

# **“Decentralisation and Implementation of Education Quality Improvement Policies in Schools: the Case of ‘Quality School’ Projects in Burkina Faso”**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Burkinabe education system is regulated by the Education Orientation Law passed in 2007 which defines the objectives of formal, non formal, informal and specialized education and proposes ways of reaching them (Burkina Faso, 2007). Formal education comprises Basic Education, Secondary Education and Higher Education. Basic Education includes three years of pre-school, six years of primary school and three years of post primary education. It is in principle free and compulsory for all 6-16 year old children. The present study deals with formal education and more specifically basic education.

Like other low-income countries, Burkina Faso is firmly engaged in the struggle to meet international targets such as those set by the Jomtien Conference (1990), the Dakar Forum (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to poverty reduction and Education For All. The government with the technical and financial support of its partners has deployed several initiatives to improve the access and the quality of basic education within the framework of a Ten Year Basic Education Development Plan (PDDEB) (2001-2010) which is now being relayed by a ten-year Basic Education Strategic Development Program (PDSEB). (PDSEB, 2012) PDEB has reached fairly substantial results, particularly in terms of access to education. See (MEBA, 2010). The primary school gross enrolment rate that was 5% in 1960, 16.8% in 1983 and 41.3% in 2000 reached 80.2% in 2010 which is a significant improvement despite disparities according to gender and regions. Enrolment rates remain very low in post-primary, secondary and higher education.

A lot remains to be done therefore to bring the indicators to a satisfactory level for

education to boost the country's development. In terms of quality and relevance primary education is still characterised by high repetition and drop-out rates while the curricula and teaching methods have no obvious link with the resolution of the daily problems of the community and preparation for active life.

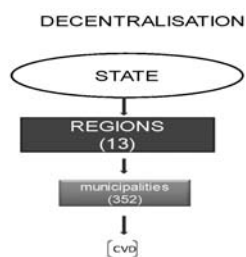
That is why the last phase of PDDEB focused on the quality component of its programme. (PDSEB) which will be implemented from 2012-2021 as part of the country's strategy for accelerated growth and development (SCAD) also devotes one of its five programmes to quality improvement.

## 2. Context and Justification

The present research project was designed in a context when Burkina Faso, while pursuing its efforts to improve access to basic education for all, lays a particular emphasis on the improvement of education quality. Among the many innovations introduced to this effect is the Quality School Project (PEQ) designed in 1999-2000 as part of the quality component of PDDEB. The context was also favourable to innovations. Since 2007 the country has been experimenting with a reform grounded in the Education Orientation Law with among other innovations the new definition of Basic Education mentioned earlier. This reform includes the use of national languages as mediums of instruction, renovated curricula to incorporate *emergent themes*, competency-based approaches and pre-vocational education. PDSEB also introduces other innovations such as a focus on professionalisation at all levels of the educational system, the introduction of English and computer sciences in primary school and bridges linking the various levels and types of education (formal, non-formal, informal and professional) into a holistic system.

### Decentralisation

Another major factor relevant to the present study is the country's clear commitment to the decentralisation process. Since 1995 Burkina Faso has adopted a decentralisation policy to promote development at the local level through a proximity administration. The country is now made of thirteen (13) regions, forty five (45) provinces, and (352) municipalities (2011 figures). The villages are organised into village development councils (CVD) to promote development at the grassroots level.



The Ministry of National Education (MENA)<sup>1</sup> has “deconcentrated” structures which mirror the new national administrative divisions. It has 13 Regional Directorates (DREBA), 45 Provincial Directorates (DPBA) and 385 Basic Education Districts (CEB). A CEB groups several schools under a pedagogic unit headed by an inspector. The national decentralisation policy is materialised in the education sector by the transfer of the administrative and financial management of basic education to the municipalities. Decree N° 2007-91/MATD/MEF/MEBA/MASSN of 21 November 2007 transfers to the municipalities the ownership of all pre-school and primary school infrastructures as well as the salaries of basic education teachers.

