

▷ **Évaluation conjointe**

Executive Summary available in English (pp. 31 - 53)



Evaluation à mi-parcours

du Plan décennal de développement du secteur de l'éducation du Bénin (PDDSE 2006-2015)

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Executive Summary

The second phase of Benin's 'Ten-Year Education Sector Development Plan' (*Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur de l'Éducation*, PDDSE) covering the period 2006-2015 is about to be completed. Before entering the third and last phase, a mid-term evaluation has been undertaken, initiated by the governments of Denmark, France and Benin (represented through the '*Observatoire du Changement Social*').

The overall objective of the evaluation is to assess to what extent the objectives and assumptions that underlie the education plan remain relevant in light of the current situation, to assess the results achieved over the past five years, and to identify lessons learned. The evaluation is structured around three main themes: (i) assessment of the policies and strategies undertaken as well as the results obtained, (ii) management, coordination and sector dialogue, and (iii) sector financing. The evaluation covers all six levels of the education sector in Benin: preschool, primary, secondary, technical education and vocational training, higher education and scientific research, as well as literacy and adult education.

The evaluation process took place between February and August 2011 and was based on three phases: (i) a comprehensive documentation review, (ii) data collection in Benin in April, including interviews with key actors at central, deconcentrated ('*départementales*'), decentralized ('*communes*') and institutional levels, and (iii) analysis and report writing.

The executive summary is presented in three parts: firstly an outline of the main results of the education plan across the six levels of education and across the three themes; secondly, a discussion of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Plan; and finally the overall conclusions and recommendations.

For additional information on the progress in key education indicators discussed in theme 1 below, please also consult Appendix 4 which presents a full list of the monitoring indicators used for the evaluation.

Theme 1: Policies and strategies undertaken and results obtained

1. Preschool education

Access and equity

Growth in preschool enrollment has been impressive since the launch of the education plan, increasing from 27,673 pupils in 2005 to 97,333 in 2010. The decision to introduce free education, combined with targeted outreach campaigns and awareness-raising, has generated a real momentum for preschool education. The question is, however, whether the State will be able to adequately meet this growing demand without resorting to financial contributions from parents as was originally planned. It is difficult to say whether the expansion of preschooling has led to a reduction in the geographical disparities since no strategy has been developed to address this issue. On the other hand, gender parity has been achieved.

Quality

Attempts to improve the quality of preschool education have achieved mixed results. The number of teachers in public preschools is limited and there may be a need to increase the special vocational training for preschool teachers in the near future due to the rapid expansion of the subsector. The situation in terms of infrastructure and basic facilities remains a concern. Moreover, the pedagogical approach is primarily focused on preparing children for school entry, contrary to experience which shows that preschool is most effective when addressing the needs of children in a holistic manner by addressing the needs for education, nutrition, health and protection simultaneously.

Recommendations:

- Examine the financial implications of the decision to offer free preschool education in order to assess the longer-term sustainability and adapt strategies for expansion accordingly.
- Develop a long-term plan to ensure a balanced implementation of preschool infrastructure between different municipalities and between rural and urban areas, including specific indicators to measure the reduction in disparities.
- Strengthen the monitoring of indicators to measure quality in preschools particularly focusing on the improvement of infrastructure and basic facilities, staff qualifications, pupil/teacher ratios and the availability of teaching materials.

2. Primary education

Access and equity

The strategies implemented have been successful and, as in preschool, the introduction of free education combined with public awareness campaigns has significantly contributed to accelerating the gross intake rate (GIR) from 99% in 2005 to 132% in 2010. Furthermore, the inequalities between girls and boys in primary school attendance have continued to decline. The gender parity index increased from 0.90 in 2005 to 0.94 in 2010 in terms of enrollment (gross enrollment ratio, GER) and from 0.92 to 0.98 in terms of intake (GIR). In contrast, very little progress has been made on integrating children with special needs and children out of school. Overall, the most effective strategies for increasing enrollment appear to be the reduction in the costs for families combined with the sustained advocacy and awareness activities. These are policies of national scope. In the future, however, it will be strategies that are more focused and more directly address local needs that are likely to be most successful in reaching the last groups of girls and boys for whom the strategies of national scope have proved to be insufficient. In addition, substantial geographical disparities remain.

Retention

The education plan has placed a high priority on reducing the proportion of children repeating grades. This focus is justified as repetition has a cost and does little to fight school failure. However, the results are limited since the implementation of measures has encountered some resistance from teachers beyond the first and second year of primary education. The extension of school meals has had a positive effect on school attendance, but a massive expansion of canteens is unlikely in the near future, as costs are too high and compete with funding for other inputs into the education system. A more precise and rigorous targeting of canteens towards the poorest areas, areas of food insecurity and low education is required instead. In general, the reduction of dropouts should be linked to improvement in the quality of education services as a whole. At the same time, the significant geographical disparities need to be addressed.

