pupils who obtained at least 40% of correct answers⁶ in the Maths and French tests⁷ (cf. chapter 4 graph 4.5). Once again, it is confirmed that a significant number of countries are very far from a desirable minimum of school learning achievements, after five to six years of schooling. Thus, **although the quantitative challenge to enrol all children is still a reality for many African countries, the qualitative challenge is facing all the countries.**

The issue of the quality of learning must therefore be the focus of future efforts in terms of Education for All. This issue has to be looked at through two components, i.e. international assessments and management of quality within the education systems⁸:

- the need for surveys enabling comparison between countries is no longer questioned. However, existing international surveys designed by and for developed countries do not necessarily address the needs of African countries and are not always adapted to contexts prevailing on the continent. Even so, the comparison between African countries and the rest of the World should not be excluded, as this alone makes it possible to situate the performance of their education systems internationally. There are two ways of responding to these demands: (i) direct participation by some African countries in international surveys, which should certainly be encouraged; (ii) incorporating exercises from other international surveys in tests specifically developed for the African countries. In the two scenarios mentioned, it is necessary to implement a survey covering all the African countries. At the present time, such a survey does not exist and one must make do with data which is not comparable, from two distinct programmes (PASEC and SACMEQ), covering in all only around twenty countries, to outline the situation of the quality of learning. These two programmes, which have different objectives, have been conducting assessments in Africa for over 10 years and have therefore built up experience and expertise that must be used today, in order to develop a survey on the scale of the continent which will address the needs of the African education systems. Setting up a survey of this type should constitute one of the priorities in terms of monitoring the quality of learning in the framework of EFA.

5 PASEC considers that 40% of correct answers correspond to the threshold of minimum knowledge.

6 And Arabic for Mauritania.

7 This should incorporate, as set out in chapter 5, a specific effort for the assessment of literacy and non-formal education.

- International surveys are only the visible part of the iceberg in terms of managing the quality of learning. Indeed, these surveys do not make it possible to ensure the day-to-day management of the quality of learning, due to their scarcity and above all the limited number of schools concerned⁸. As already highlighted, management at local level is all the more important for a national policy of improvement of the quality of learning⁹. In this respect, developing national assessment systems in line with international surveys should be encouraged. However, it raises many institutional and technical questions that it is appropriate to handle in each national context. At institutional level, the main problem is to reconcile the independence necessary for an objective assessment, with the necessary proximity of decision makers and stakeholders. At technical level, the most cost-effective solution would be to use the information provided by national exams. Although these data are generally produced by education systems, they are still difficult to process. More precise analysis would be conceivable if it were possible to use the marks obtained by pupils in each subject. In this respect, pupil identification is required, that would be common to the school and the examination centre. The development of national assessment systems must promote the evolution of information systems and grant particular attention to data related to the quality of learning. However, the production of information on the quality of learning is not sufficient in itself to change results. This information has to be used in the daily management of the education system, in order for things to change. The circulation of the information and its use therefore represent major challenges for local school administration. For example, schools, with results well below others, should be investigated as a priority by those in charge of supervising the schools.

1.3 The need to remobilize donor agencies in order to achieve quality UPE

As seen in the first chapter of this report, mobilization by the international community for UPE was more significant after the Dakar Forum than ever before and very important changes were registered in cooperation practices. However, in financing terms, promises have not been kept and a slowdown has even been noticed recently. It is therefore necessary to remobilize technical and financial partners and give consideration to the future of initiatives that have been taken, including the Fast Track Initiative, which in itself is the symbol of the new forms of aid. Again, as shown in chapter 1, the African education system context of change has been influenced by the Fast Track Initiative, which has experienced growing momentum since its launch in 2002: 20 African countries (from a total of 31) are partners today, with Africa as main beneficiary of the multi-donor funds set up in the FTI framework. The Initiative has therefore been a motor in the development of basic education in Africa, in an international context characterized by a dip in the share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) devoted to the continent. This leads to some suggestions for ensuring that it continues and maintains its role of mobilization around national sector-wide strategy.

⁸ International surveys take place several years apart and only concern a limited sample of schools.

⁹ Several initiatives have been taken to contribute to improving the management of African education systems. The Improving Education Management in African countries (IEMAC) project focuses on primary education. It targets coherence in terms of deployment of teachers across schools and the transformation of resources into school results in the classroom. The project related to the management of school systems in French-speaking countries (CONFEMEN) aims at promoting committed leadership and good governance, improving and rationalising school management by focusing on the improvement of education system processes and performance, reinforce the mobilization of latent resources and their use and make management personnel more professional at all levels. The strategies, which enable to reach these goals, are the reinforcement of local dynamics, participatory management and partnership, the rationalisation and optimisation of resources, giving staff a sense of responsibility, capacity building and image-enhancement of personnel.

First of all, it is essential to (re)focus on primary education. FTI was launched to accelerate the achievement of UPE. The educational strategy endorsement procedure must therefore refer explicitly to this level of education, in order for the first beneficiaries to be indeed those most behind with the Dakar n°2 goal. That has not been systematic in the recent period. It appears essential to refer to the indicative framework. This does indeed make it possible to :

- determine the distance from the UPE goal, through reference to the primary completion rate.
- determine the principal elements of the sector's financing framework and those related to its operation.
- apprehend the level of government commitment to UPE, which is bound to reinforce the selection process in favour of countries showing the most will for change.