In such a context it is relevant to explore the possible link between decentralisation and the improvement of the quality of education. In principle, the decentralised structures and particularly the municipalities should involve themselves to mobilizing human and financial resources to promote a self-reliant development in the educational sector. This is what motivated the university of Ouagadougou AA-dialogue research team to carry out the present study on “ *Decentralisation and implementation of education quality improvement policies in schools: the case of ‘quality schools’ projects in Burkina Faso*”.

We found it interesting to study the feasibility and conditions for an optimal implementation of the Quality School Projects which seem to have remained mostly on paper despite the fact that they could greatly contribute to education quality at the school level. Although the PEQ project was not specifically designed within the framework of administrative decentralisation, our study considers it as an interesting case of a decentralised quality improvement policy: the central State agencies putting at the disposal of some selected schools a sum of about 1,000 US dollars to design and implement projects aiming at improving the quality of education.

Through a documentary analysis and field surveys, with a questionnaire and interviews we sought respondents’ opinions on the feasibility of PEQ, with a particular emphasis on the role played by school management committees (COGES) and other actors at the school level in the implementation of PEQ activities, for instance school canteens. It was hoped that this can help to understand why the PEQ project has remained dormant for so long and enable us to suggest which amendments can be made to its contents, organisation and implementation process.

### **The quality school project (PEQ)**

This type of innovation “Projet Ecoles de Qualité” known in other countries as « Projets Ecoles » (school projects) is fairly widespread in francophone Africa. It is being implemented for instance in Senegal, Guinea, Congo, and Madagascar, (Solaux and Suchaut, 2006). In Burkina Faso the quality School Project is a component of the quality improvement axis of PDDEB. Its general objective is to improve the quality of education at the basic unit level, the school. More specifically the PEQ projects aim at:

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1 The new name of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA)

- helping the schools and the communities in their catchment areas to design, implement and evaluate a coherent set of activities and actions as part of a school project in order to improve school results ; and
- providing them with the technical, material and financial support they need to engage successfully in the process of problem resolution.

The main beneficiaries of PEQ projects are the children of the schools involved; additional beneficiaries are the teachers whose motivation and professional practices will improve significantly. The parents and the community at large will also benefit as their involvement will help generate the type of school that really meets their needs and expectations.

The project documents (MEBA, 2002) summarize the results expected from a PEQ in terms of improvements of the quality of the teaching-learning encounter and in terms of the numbers of schools that will receive training and direct financial support as part of the scheme.

It is expected that a school where a PEQ is implemented will reach the following results that will particularly affect positively the schooling of girls:

- an increase of the school admission and enrolment rates;
- better school attendance ;
- a significant improvement of the results of school examinations ;
- an increase of promotion rates ;
- a significant reduction of repetition and drop-out rates ;
- an increase of the completion rate ;
- a reduction of the number of years spent to complete the primary school cycle.

The targets for those quantifiable outputs were fairly ambitious. All the schools involved in the project for at least two years were to reach

- (I) a promotion rate of 86%,
- (II) a success rate of at least 75% at the CEP exam<sup>2</sup> (for those with a normal school cycle), and
- (III) repetition and drop-out rates of less than 10% and 4% respectively.

In addition to these quantifiable outcomes the PEQ also aims for more general qualitative indicators relating to teachers' and pupils' attitudes and community participation:

- to improve the skills and motivation of the teachers by giving them more responsibility and value ;
- to bring the community to take full responsibility of its school ;
- to increase community participation in the education offered by the school ;
- to create among the main actors and beneficiaries a reflex of self-reliant management of basic education ;
- to facilitate the integration of school-aged children into the socio-cultural life of their

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2 The national primary school leaving exam

- communities ;
- to enable the school to contribute more significantly to improving the quality of life of the surrounding community.

The PEQ project was to be implemented in three phases beginning with 80 schools in the “priority provinces” (those with the lowest education indicators in terms of access and quality) and then be extended progressively to the other schools within ten years

According to the manual of procedures, to receive funding for a PEQ project the school has to meet fairly stringent criteria (some of which relate to community involvement in school improvement activities). The schools had to compete for the PEQ funds through rather forbiddingly complex selection procedures.

### **School canteens in Burkina Faso**

Another factor likely to impact on the quality of education at the school level is the existence or not of a school canteen. With today’s widespread food insecurity, the canteens are seen as a factor of social mobilization around the school because the meal at school favors school attendance and allows a better performance.