Quality

Despite efforts to introduce new programs, a large majority of pupils (almost one in two) do not master the skills required at each level. A massive effort has been made in the area of teacher training. This has stopped the decline in the proportion of qualified teaching staff. At the same time, the pupil/teacher ratio (PTR) is high and has

shown an upward trend. A new competency-based approach has been put into practice in the teaching methods, although a sustained effort of training as well as pedagogical and material support is necessary to consolidate the current achievements, which remain fragile. The textbook/pupil ratio has significantly improved from 0.77 in 2005 to 0.94 in 2010, and the lack of textbooks is not included in the list of major problems identified by the teachers interviewed by the evaluation team. However, the availability varies considerably and there are clearly flaws in the centralized distribution system. Given the limited resources available to school districts (*Circonscriptions Scolaires*, CS) in the country, the teaching units (*Unités Pédagogiques*, UP) constitute an effective source of professional development. Furthermore, the Government has made a real transfer of resources and decision-making authority to schools in recent years, which could potentially contribute to improving the functioning of schools through greater autonomy. However, this transfer has not so far been accompanied by a sufficient strengthening of school management, especially the role of the school principal.

Recommendations:

- Give urgent attention to the reduction of the geographical disparities in terms of the supply of school services. As stipulated in the Plan, this implies two strategies, namely: (i) development of a national and communal assignment of pupils to a particular school (*carte scolaire*); and (ii) allocate teaching staff according to specific criteria and through a needs-based system of recruitment.
- Critically assess the relevance and effectiveness of the strategies used so far to improve retention in order to define a set of more efficient strategies. The review should be based on a thorough assessment of the causes of dropout and should explore the relevance of other strategies accordingly.
- Pursue and further develop the strategies that address inputs for the sector, while addressing key weaknesses identified in this report, especially: (i) insufficient support and reference material to correctly apply the new curricula, (ii) serious flaws in the system of distribution of textbooks and workbooks, (iii) the inadequacy of school furniture appropriate for more active teaching practices and for working in small groups, (iv) the lack of compliance with the minimum required number of teaching hours, which has not been properly addressed, although the causes of the problem are well known.

- Strengthen the role of the school principal as a facilitator and a key player in achieving a better functioning of schools and thus a more effective and efficient use of the various inputs in the system.

3. Secondary education

Access and equity

The evaluation shows that secondary education has continued to develop according to the pressure of demand and not according to the objectives and strategies set out in the Plan. In five years, enrollment increased by 69% in the first cycle and 112% in the second cycle. Given the limited resources, the provision of educational services could not keep up with the rapid growth in the number of students, and a regulation of student intake is therefore necessary to ensure that the State can provide secondary education of a certain quality and in accordance with the needs of the labor market.

However, for a regulation of student intake to be socially acceptable, it must be done in an objective, transparent and equitable manner. Disparities continue to affect attendance at secondary level, but no specific strategy has been initiated to address disparities, nor a long-term construction plan, nor an assignment of pupils to schools (*carte scolaire*), nor a strategy for integrating children with special needs. A number of measures have been taken to promote girls' education, but they were not sufficient to significantly change the situation. However, the government decided in 2010 to gradually exempt female students from paying school fees during the first cycle of secondary education, a measure which is likely to have a significant effect.

Quality and retention

When using the 'grade repetition' indicator as a proxy measure of the quality of learning, it appears that there has been no improvement since the beginning of the Plan. Grade repetition remains much too high in the first cycle (21% in 2005 and 19% in 2009) to speak of a quality learning process. The shortage of teachers was partly addressed through the recruitment of community teachers when it was decided at the highest level of the State to transfer these teachers to the civil service.

A specific system to ensure professional qualifications has been planned and could, if implemented, have a positive impact on the quality of education. Schools are, however, increasingly forced to rely on temporary teachers (often two-thirds of

teachers and sometimes more), a situation which causes serious problems of administrative management.

There are few statistics on the availability and quality of material inputs, but the evaluation shows that schools lack classrooms, equipment is mostly minimal and there is a severe lack of teaching materials.

Recommendations:

- Start to regulate student intake as provided for in the Plan. This must be done without delay, as it is likely to become more difficult to implement as time passes.
- Ensure greater equality in access to secondary education through a balanced distribution of school facilities between different areas of the country and through special support measures for disadvantaged students (not just for girls).
- Quickly ensure sufficient availability of textbooks and basic learning materials in schools (urgent measure).