In this context, local coordination of the donors is essential. This comes in at the time of the endorsement proposal and their commitment to the programme will necessarily be a driving force to progress. The FTI is a partnership and, in this framework, mobilization efforts are not the sole responsibility of the beneficiary countries. Development agencies have the responsibility of ensuring that their local representatives are aware of the analysis of the national systems and of the trade-offs to be made. This is bound to contribute to making the endorsement process more credible, through more demanding requirements, commonly agreed upon, of course, with the national partners, on the content of sector documents submitted for endorsement. Beyond the election procedure, a «control» must be made *a posteriori* to guarantee that the policy, for which the country has been elected, has been effectively implemented. Logically, this should take into account considerations on how to handle the case of the endorsed policy not being the one effectively applied. One last question concerns the sustainability of the Catalytic Fund: with the modification in eligibility criteria and the extension of the financing period, a rapid rise in the number of beneficiary countries can be expected. Now, a decrease in contribution promises by donors is observed for the coming years. In this context, the Catalytic Fund might not stick to its ambitions. The responsibility of the contributing countries is at stake, just like the Initiative's credibility itself.



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2. Developing true sector-wide policies incorporating in-depth reform of post-primary education

Chapters 2 and 3 showed that the progress towards UPE results in a rising demand for secondary education. Chapter 6 clearly showed that the different countries will not be able to finance the expansion of post-primary education at the same pace and, above all, at the same costs as those today. Finally, chapter 7 highlighted the fact that the content of post-primary education is ill adapted to the economic context and that there is a lack of opportunities for school leavers. It is therefore necessary to develop research on what post-primary education could be in the future, in line with national contexts. This implies in-depth analysis of the education systems and their specific realities, in order to give all pupils, completing primary education, training possibilities enabling integration in the labour market in the longer term.

This implies effective **global** education system **policies**. The envisaged reforms must enable achievement of quality UPE and guarantee the existence of a wide vocational training sector, addressing the need for integration young people into the labour market, and, above all, give new sense to (general) secondary and tertiary education, which are sometimes very far from international standards. The search for innovative strategies, based on experience of good practices, must be fostered. In this sense, developing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) looks like a promising transversal strategy, even if for those who have a lot of practice of same, it is far from being a panacea in terms of reducing costs¹⁰.

It will be essential to **take the national context into account** in these education sector strategies as this sets the constraint, in terms of job possibilities, for those leaving the education systems. The needs of the economy do indeed depend upon its structure, and particularly the relative importance of the traditional and modern sectors. Through taking the national context into account, post-primary education sector policies must thereby define and incorporate efficient and equitable regulation of flow in the different branches and levels of education.

Education sector strategy must also be in line with the concept and the strategic goal of **Sustained Development**. The close connection with the education sector has been stated precisely for some years, particularly at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002¹¹, when it was reaffirmed that education was the cornerstone of sustainable development. Moreover, the United Nations decided, that same year, to set up the « Decade of Education for Sustainable Development¹²». This strategy is a conception of education that strives to reconcile economic development and cultural traditions, while respecting the planet's natural resources, with an emphasis on learning aspects that foster the transition to sustainability¹³.

While bearing in mind that there are a variety of country situations and that it is illusory, in this respect, to define a single sector strategy model to be generalized for all countries, we shall come back, first of all, to the goal of creating a cycle of basic education before going on to tackle the issue of form and ambitions for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). We will then have a lucid approach to tertiary education and strive to define an ambitious policy for upper general secondary education, leading to tertiary education in line with international standards of quality.

10 As summarized in her way by Diana Laurillard, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University, the choice of Open and Distance Learning rarely corresponds to a reduction of costs and, much more often, constitutes a solution in terms of quality of service and offer adapted to special contexts: «Don't let anyone tell you that ICT will reduce costs, as it is not possible. What ICT can do, is broaden the range of possibilities. It can improve education and make it more accessible».

11 And in an even more pronounced way for TVET with the «Bonn Declaration» (2004).

12 Adopted in 2002 and launched in 2005 for the period 2005-2014.

13 Education for tomorrow, education for citizenship, education for a culture of peace, gender equality and respect for human rights, health education, education in terms of population, education for the protection and management of natural resources and education for sustainable consumption.

2.1 Rethinking basic education a long-term strategic option

Progressively setting up basic education to link primary education and lower secondary education is a key strategic option, directly connected to the new sector policies for structuring post-primary education in the long term. This strategy goes further than simply lengthening the duration of primary education and implies the effective extension of learning. It might involve¹⁴, especially in lower secondary, a strong articulation between general secondary education and TVET, due to the fact that in most existing or emerging job positions, the principal qualities needed are often transversal. This implies a serious and difficult redefinition of curricula, which should enable the integration of basic education leavers into the world of work as a priority, through the acquisition of knowledge and skills enabling them to adapt to the changing conditions of the economy. The curricula must then offer a relevant knowledge base of everyday skills and essential generic competencies, not occupation-specific, and focus less on knowledge than on transversal attitudes and skills.