4. Technical education and vocational training

Access

One of the main challenges for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is to ensure a better match between the training and the needs of the labor market. However, strategic actions in this direction have been paralyzed by a lack of available means. The system of dual apprenticeship which offers a mechanism well suited to the largely informal economy is a positive development. The number of learners increased from 1,370 in 2006 to 5,719 in 2010. However, the number of graduates in this system remains very low (994 per year in 2009), and a number of important issues concerning the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of this system have not been clarified. Meanwhile, measures planned to restructure and revitalize classic technical education have not been implemented, and the education has experienced a continued deterioration, which can be seen through the decline in enrollment. Overall, enrollment in public TVET institutions decreased from 11,249 in 2005 to 8,266 in 2009, little more than half the target for 2008 of 15,524 students.

Quality and equity

One of the main advantages of TVET is the flexibility that allows it to be provided in various forms and targeted at different levels, thus making it more likely to

reach the most vulnerable groups of society and improve their chances of integration and performance on the job market. The evaluation shows, however, that almost no targeted action to promote equity in TVET has been implemented. The standardization of training for apprentices through the 'dual apprenticeship', which especially targets dropouts or unschooled people, is a significant step forward, but the system still targets a limited group. In terms of classic technical education, the system has failed to diversify the supply, and teachers lack adequate means and tools to adapt the training to technological and socio-economic developments.

Management and piloting

TVET is characterized by high fragmentation due to the fact that it involves stakeholders from very diverse backgrounds. This complexity makes it essential to have a unique level of coordination and regulation to ensure the overall consistency of interventions with a clear division of the roles and responsibilities of each partner. But since the start of the Ten-Year Plan, this sub-sector has been characterized by institutional instability causing a great lack of leadership. The strategic restructuring of TVET therefore has not been successful.

Recommendations:

- Establish an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism by mobilizing the available material, human and financial resources to provide reliable statistics which can measure the performance of the subsector and better tailor training offers to the needs of the labor market.
- Promote more determined strategic planning that respects the sequencing of identified key priorities in order to increase the impact of the program and avoid a dispersion of resources.

5. Higher education and scientific research

Management and piloting

The number of students is particularly high in Benin considering the socio-economic development of the country, with 790 students per 100,000 inhabitants in 2006 whereas the average for sub-Saharan Africa was 299.¹ This is a major challenge in

¹ Pôle de Dakar / World Bank (2009), *Le système éducatif béninois. Analyse sectorielle pour une politique éducative plus équilibrée et plus efficace*, State Report on the National Education System (RESEN), Working Paper n° 165, BM, April, pp. 30-31.

an economic context marked by weak development in the modern sector with few employment opportunities for graduates of higher education. Strategies intended to control the development of student enrollment in higher education have not been sufficiently developed or incorporated within the system, with the result that student intake has continued to grow at an exponential rate.

In addition, over two-thirds of students are enrolled in courses characterized by low internal and external efficiency, while enrollment in the most effective professionalized entities has dropped. If no action is taken to regulate student intake, the deterioration in the quality of education will reach new records. This could result in significant social unrest in the coming years. The 2008 introduction of free student registration in faculties and the 2010 salary increases awarded to teachers in higher education mean that it is even more urgent to limit spending, but also to optimize the use of available resources.

Quality and equity

Benin has initiated the establishment of the Bachelor-Master-Doctorate (LMD) system which is supposed to adjust the higher education system to international standards and is likely to promote multidisciplinary approaches and a greater professionalization of studies. Nevertheless, the benefits of this reform to the quality of higher education may be limited if the significant challenges related to the deteriorating conditions of teaching are not addressed. Indeed, it has been noted that the growth in social spending to the benefit of students and salary expenses occurs to the detriment of educational/scientific spending and therefore quality. Proxy indicators of quality have deteriorated at an alarming rate in recent years. The teacher/student ratio has risen from 1/44 in 2005 to 1/74 in 2010 (with the ratio exceeding 1/100 in the classic faculties). Infrastructure and equipment have not been able to keep pace with the increase in the number of students. No targeted measures have been implemented to promote more equitable access to higher education. However, 80% of individuals reaching the level of higher education belong to the richest 20% of households, and women remain significantly underrepresented with 23% of girls among the students in higher education. Paradoxically, the social benefits to students are not granted with a view to promoting equity, but rather in the aim of rewarding the best performing students, while the conditions conducive to success in school are very inequitable.

Scientific research

Initiatives have been underway for years to restructure the national system of research, but they are slow to materialize. Scientific research is often the victim of budgetary trade-offs and the deficient conditions of research are felt. Since the launch of the education plan, the research budget, which initially dropped precipitously and then recovered to nearly reach the 2006 level by the end of phase 2, was mainly used to finance one-off activities. Research continues to be carried out in an individual and compartmentalized manner, which considerably limits its economic and social utility. The research results are not valorized and there is no real incentive to promote research among researchers and research units.

Recommendations:

- Take immediate steps to limit student intake at higher levels of education and to better guide students in their choice of courses. Different selection mechanisms may be considered.
- Develop a strategy to rationalize unit costs through better sharing of the financing of higher education with students and the private sector. Different options have been proposed in the scenarios developed in the study on the funding strategy for higher education.
- Take the necessary steps to promote strategic management of scientific research by orienting it more towards national development priorities through the establishment of competitive grants and other performance-based incentives.

6. Literacy and adult education

Access

Despite several decades of efforts to provide literacy to the adult population in Benin, the illiteracy rate has remained very high, estimated at 63% in 2005. The lack of a reliable and functional database is one of several technical problems that exist in this subsector. The departments in charge of literacy seem to be paralyzed except for the organization of routine annual literacy campaigns. Available data indicate that the proportion of learners enrolled in literacy courses has remained stable with about 30,000 men and women becoming literate each year, but this is still well below the

targets announced. It is therefore clear that without a rapid revitalization, Benin will remain far from the final objective for 2015 of reducing the illiteracy rate to 50%. However, the “*faire faire*” strategy (*i.e.* outsourcing to private operators) which provides the basis for the Government approach towards literacy has still not started.

This approach should in principle lead to a better mobilization of all the operators and civil society organizations in the fight against illiteracy, but there is concern that its implementation will face the problem of very limited management capacity, especially at the central level. Thus, the objectives and targets of the Plan seem very ambitious and disproportionate, considering the limited resources and weak management and steering capacity at central level.

Quality

The lack of follow-up literacy courses is a major obstacle to sustaining and improving the literacy levels which people acquire and thus to obtaining a return on the resources invested in basic literacy.

In principle, the new pedagogical and didactic system presented in the Framework Document for the implementation of the “*faire faire*” strategy should remedy these problems, but it will require financial and human resources far superior to those currently used.

Recommendations:

- Accelerate the contracting of NGOs so that the experimentation with the “*faire faire*” strategy can finally start and bring real change to the literacy program.
- Prepare and implement an emergency plan to build the capacity of the services in charge of literacy at the central and deconcentrated levels in order to put them in a position where they can properly manage the implementation of the “*faire faire*”² strategy.

2 MCAPLN (2010), *Document cadre de mise en œuvre de la stratégie du faire faire en alphabétisation au Bénin (options, mécanismes, procédures et outils d'opérationnalisation)*, October.

Theme 2: Management, coordination and sector dialogue

A management structure has been put in place for the education plan, including an oversight committee (CSPD), a steering committee (CPPD) and a coordinating committee (CCPD), as well as a Permanent Technical Secretariat (STP) which coordinates the preparation of annual action plans, progress reports and sector reviews. The oversight committee is a decision-making body with a mandate to ensure compliance with the general thrust of the Plan and with the commitments made by the Government of Benin. The steering committee is responsible for decision-making regarding the actual implementation of the education plan, including the validation of the annual action plans and the corresponding budgets (PAAB). Finally, the coordinating committee is in charge of coordinating the preparation of the annual plans and budgets and the monitoring of their implementation.

The management set-up appears to be relevant for a program of this magnitude and the different bodies seem to provide the necessary coordination at the level of the six educational programs, the strategic management of all sub-sectors, and thus of the four ministries in charge of the sector, and finally of the national oversight of the Plan.

In practice, however, the management set-up has not been operational, since neither the oversight committee nor the steering committee has been active. As for the coordinating committee, it has worked intermittently and on an ad hoc basis. Operational difficulties can partly be explained by the composition and the high number of members of these bodies and the lack of clearly defined roles. The Technical Secretariat has not been effective due to a lack of resources to cover costs associated with coordinating events or activities, but also because of its lack of availability (only three out of twelve members are permanent) and the inadequate profiles of some members of the STP. As the management set-up did not work and the important and strategic decisions were not taken in time to rectify the situation, all sub-sectors are experiencing delays and are showing significant differences compared to the strategies defined in the initial programming of the education plan.

The sector dialogue between the Government and donors in the education sector has improved in recent years. However, the government has so far not truly taken the lead in dialogue and aid coordination by adopting a proactive approach to advance the process of national ownership, harmonization and donor alignment. This process is currently confined to the Fast Track Initiative program/Common Budgetary

Fund (FTI/FCB). The intensification of this dialogue would involve donors in reflection on the integration of policy decisions and their strategic management in the PDDSE.

The coordination of sub-programs has not been effective due to a certain habit or culture of work that does not allow a real exchange between the four ministries, which sometimes have conflicting interests. Ministries do not consult sufficiently to be able to adopt a common position on some of the key issues in education, including the management of student intake between different levels of education, the impact of free education, a more equitable allocation of resources within the sector (taking national priorities into account), or the role of private schools.

Consultation with the private sector and civil society organizations has achieved mixed results, despite the fact that these stakeholders are already contributing to the objectives of the education plan. The successful pilot experiences of some NGOs, such as the recruitment of female mediators or the organization of mothers clubs, have not been capitalized on, while they should have been highlighted and in some cases disseminated.