2.2 Ambitions for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The report recalled the existence of considerable disparities on the African continent in terms of TVET, reflecting the variety of contexts and policy choices in the different countries. It also highlighted (particularly chapter 7) the urgent need to reform the sector¹⁵, assessing the non-adaptation of TVET in its formal and non-formal modes. The TVET reform must reconcile long-term objectives with a short-term strategy on training mechanisms. In the short term, it is important to devise a strategy for improvement or implementation of alternative, attractive and relevant mechanisms, for a wide general public, which will effectively participate in the integration of primary school leavers and effectively tackle exclusion. In the long term, with a view to basic education that will include lower secondary education, it is at the outcome of basic education that mechanisms should be set up to facilitate direct integration into the employment market, without however excluding the possibility of continuing studies in more specific TVET structures.

The integration of young people must be a central axis of the relevance of TVET mechanisms. This objective involves better steering of TVET and seeking appropriate training for the job vacancies, based on teachings adapted to the changing socioeconomic context. This points in particular to better steering and management of this sector, for which one of the elements to be developed by many African countries is that of the incorporation of reliable statistical information systems, in order to enable targeted actions through analysis of the employment situation and of the characteristics of integration for young people. From this angle, the notion of inappropriateness of the job filled, compared to the training received, is important when an imbalance is observed as to the status of the job filled (for example, a graduate from tertiary education who is working as a simple employee), and is less relevant when the imbalance observed is connected to content. When the job does not directly correspond to the speciality training received, it may mean that the said training allows access to a wide range of jobs, which could be confirmed if the individual has not been downgraded, in terms of status or salary compared to those corresponding exactly to the occupation for which he/she has been trained. On what are sometimes very small labour markets, striving for a perfect compatibility between training content and the job has little

14 UNESCO Reform of Secondary Education document (2005) «Towards a convergence of knowledge acquisition and skills development».

15 Particularly qualitatively and quantitatively for French-speaking and English-speaking countries : (i) a structurally high rate of unemployment, even if there are naturally variations according to the countries ; (ii) limited taking into account of the narrowness of the modern job sector ; (iii) significant integration difficulties for young people, especially for the most qualified, this in spite of very acceptable salary requirements ; (iv) an imbalance between supply and demand for skilled labour, due to an excess of qualified people compared to job possibilities ; (v) technical diplomas that do not guarantee access to skilled jobs in the modern sector (compared to diplomas from general secondary education).

meaning and may make the training supply excessively rigid. The information necessary for designing the supply of training should therefore in this case, and in particular for vocational training, enable to fill in on the judgment based on the simple observation of inappropriate content.

In terms of content of training precisely, many countries have embarked on the engineering approach to training over the past few years. If this strategy is to continue developing (both in initial training as in lifelong training, the strong TVET development lever) the countries must ensure the permanence of the structures, mechanisms and competencies that training engineering requires, and also the achievement of truly concrete results as to improvement of the quality on underlying processes, such as the skills approach for curricula. In the longer term, it is also important that the countries be vigilant in giving individuals the possibility for lifelong learning (indispensable with changing technology), and to promote civic attitudes and behaviour in those trained.

Several countries are judiciously injecting new energy into their strategy on effective structures in terms of integration, such as alternate school/business mechanisms. There are many initiatives in this respect on the different markets illustrating the relevance of a multi-sectoral approach of TVET at this level. Spotting and defining the needs, applying educational engineering techniques mentioned earlier, are facilitated by the prior structuring of the market stakeholder representatives (employer and employee syndicates), which become actively involved in the different stages of the definition and of the appreciation of the relevance of training. More globally, the necessary interaction between TVET and the labour market make it important to work on structuring the professional branches that are flourishing, in terms of job prospects. In Africa, the employment markets are not very structured, and this encourages neither their development nor the synergy with the education systems. Moreover, these coordination mechanisms must foster the emergence of new markets and the creation of businesses or self-employment in flourishing or innovative sectors. They go beyond the education sector framework itself, and give meaning to the need for developing multiple partnerships between all the stakeholders. In a multi-sectoral approach to adapting training to the socioeconomic context, the countries must acquire the institutional instruments necessary for the sector's coordination and financing mechanisms, and which effectively fill their role.

Aside from national initiatives, regional dynamics must be encouraged wherever possible. An improvement in integration must also include, at least in the short term, the development of relevant and attractive intermediate level training, also accessible to those excluded from primary education and to those not attending school, in the imperative respect of children's rights to which the countries have committed themselves. « Pre-vocational » training and traditional apprenticeship (for a much wider age-group and population) are both sectors that deserve more attention in this respect, on account of the current employment situation in Africa. Initiatives to promote these types of training must be encouraged, with a view to generalisation and to adapting their incorporation in current mechanisms. In this framework, relevant strategies must aim at reinforcing the link between the TVET and literacy systems. This is for example the case of the « Programme of skills development for youth and adults » (*Education qualifiante des jeunes et des adultes* - EQJA), which focuses on activities in the informal sector and is put forward as a promising initiative¹⁶.