The information system is unable to inform policy-makers. The use of indicators is greatly limited by poor information systems. The education sector databases have serious problems, particularly at the Ministry of Secondary Education, Technical Education and Vocational Training (MESFTP) and at the Ministry of Culture, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages (MCAPLN) where there has been no functional information system for several years. Some information exists but there is the problem of its reliability. Data collection and processing is still highly centralized and the production of statistical yearbooks is experiencing significant delays. In addition, the use of key indicators is not rigorously applied in the ministries, which means that performance reports do not provide a sufficient basis to assess the results and they lose their credibility.

The deconcentration and decentralization process has made no significant progress within the education sector. Decisions are still highly centralized and the delegation of responsibilities has achieved mixed results. The ministries in charge of education are not inclined to transfer power in any significant way to the municipalities who are nevertheless already accumulating significant experience on contracting issues in other sectors (health and water). Moreover, deconcentrated State authorities do not have sufficient resources to support local management that could improve quality, equity and efficiency in the provision of educational services.

In general, capacity in planning and management is weak in the departments responsible for the implementation of the education plan and staffs have not received systematic support in the first two phases of implementation.

Recommendations:

- Revise the composition of the Steering Committee and make it functional by reducing the number of members and clarifying their responsibilities.
- Allocate the necessary resources to the Technical Secretariat to allow it to perform its mandate, and reexamine the profile of all its members with a view to determining the expertise required in planning, monitoring and evaluation, procurement and public finance.
- Ensure a better integration of the decentralization/deconcentration dimension in the implementation of the final phase of the Plan, emphasizing the complementarity between deconcentrated authorities and municipalities in the planning, implementation and monitoring of education services.
- Establish, without further delay, a functional information system at the Ministry of Secondary and Technical and Vocational Education as well as at the Ministry of Culture, Literacy and National Languages and strengthen existing systems in the other two ministries responsible for education.

Theme 3: Sector financing

The financing of the education plan is based on a number of assumptions regarding growth in GDP, the proportion of the government budget allocated to education, donor contributions etc. which were used in a financial simulation model. However, the economic and financial development of the country has not developed according to the basic assumptions of the Plan. The growth that began in 2006 has not kept the expected pace and in 2009 there was even a drop in the growth rate. However, resource allocation shows that the government has prioritized the sector and compensated somewhat for the smaller than anticipated government budget by allocating a higher proportion of its budget to the sector, as was the case with other social sectors considered as priorities for achieving the MDGs.

The analysis of the distribution of resources within the sector shows that the Ministry of Preschool and Primary Education (MEMP) continues to receive the largest share of resources in the education sector. The share of the sector budget allocated to preschool and primary education has remained above 53% since 2008, contrary to expectations in the education plan during which this share should have gradually declined. While the Ministry of Secondary, Technical and Vocational Training (MESFTP), which gets the second largest share, has experienced a decrease in budget allocations from year to year, from 29.1% in 2008 to 22.3% in 2011, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESRS), while retaining its third position, has received a rising share of the budget, from 17% of the sector budget in 2008 to 22% in 2011. Finally, the share of the Ministry of Culture, Literacy and National Languages (MCAPLN), which previously received between 0.4% and 1.0% of the sector budget, increased its share to 2.1% in 2011.

The main causes for this increase in resources at the preschool, primary and higher education level can be found in: (i) the decision to introduce free enrollment in preschool, primary and higher education; (ii) the transfer of community teachers - who were largely working at the primary level - to teachers employed by the State; (iii) the already large and ever-growing volume of non-academic student costs in universities (transport, accommodation, canteens, etc.); (iv) the lower bargaining power of the ministries in charge of secondary education and literacy within the sector; and (v) the lack of a true strategic management of the Plan through which the issues of equitable distribution of resources could have been discussed.

The analysis of changes in the distribution of the sector budget by type of expenditure shows that resources for investment have tended to decrease year by year, in favour of operating costs. The largest budget envelope goes to staff costs, which rose from 38.8% in 2008 to 62.6% in 2011. This sudden rise in staff costs, which currently absorb more than half of the resources allocated to the sector, leaves little resources for other operating cost items in the central and deconcentrated structures of the ministries, as well as in schools receiving transfers from the central level for their operation. The share of education resources used for transfers to schools therefore decreased from 30.1% in 2008 to 18.7% in 2011.

In terms of budget performance, efficiency was low across all ministries, albeit less so in the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. The budget execution rate for investment, including the construction of school infrastructure, was very poor. The factors explaining this low absorption capacity of the budget allocations include: the

cumbersome procedures for the disbursement of funds, insufficient knowledge of procedures by some managers, and delayed execution of work.

In addition, the measures taken by the Government which were not originally foreseen in the education plan, combined with the growing and unregulated student intake, have affected the implementation of the plan and undermined the initial assumptions. This raises the problem of how to ensure a sustainable and balanced management of the sector in the medium and long term.

Recommendations:

- When the implementation strategies for the third phase of the Plan are updated, conduct a thorough examination of the factors explaining the low absorption capacity of budgetary allocations.
- Identify all bottlenecks that prevent a smooth allocation of resources and implement appropriate strategies to gradually reduce these blockages. One suggestion could be to draw on the initiative to create focal points for the Plan, and do the same within the structures of the expenditure chain to accelerate the processing of paperwork.
- In preparing the third phase of the Plan, take into account the issue of inequitable access (between regions and municipalities, among Ministries of Éducation, between central, deconcentrated [*départementales*] and decentralized [*communes*] levels) to the public resources allocated to the Plan. This could be done at the time of updating the financial simulation model.
- Implement the new procurement code.

Relevance of the education plan

The proposed strategies are consistent and relevant to the strategic directions and action plans of the Ten-Year Education Plan and to the key challenges of the education sector. However, some strategies, such as the regulation of student intake in upper secondary and higher education and strategies for promoting equity, need to be better articulated. Other issues, not considered in the education plan, but which need to be given consideration, include the functioning of schools and the role of the school principal as important issues to improve the quality of primary education, as well as the improvement of girls' schooling in secondary education. In light of the management capacity in the ministries, the targets and programming envisaged in the area of adult

literacy have proven overly optimistic. In general, it is necessary to review the programming in the light of the new strategies that were not provided for in the original Plan, such as the introduction of free education and the transfer of teachers that were previously paid by the local community (parents) at primary and secondary levels to State employees.

The management and coordination system as it was organized, with an oversight, steering and coordinating committee, is relevant to a program of this magnitude. The different bodies are coherent as they provide for an operational coordination at the level of the six educational programs, strategic management of all sub-sectors, and thus of the four ministries in charge of education, as well as national supervision of the Plan.

The strategy for resource mobilization to finance the Plan is based on the mobilization of internal resources (based on a scenario of an optimal mobilization of tax and non-tax revenues) in order to meet the gap with donor funding, particularly from the Fast-Track Initiative and grants from bilateral donors. This finance strategy was initially relevant, but did not work out according to plan since the macro-economic assumptions, which formed the basis of the financial simulation model, were not met.

Effectiveness

Since 2006, Benin has made significant progress in access to primary education in accordance with the commitments made to *Éducation for All* and the MDGs. Nevertheless, the implementation of policies and strategies has, seen as a whole, been a (very) limited success. The expansion of access to preschool and primary education can to a large extent be attributed to the introduction of free education, which was not included in the education plan, and which, in a situation of severe budget constraints, has had strong implications for the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the sector as a whole and therefore on the achievement of other objectives set out in the Plan.

At all levels of education there were considerable delays in implementing the strategies envisaged in the Plan. Other strategies have not been developed at all, such as the regulation of student intake both between cycles and within cycles (in secondary and higher education), the program for accelerated education for school dropouts and children not attending primary school, as well as the development of pupil assignment (*'cartes scolaires'*) for each level of education. Finally, some strategies, such as studies or regulative texts governing examinations and admission tests required to gain access to

different levels of education, as well as the distribution of textbooks and equipment to schools, have only been partially implemented.

The preschool and primary school level results are mixed, although enrollment rates have experienced a positive trend, and some progress has been made in terms of improving the quality of education. At the secondary and higher education level, student intake is not controlled at all, which is worrying in the short and medium term. The gender gap in access to schooling was significantly reduced at preschool and primary level, but gender inequalities remain important in secondary and higher education. In addition, little has been done to reduce other types of inequality, in particular geographical disparities.

Although encouraging results have occurred with the introduction of dual apprenticeship, both in terms of the quantitative and qualitative development of the technical education and vocational training (TEVT) system, the effects are far from being outstanding. Contrary to expectations, there was no increase in the proportion of secondary students pursuing TEVT.

The prevailing situation in the sector is particularly the result of a failure of coordination. Since the beginning of the Plan, neither the oversight committee nor the steering committee has worked. As for the coordination committee, it has worked intermittently and on an ad hoc basis. The Permanent Technical Secretariat has not been effective due to a lack of resources, but also because most of its members are not permanent. It follows that strategic decisions were not taken in time to redress the situation despite the recommendations in the regular sector reviews. In recent years, the education system seems to have been driven by demand and urgency.

The sector dialogue between the Government and donors in the sector is not optimal and needs to be further improved. The leadership of the sector dialogue should be taken by the Government in order to improve aid coordination proactively. This would advance the process of national ownership, harmonization and donor alignment, which is currently confined to the FTI/FCB program.