¹⁶ This strategy is an educational and formative process, often part-time, that must enable youth and adults to complete their apprenticeship through the acquisition of further basic education, particularly in the area of communication and basic scientific skills related to professional know-how. It thus contributes to reaching the EFA goal n°3.

2.3 For an ambitious policy of redefinition of general secondary education clearly articulated with quality tertiary education

While lower secondary education is intended to be associated to primary education, in order to progressively constitute the base of a cycle of basic education benefiting from universal coverage, in the short and medium term, flow intake regulation appears inevitable in most low-income sub-Saharan African countries, for which primary completion is still a remote goal. As for upper secondary education, it is supposed to prepare pupils for tertiary education of international quality. Insofar as upper secondary and tertiary education should clearly train qualified executives addressing the economic needs of the countries, it is appropriate to adopt a strategy here that puts the accent on quality rather than quantity. That implies fundamentally reviewing its present configuration, in order to direct it towards more scientific

and technological courses of study, and providing libraries, computer facilities and equipped laboratories. It also implies defining acceptable principles of selection (cf. section 3).

The very variable performance of the African tertiary education systems is a curb to the circulation of skills. This is why the African Union wanted to be equipped with standardisation instruments and harmonisation frameworks at continental level, particularly through the Arusha Regional Convention, in 1981, on the recognition of tertiary education studies and certificates. However, this convention, which is being revised in order to allow for the huge changes in African tertiary education over the last 25 years, has only been signed by 20 countries, considerably limiting its scope. The African Union's new decade for education (2006-2015) recommends revitalization through the emergence of university institutions playing their role to the fullest, in the implementation of training and research addressing economic and social demands. However, a number of questions still have to be dealt with, in order to make up for the lack of relevant answers in relation to the vision formulated by the African Union for tertiary education. Several issues are to be taken into account and must be the subject of a clear political commitment and long-term investment.

First of all, it is important to define better criteria for student selection and guidance, in order to avoid the explosion of courses of study with low job opportunities, whilst the scientific branches and some technological branches are not attractive. This guidance may have an institutional base but will also involve improved communication about the courses of study offered (prerequisites, content, economic and social relevance, attractiveness on the labour market, etc.) and on job opportunities. Alongside the renovation of public education, the success of such reforms will imply setting up and reinforcing authorisation and certification procedures for private institutes, in order for them to comply with recognized and validated national standards. Successful control of tertiary education



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enrolments also involves the development and promotion of short vocational training leading to diplomas or qualifications, in order to direct the supply of training by reference to national contexts and market demands.

In a context of globalization of economies and knowledge, and so of internationalization of tertiary education, controlling enrolments must go along with the unconditional improvement of the services provided ; this is essential both for national development and to ensure competitiveness at global level. The internationalization of tertiary education creates a context favourable to higher mobility of students, teaching staff and researchers on the continent and elsewhere. However, the virtually unidirectional flow of African competencies towards countries in the North is a sizeable handicap for the economic and social development of the continent (cf. chapter 7). It is therefore important to increase the attractiveness of the training supply in tertiary education in Africa by improving study and teaching conditions (access to documentary resources, more functional research frameworks and innovative branches of training) and by recruiting highly qualified teaching staff, in order to enhance effective research. In this respect, the rating of tertiary education and research institutes published with extensive media coverage is a strong incentive.

The internationalization of tertiary education also strengthens the need for harmonization and modernization of pedagogical practices (synchronization of the systems and standards used, common nomenclature of diplomas ...). Quality assurance devices have priority on this subject and can facilitate settlement of the issues related to accreditation, harmonization of academic titles and mobility. Finally, in a context where resources are scarce, the development of quality tertiary education will only be possible with more favourable trade-offs to pedagogical and research expenditure in the national budgets. In many countries, social aid takes up a too large share of the budgets. Better management and targeting of social aid, according to criteria to be defined (criteria of excellence and/or socioeconomic criteria and/or support to branches of study of high social relevance), and efforts for involving the private sector in the provision of quality social services to students are all urgent considerations to be adapted to the situation of each country.

The change at tertiary education level will follow on from a global vision, embracing the education system as a coherent system more effective than the sum of its respective sub-sectors (basic education, secondary, tertiary ...), and which potentially addresses the demands in human resources, knowledge and know-how coming from all sectors of national life. Tertiary education must also fulfil its prospective function and its role of intellectual support to political thinking. Beyond the improvement in the production and dissemination of knowledge, the problems of poor management, governance of the institutions and absence of effective dialogue between partners call for special attention and reforms.

8

C H A P T E R

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN AFRICA

3. Flow regulation, financing of education and equity

The implementation of genuine sector-wide policies and the constraints weighing on same, both in terms of financing and in terms of relevance, would justify a more active policy for flow regulation in many African countries at upper secondary and tertiary education levels. These are certainly policies that are difficult to set up and that must fit into a process of dialogue, fuelled by sound arguments in a progressive calendar. Flow regulation can take the traditional form of restricted access; it could be more effective if it was also based on a reconsideration of free education, in order to contribute to mobilizing new resources, more effectively reconcile individual education choices and community interests, and provide the government with a guidance and incentive mechanism that is lacking. The proposal for families to finance part of the cost of education, borne today by society, can hardly be taken into consideration without also looking into the issues of equity, which are often given as the reason for rejection of the proposal without seriously examining the arguments behind this.

3.1 Flow regulation and participation by the families in financing post-primary education

The financial projections set out in chapter 6 are convincing enough as to the fact that many African countries will not be in a position to finance the expansion of secondary education at current pace and costs. This is without even allowing for the additional financial efforts that some of them could be obliged to make in order to reach UPE. While it is important, as suggested by the report of the 3rd SEIA conference held recently, to reduce the costs of post-primary education in order to make its expansion financially sustainable, there are many arguments for justifying additional expenditure made necessary by the indispensable reference to international standards, particularly in tertiary education, and in some branches of upper secondary education. It will be inevitable, in many cases, to control expansion in enrolments, even to decrease total enrolments in some courses of study which are well known to lead to limited job opportunities.

This flow regulation can operate directly through the setting up of different restrictions on access (competitive examinations, guidance commission ...), which ensure the regulation of the courses of study and the academic levels of those admitted. This is an issue that is difficult to handle socially, due to the political weight of students. Many developed and emerging countries have preferred to get round it by enabling the development of a selective sector of limited size beside a vast open sector, bound to depreciate progressively. Besides the fact that neither equity nor social stability are ensured in this type of institutional arrangement, it does not in any case seem to constitute an adequate response. At the same time, entrusting the development of the selective sector to the private sector, while maintaining a low performing public sector, cannot be considered a serious alternative.

Implementing flow regulation through an increased participation by the families, even by businesses, in financing upper secondary education can, in this specific context, represent a more acceptable option socially.

Increasing the financing of education by the families in post-primary levels, or more generally imagining a transfer of costs between the system's stakeholders could participate in a quantitative and qualitative regulation of the overall sector:

- Private financing enables mobilization of new resources to be devoted to the education system overall, and enables satisfaction of the priorities of the moment, like strengthening UPE in some countries where it is limited due to extreme poverty in part of the population, setting up of aid to the most destitute, improving the quality of the studies proposed.
- Increasing the cost of education for the beneficiaries may reinforce the relevance of their choices and encourage putting a halt to courses of study of limited value. As noted earlier (chapter 7), the low effectiveness of some branches, and their very uncertain economic benefits, is largely due to the fact that their cost is covered by society.
- The rise in the cost of studies should also make students more demanding, as to the content and conditions of study and would thus be conducive to an improvement in the quality of studies and their outlets.
- More globally, this policy would enable the government to be directly involved in flow regulation by promoting some fields of studies rather than others. Rather than bemoaning the little interest shown by the families for TVET or scientific studies, which should be promoted by many countries, it would be possible to develop a system of modulation of registration fees, to attract more young people to these sectors. This would, of course, have to be adjusted with the needs of society and the situation of the labour market.

When referring to the average situation of the different countries in terms of enrolments, it appears clearly that participation by the families in financing education should neither concern primary education nor, as far as possible, lower secondary education. The importance of the economic dimension in primary schooling can be seen by the trends in enrolment that go along with policies concerning school fees, and this could even justify, with a view to UPE, an aid policy targeting the poorest populations, for whom free education is not enough to ensure access and survival in school. In the short term, the policy of participation by the families in education expenditure should only concern upper secondary education and tertiary education, for which the imbalance between qualifications and jobs are often the most manifest and where more resources should be concentrated on a smaller number of beneficiaries for better quality education.

The present situation is quite paradoxical in these education levels insofar as, in many countries, free education is no longer the rule in secondary education while, at the same time, it is still in effect for students in tertiary education, a higher proportion of whom receive direct aid from the government. One can then appreciate the difficulty of radically changing these established facts and also the importance of social dialogue and of the agenda that must accompany these necessary reforms.

3.2 Private financing of education and equity

The issues of financing and modes of regulating access to the different levels and forms of education are connected. It is imperative to include actions aimed at promoting equity. Although free education does not guarantee, on the one hand, the poorest individuals access to the schooling system, it does, on the other hand, lead to redistribution towards those who are the most capable of benefiting from the schooling system. For a single age group, economists traditionally measure the equity in the distribution of public resources in education by the profit gained by pupils, according to their schooling pattern¹⁷. The longer a child spends in schooling, the more he/she benefits from the public resources mobilized for education, due to the increase in expenditure per pupil along with the level of study. In 2005, for all the African countries for which appropriate data is available, it can be seen that the 10% most educated have benefited from 40% of the public resources in education. This low «structural» equity, connected to the schooling pattern alone, is made worse by the fact that this is obviously very much dependent upon the social origin of the pupils. Even though we do not have a comparative data base as to school attendance according to social origin, there is hardly any doubt that those who have studied the longest, belong to the more privileged segments of society and have in addition benefited from good quality, whether in primary, secondary or tertiary education.