The existence of certain habits or work cultures that are not conducive to dialogue and consultation between the four ministries, which sometimes have different interests, makes the coordination of sub-programs ineffective. Better communication and teamwork would have allowed the stakeholders at various levels of education to meet and discuss, *e.g.* how to manage the problem of the growing intake of students.

The information system is unable to inform decision-makers. Weak information systems severely limit the use of indicators. Although some information is provided, there is the problem of the reliability of the data. Data collection and processing is still highly centralized and the production of statistical yearbooks is experiencing delays. Statistical offices lack both qualified staff to interpret the data, as well as hardware capable of containing large databases. The establishment of a new Éducation Management Information System (EMIS) is becoming urgent.

The financing of the Plan has been very ineffective, both in terms of the mobilization of resources and their distribution, as well as their use by the various ministerial structures responsible for the sector. The principal remarks are the following:

In terms of mobilization, budget allocations have remained constantly below the predictions made in the financial assessment of the cost of implementing the Plan (among other things, problems are related to the actual availability of resources and access to these resources).

Planned intra-sectoral allocations have not been met; preschool and primary education continues to absorb a large share of resources to the detriment of other levels, particularly general secondary education and TEVT.

Staff costs account for over half the resources allocated to the sector, creating major malfunctions in the central and deconcentrated structures of the ministries as well as in schools and training units that receive transfers from the central level for their operation.

Another aspect of ineffectiveness regarding the financing of the Plan concerns the inadequate budget execution rate. The resources mobilized both internally and externally are not easily absorbed. There are real difficulties in implementing all the planned expenditures, especially expenditures in the Public Investments Program (PIP) and, to some extent, recurrent expenditure (non-salary operating costs). For all levels of education, except higher education, the average rate of budget execution rarely reaches 80%.

Reasons behind the low budget execution rate include: (i) cumbersome procedures for the disbursement of funds, (ii) insufficient knowledge of disbursement procedures by some managers and administrators, (iii) long delays in procurement, (iv) delays in the execution of works and the preparation of accounts, (v) frequent institutional changes followed by changes in ministerial cabinets and a turnover of

executives at the head of structures involved in the expenditure chain; (vi) constant delays early in the year in reporting available credit lines to line ministries, (vii) the reduction of budgetary allocations, undermining the financial planning by departments and sometimes requiring them to make hasty choices and readjustments in a situation of inadequate information between the implementers and those making strategic decisions, (viii) a frequent dysfunction of the process of budget execution due to a frequent blocking of the Integrated Public Finance Management System (SIGFIP) that has in fact been put in place by the Minister of Economy and Finance to regulate government spending in accordance with the rate of revenue collection during the year.

Efficiency

The assessment of efficiency should be based on the link between resources used in the implementation of various strategies and results obtained for the education sector as a whole.

On the one hand, the utilization of education resources has contributed to the goal of developing the country's future human resource base through the priority given to primary education, the wider access to basic education and the somewhat improved quality of services. On the other hand, when considering the utilization of education resources in relation to the goal of reducing inequalities, the absence of regulation and orientation of student intake at the secondary and higher levels of education has led to a situation where resources are not being used optimally, as the majority of school leavers from these two types of education find themselves in a situation of underemployment or unemployment.

The process of deconcentration and decentralization of public services has progressed, but in the education sector the results are disappointing. Yet, setting up local management with a greater involvement of local communities is likely to help ensure that education services better reflect the realities and needs at the local level. In addition, it has the advantage of simplifying the system of public expenditure and strengthening the links between expenditures and results, which should optimize the use of resources.

Overall, the education plan is executed by an institutional mechanism comprising the Ministries of Education and the appropriate structures of the Ministries of Finance and Planning. This operationalization through national structures, as part of their "normal" functioning, does not allow a clear assessment of the cost of implementing the Plan. The efficiency of the Plan is therefore not assessed in terms of

the financial cost of its implementation, but in terms of the three following parameters: (i) the functioning of the institutional mechanism responsible for making resources available, (ii) the equitable allocation of resources (financial, human and material/textbooks), and (iii) the transformation of these resources into quality outputs in an economically and timely fashion in accordance with the timeframe of the Plan. For each of these parameters, the financing of the Plan has been very inefficient.

Finally, the impact of using the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) as a tool for planning and monitoring the implementation of the education policy has been weak especially due to: (i) the introduction of measures not provided for in the Plan which have gradually rendered the initial strategies of the Plan less consistent with the realities, and (ii) the lack of an effective mechanism for managing and monitoring the implementation of the Plan, which could otherwise have contributed to an update of the sector MTEF, incorporating new measures to facilitate the assessment of the impact on the overall system.

Sustainability

The assessment of the sustainability of policies and strategies implemented within the education policy calls primarily for the question of financial sustainability in the medium and long term to be addressed. Indeed, the policy of free education was not part of the Plan, and its implementation has financial impacts that were not included in the financial simulations underlying the scenarios and the financial framework of the Plan. This policy has led to a growth rate in enrollment which was not anticipated in the Plan, with consequences that are already clearly visible through the persistent and ongoing deterioration of conditions of teaching and educational support at secondary and higher education levels as well as in TEVT. Strong enrollment growth induced by free education, combined with a lack of control of student intake and measures to transfer teachers paid by the community to State employees, which was not provided for in the Plan, may make the financial burdens of the State unsustainable. It is therefore necessary to examine the financial consequences of these measures with a view to financial sustainability, taking into account the overall sector strategy.

General conclusions

All in all, the strategies of the education plan remain relatively relevant to key issues in the education sector although some deserve to be better articulated, supplemented by other dimensions that were not anticipated by the Plan, or adjusted in terms of level of ambition. The strategy for resource mobilization to finance the Plan was relevant at the outset, but proved less evident in practice due to the non-occurrence of the macro-economic assumptions that formed the basis of the simulation model and of the financial framework. It is necessary to review the programming in the light of changes brought about by new strategies not envisaged in the Plan.

Overall, the education plan has not done much to reduce disparities within the education sector. On the one hand, the education measures have increased access to basic education and reduced the gender gap in access to schooling at the preschool and primary school level. But on the other hand, all other forms of disparities remain a concern. In the sector as a whole, it is the most privileged individuals who benefit most from the public resources spent on education. As it tends to be the most privileged sections of society who benefit from secondary and higher education, the education system contributes to increasing the existing inequalities of society.

The provision of quality education remains a challenge since there is a gap between the high growth in enrollment at all levels and the possibility of providing school facilities and adequate pedagogical supervision at the same pace. However, without quality, internal and external effectiveness will also continue to deteriorate. This highlights the need to develop strategies to regulate student intake in secondary and higher education.

Cross-cutting issues related to the regulation of student intake, the financing of the sector and the efficient and equitable allocation of resources have clearly lacked a strong political and technical commitment and in general, the main dysfunction observed in relation to the implementation of the education plan is the fact that at every level of education, the education system has followed the pressure of demand rather than implementing the strategies contained in the Plan. The disappointing results are thus largely related to a lack of political will and of strategic management.

At the operational level, weak information systems seriously limit the use of indicators to steer the implementation of the Plan. The instability and complexity that characterize the institutional environment in the sector represent another major constraint.

The political dimension of the sector dialogue on key sector issues and new measures taken by the Government has failed. The assumptions, on which the new directions taken by the Government were based, have not been verified or tested, particularly in relation to their financial sustainability. However, this question falls within in a context of severe budget constraints.

The evaluation has revealed that many studies and reviews have been conducted in the education sector, and they have suggested some very pertinent recommendations. However, these recommendations have not been implemented. This is particularly the case of the State Report on the National Education System (RESEN).

Main recommendations

1. Organize a mission to update the sub-programs of the education plan and to revise targets before the start of the third phase. This update should include the integration of the deconcentration and decentralization dimension with greater accountability and involvement of the deconcentrated authorities, school districts and municipalities in management, with a focus on strengthening the capacity of school management by the school principals.

2. Based on this update, new programming must take into account the accumulated delays, have a more realistic approach with regard to implementation capacity, and make a list of priorities of actions to be taken within each program and list these in order of priority. The original logical framework format should be kept, but the content reviewed as needed.

3. Redo the core financial simulation model incorporating the results obtained to date, all recent and future measures, as well as the assumptions of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy 2011-2015, in order to determine the overall framework for the third phase of the Plan. Based on the results, develop a new strategy for mobilizing and managing resources to finance the third phase and subsequent phases of the Plan.

4. Revitalize the steering bodies, including a revision of the composition of the steering committee to make it operational in terms of the strategic management of the education plan.

5. Make the Permanent Technical Secretariat operational with the provision of adequate staff and an appropriate operating budget, as well as the definition of a precise set of specifications of responsibilities including performance indicators.

6. Establish an *ad hoc* committee to examine options for how to implement a system to regulate student intake. Management of student intake in the education system is a priority. To achieve this, it is necessary to take into account the interdependence between different levels of education and seek complementarity between the various strategies in order to achieve a better balance between the supply of education services and the socio-economic needs of the country. A rigorous program based on the simulation model is needed to coherently articulate the development options for the entire sector.

7. Implement an effective communication strategy for the education plan at central, deconcentrated and decentralized levels. The level of ownership of the strategies contained in the Plan by those affected by it and responsible for its implementation is a key factor for achieving the desired results. This dimension has been lacking during the first phases, but there is still time to mobilize stakeholders around a common vision for the sector.

8. Implement the capacity building plan derived from the organizational audit by quickly scheduling the planned training programs.