The impact of free education on the inequality of schooling patterns can be studied through the abundant literature on social inequalities, including several international articles by Duru-Bellat (2006). This work shows that the development of schooling has little effect upon economic and social inequalities. Social selection and access to high economic positions take place in this context through longer studies and the compartmentalization of courses of study that tend to consolidate the initial inequalities. In the competition for available positions, the rise of the average level of schooling goes, hand in hand, with a drop in the value of diplomas, economically and socially speaking, and thus longer schooling for children from the most privileged backgrounds¹⁸. In developed countries, in spite of the distinct rise in the average length of studies, the process of social differentiation in schooling patterns is still at work and involves early choices of distinctive or elite courses of study.

While equity must preside over the orientations of the education system, it is clear that it is not free education that will make it possible to achieve this goal. It is therefore appropriate to turn the traditional set of arguments completely around, in order to make equity one of the objectives in giving up free post-primary education. Just like positive discrimination policies, the search for equity implies supporting the poorest and, for the most skilled, considerable support to enable longer education. This type of policy requires additional resources, which could be obtained by abandoning the notion of free education for longer studies; besides, this is justified by the private nature of investment in this type of education, which is largely funded by society today.

The financing reforms must go, hand in hand, with the promotion of equity: firstly, in the name of justice, as the poorest individuals should not be denied access to longer courses of education when they have the necessary ability; secondly, in the name of effectiveness, as any reform on the financing of education is doomed to failure, if it does not take equity into account. Ensuring that funding by the families contributes to the reinforcement of the quality of the educational supply and to flow regulation, while enabling improved access for the poorest individuals to levels of education, that were practically inaccessible to them at present, is thus one of the keys to success of this type of reform. A fairer system would confine free education to the levels attended by all (primary and basic education) and would impose a participation on those who have the possibility of pursuing their studies, while ensuring, at all levels, the targeted redistribution towards the underprivileged.

¹⁷ The analysis consists in estimating, from net enrolment rates, the structure of final schooling (approximation of the share of a generation completing their studies at each level) and in calculating as a second step, according to the expenditure per pupil and the length of each cycle, the structure of public resources «appropriated» by the pupils, according to their schooling. Finally, a comparison is made between the structure of enrolments on the one hand, and that of expenditure on the other hand, and the more or less equitable nature of the distribution is measured by using traditional distribution analysis tools (Lorenz curve, Gini coefficient).

¹⁸ Becker did not state things otherwise, in 1967, when he showed that the individual point of balance in educational investment was connected to financial resources and individual capacities. In this framework, the most able and the richest (*a fortiori* the most apt who are at the same time the richest), due to the lower cost of their studies, invest more than others.

4. Adopting management and guidance instruments for the supply of training and appropriate frameworks for dialogue and action

Defining and setting up genuine sector-wide policies supposes an extension, if not a redefinition, of diagnosis and assessment tools of how the education system and the labour market operate. This requires the simultaneous change and reinforcement of the structures incorporating the sector dialogue at national and regional levels, and also of the frameworks for action for the development of the government-donor dialogue and the concretisation of external financial support to the education system.

4.1 Refining sector diagnosis at country level

CSR-type sector analysis generally covers all areas of the education system. To date, they are however more detailed for primary and secondary education than for technical/vocational and tertiary education. It is advisable to extend the field of sector analysis to the overall educational system, and particularly to give more detailed coverage to tertiary education and the different forms of technical and vocational education and training. The global diagnosis could consist of making prior analyses to provide an appropriate description for apprehending the specific situation of each sub-sector.

In tertiary education, the analysis must clearly be made at the level of the different branches, as to their operation, internal effectiveness and costs; the results should be contrasted per university, when there are several on the territory. It will not be possible to benefit from information aimed at a fine steering of the sub-sector, if tertiary education is handled as a homogeneous whole, when it is in fact made up of academic disciplines and institutions that offer neither the same quality of education nor the same job opportunities. Besides student-teacher ratios, the quality of the teaching profession is certainly an important element to be broken down as to the different categories of teaching staff and their commitment and production in terms of research.

The low contribution of tertiary education to growth in the less advanced countries and in the emerging countries (chapter 7) can to some extent be put down to the fact that it has been developed on the basis of general courses of study. In the past, the latter enabled the development of civil service and State departments but do not really address the needs of the present day markets ; the poor quality of service provided has also something to do with this observation and, in itself, reflects the situation of over enrolment and the poor student-teacher ratio. Many African universities function with a very low number of high-ranking professors and a large body of junior lecturers, sometimes simply holding a master degree. Manifestly, the objective, at this level of education, is not to reduce the unit cost in order to ensure massive access, but to develop quality tertiary education in hardly flexible global public budget plans.

An analysis of technical and vocational education must lead to even more differentiated programmes and, no doubt, to a wide variety of situations in terms of training (traditional courses, school courses combined with work experience ...) and financing. Analysis already carried out in several African countries, show that it is important to go into great detail there again. It concerns a sector with a high number of flourishing initiatives to be federated, supported, financed, assessed, and first of all identified. Other criteria are used to evaluate the relevance



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of this sub-sector, compared to other levels of education. The implementation of sandwich courses and in-job training, for example, depends critically on legislation with respect to businesses, on tax legislation and additional efforts that can be made, in order to structure the different branches, the future growth of which lies in their capacity for defining the needs in terms of skills.

When looking at the performance of these levels of post-primary education, priority should be given to the analysis of external effectiveness (cf. section 4.2), highlighting the characteristics of integration for those who have been trained, rather than analysing the quality of learning achievement, which will continue to be a useful element of assessment in general secondary education. This is of course critical for technical and vocational education, and just as much so for tertiary education, which cannot go on educating cohorts of unemployed.

The extension of sector diagnosis must also concern the simulation tools, enabling global and inter-sectoral financing trade-offs (financing needs for the sector compared to mobilizable national and external resources). Recourse to financial simulation models, as is often the case after sector analysis, has been directed, up till now, towards securing the necessary funds for satisfying the goal of UPE. In this exercise, the Fast Track Initiative indicative framework defines references for primary education in terms of budget allocation (50% of public expenditure on education on average) and in terms of intra-sectoral trade-offs for primary education, aiming at holding in check the unit costs per pupil while protecting quality. There is nothing comparable for post-primary education and this obviously represents an important analytical work project at country level, and also in the framework of international comparisons, with the aim of «benchmarking» trade-offs at these levels of education. Comparing simulation models, including all levels of education for a significant sample of countries, should enable each of them to measure the global leeway, as to the evolution in schooling in the overall sector and also to highlight the most auspicious inter and intra-sectoral trade-offs for financially sustainable complete sector-wide policies.

4.2 Better management of the training supply by setting up mechanisms for regular monitoring of the employment market and training needs

We have already noted several times (chapter 7), that the specificity of the investment in human capital does not enable a rapid adjustment of the «education market», i.e. abandoning hardly effective courses of study to the benefit of others, which would be more effective. Thus, regular monitoring of external effectiveness and particularly integration of school leavers are the basis for defining effective policies for post-primary education and, above all, for justifying public funding. This involves giving greater attention to the employment situation, in such a way as to guide pupil/student flow to the different levels of education.

On the level of global quantitative adjustments, it is necessary to collect regular data on the access to employment by education system leavers. While knowing the rate of unemployment is useful, it is far from sufficient in the context of duality of the African labour markets, where adjustments take place mainly through situations of underemployment and downgrading, masking the reality of the imbalance. More direct information, on the job filled

and on the salary, is necessary to complete this description. Considerable effort is essential in Africa for regular implementation of this type of investigation to support any policy for the development of post-primary or post-basic education. Choice must be guided by the capacity to inform on market specificity¹⁹.

Running these surveys is not the direct responsibility of the ministries in charge of education. They address wider concerns involving other ministries or institutions, particularly those in charge of economy, development, national planning, etc. The availability of observation tools and sharing information on market situations can represent the first important step towards intersectoral approaches, necessary for improved management of post-primary education.

Much more detailed market observation is required, in order to create new courses of study. Studies, carried out in vocational education, show that structuring the market stakeholders is a prerequisite for expressing needs that can lead to supplying new training. It is important to be pragmatic, insofar as, even when precise needs may be expressed, these do not necessarily justify implementing specific permanent training courses; tailoring existing courses of study may be an alternative to the creation of totally new ones. Moreover, the expression of needs by employers is far from neutral, particularly in a context where they would not participate in financing the branches of training that they may suggest and where needs may change rapidly. It is therefore necessary to devise sufficiently flexible mechanisms, to be assessed frequently by all stakeholders, enabling rapid adjustment of programmes.

4.3 Promoting and developing sector dialogue

The sector policies to be undertaken imply new levels of trade-offs. These reforms demand strong political determination that will be all the more effective, if supported by a renewed social dialogue. The international community itself will then be confronted with new challenges justifying new changes to its framework of action, in addition to the concretisation of promises made.

The changes, that have occurred since the Dakar Forum in the different countries and at international cooperation level certainly, constitute a significant advantage in this context. National and international discussions around "credible plans", even of limited scope in sector-wide terms, and the stronger commitments for directing aid at national budget level are indisputable positive outcomes. These changes are a necessary condition for undertaking new policies; however, they will not be less insufficient if the practices they have fostered stay in their present configuration.

Obtaining a national consensus on the promotion of primary education was not difficult, once it was seen to have few repercussions upon the other sectors. To a great extent, the most difficult trade-offs have been carried out within primary education itself and, in particular, around the reduction of the expenditure per pupil on teaching staff. The new policies to be implemented should be trickier in that they concern the operation of all levels and suppose, in many countries, a modification in priorities and in financing modalities. There are arguments to support the different changes. They must be widely discussed nationally in the framework of a serious dialogue built around the challenges of justice and development.

¹⁹ When carried out, these surveys must respect several principles : (i) the instruments must be capable of apprehending the specificities and the complexity of African labour markets ; (ii) the measure of the levels of education must be fine enough for effective steering; (iii) they must be led and used on a permanent basis for effective monitoring; (iv) they must be of moderate cost in order to be covered by national budgets; (v) results must be rapidly made available to ensure better reactivity of the education system to the changes in the labour market.

The aim of this dialogue is first and foremost to rapidly set the basis for a global sector policy, together with a realistic agenda. Cutting corners could lead to brutal rejection of the reforms; disconnecting them too excessively from each other could just, as well, lead to reconsidering the achievement of the set goals. In the present context, under the pressure of the growth in enrolments in primary education, it could be very tempting to limit these reforms to setting up basic education, which would necessarily give rise to a consensus, by putting off, until later, the more difficult structural reforms concerning the other levels of education. While basic education must indeed be considered as an important goal for transition towards a new stage of growth, especially for countries having consolidated UPE, this goal can only take on its full meaning through a reorganization of the different levels of education, together with reforms in terms of courses of study facilitating economic integration and a clear redefinition of the roles, financing and content of general upper secondary and tertiary education.

Changes to the modalities of financing will, no doubt, be one of the most difficult issues to handle. As suggested above, the arguments that exist for facilitating evolution must be backed up by supported observations, in terms of the situation of employment and equity. In general, the quality of the dialogue and of the reforms will be very much dependent on the collection of sound convincing data. In this respect, much is expected from the financial simulation exercises for the overall sector and from the urgent mobilization of national data on employment and development perspectives.

The urgent need for factual elements undoubtedly comes up against the changing *modus operandi* of technical and financial partners. There is, at the time when the need is felt the most, a technical deficit and a lack of human resources on the side of the governments as on that of their partners, as to the capacities for global understanding of the challenges of harmonization of the different levels of education and of definition of the activities to be actually set up.



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Local technical and financial partner coordination should play an important role in this mobilization, but it is not sure that this can be possible with the present way of working. Harmonization of aid is a changing process and, unlike what has been observed for primary education, it is not sure that it can be so easily set up in areas and levels of education where the donor countries themselves have very different conceptions and approaches. The pooling efforts, characterizing these local donor groups, do not go so far as realising joint, or even shared, technical analysis. The technical reinforcement of the technical and financial partner groups could therefore constitute a major challenge in this new context. It could involve the technical and financial partners supporting the creation of new regional expertise units at the disposal of their groups and of the governments that they support.

4.4 Improving EFA coordination

The many EFA promotion, coordination and monitoring mechanisms are indispensable. They report to multiple decision-making bodies: governments, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, NGOs and civil society. They constitute the major driving force of the EFA movement, and must constantly reinforce their dynamic and positive action.

Nationally, each mechanism has played a specific role, which has not continued, due to the very evolution in the EFA movement. The programme approach, sector analysis and sector plans introduce new mechanisms that govern, more than ever, the implementation of genuine education policies, illustrated more particularly by the example of the ten-year education development plans.

In some countries, the national EFA coordination has been the mainspring of this new process. In many other cases, due to the fact that it was not the centrepiece of government structures for elaborating and monitoring educational policy, in the way education planning departments or ten-year development plan steering units are, it became out of phase and disconnected from the operational mechanisms.

So, the countries have let structures build up and it is undoubtedly time to reconsider the relevance of some of these, starting with the national mechanisms operating at present.

Sub-regional mechanisms have hardly worked, whether with reference to the sub-regional EFA Forums or to the devices specific to the sub-regional economic communities. There are many reasons for the lack of success, ranging from the poor quality of the sub-regional integration processes to the absence of an appropriate institutional base, and to the lack of resources. However, one of the major reasons is probably the difficulty of connecting sub-regional programmes and national programmes.

Comparing the EFA national coordination agendas, at each sub-region, would probably be the start to a solution. But the resources will still be lacking, at sub-regional level, to make the mechanism work. This is where the commitment contained in the Dakar framework for action: *«regional and international support is planned in order to reinforce regional and sub-regional forums and capacities in terms of EFA, especially in Africa»* should be put into practice.

At regional level, the African Union is experiencing evident difficulties for implementing and monitoring the Decade of Education for Africa. The device supported by the regional economic communities has not worked. On top of the reasons mentioned above concerning these communities, there is a fundamental issue. It is unquestionably legitimate for the African Union to have goals in terms of education. But the African Union does not seem to have found the way to use the necessary political influence on the countries. In terms of

implementation of a Decade of Education for Africa, it is already quite difficult to manage to organize consultation on educational policies and strategies, sharing of information and successful experience, transnational studies and data collection. A Decade of Education for Africa has a much greater ambition, the feasibility of which has not been proven in the past. Education in Africa is progressing thanks to other vectors that the continental authorities should identify, in order to provide them with support. .

The activity of the regional EFA Forum, which has convened three times over the period 2001-2007, has been positive in terms of monitoring progress and in terms of advocacy. The Regional Forum seems nevertheless to have lost sight of one dimension, which is the definition of a programme of activities and support to national efforts for EFA, as adopted in the form of a regional agenda for monitoring EFA in the first Regional Forum. This must be a permanent element for the future of the Regional Forum. The agenda must be defined from the needs expressed at country level, in terms of coordination and must link national, sub-regional and regional EFA monitoring mechanisms closely together.