School canteens have existed in Burkina Faso since the 1960s with help coming mostly from the Catholic Relief Service (CRS), PAM (World Food Program), foreign NGO’s such as “Frères des Hommes” and local business operators like the Tan Aliz business firm.

Since 1988, the government has decided to get more involved in this domain, following the CRS intention to phase out their help, and having noticed that the system of canteens had a positive impact on both the quality and the efficiency of education. Studies have proved that there is a strong correlation between the pupils’ achievements at school and the existence of canteens, see for instance Magee (2006).

To avoid over reliance on the State or foreign aid, the concept of endogenous canteens is being promoted to make the canteens autonomous while encouraging a full involvement of the local communities. Through this approach, the government expects to change the mind sets of the local communities who were used to being freely relieved from the burden of taking charge of their children, and to raise their awareness of their responsibilities in their children’s education.

Today three actors intervene in the field of school canteens: CRS assists canteens in 6 provinces in 4 provinces, and the State supports endogenous canteens in 35 provinces. We should also mention the action of a private business firm (TAN ALIZ) which intervenes in 54 schools in three provinces.

Table 1 below shows the supplies received by the school canteens for the past five years.

**Table 1 Food supplies received by the school canteens for the past five years**

| year/<br>Partner | Quantities supplied in tons |        |              |   |                  | Total<br>quantities<br>supplied in<br>tons | Estimated<br>quantities<br>of pupils<br>food need | Coverage<br>rates of<br>pupils'<br>food need |
|------------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------|---|------------------|--|---|--|
|                  | State                       | CRS    | PAM<br>(WFP) | Communities<br>(endogenous<br>canteens) | Other<br>sources |  |   |  |
| 2005/2006        | 4 649                       | 9 899  | 1 240        | 2 039                                   | -                | 17 827                                     | 36 044  | 49.46  |
| 2006/2007        | 6 500                       | 7 030  | 2 152        | 2 140                                   | -                | 17 822                                     | 40 468  | 44.04  |
| 2007/2008        | 3 384                       | 7 002  | 2 323        | 2 235                                   | 404              | 15 348                                     | 45 164  | 33.98  |
| 2008/2009        | 6 659                       | 3 961  | 2 649        | 2 133                                   | 195              | 15 597                                     | 51 870  | 30.07  |
| 2009/2010        | 13 614                      | 3 053  | 3 598        | 5 558                                   | -                | 25 823                                     | 54 976  | 46.97  |
| TOTAL            | 34 806                      | 30 945 | 11 962       | 14 105                                  | 599              | 92 417                                     | 228 522   | 40.44  |

Source : DAMSE/MEBA (synthesis of management reports from 2006 to 2010)

Since the 2010-2011 school year the Government has covered 95% of the pupils' food needs through the school canteen component of the social safety nets program ("filets sociaux") by providing 32 500 tons of food stuff per year for two years, at a total cost of about 25 billion CFA Francs.

### **The COGES**

These school management committees, COGES, were created recently (Burkina Faso 2009) to mobilize the local communities to support the schools through a variety of actions including the management of school canteens and PEQ activities. JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) is strongly involved in the project that trains COGES members for their duties. Parents' associations (APE) and Mother Educators' Associations (AME) are older associations created in the 60s but they will have to cooperate with the COGES since the official ministry text requires every school to have a COGES while APE and AME are independent structures drawing their resources from members' dues.

### **Justification of the study**

The decentralisation process gives more responsibility to municipalities (See Burkina Faso, 2009b) and the Ministry of Basic Education has made the strategic choice of making the school the main focus of any intervention to improve quality through innovations involving the various stakeholders of the educational system.

Hence the relevance of the present research project which proposes to examine in the field how this innovation related to the decentralisation policy has been implemented or why it has not been implemented, to identify the problems encountered and above all to suggest ways of making it work more efficiently in the quest for quality education.

Based on the findings of this study the research team could launch an action research project that will consist in setting up an experimental PEQ in a few primary schools to study the process and outcomes of this innovation in the field.

### 3. Objectives of the Research

- ❑ The general objective of the study is to find ways and means to improve educational quality in Burkina Faso, with a particular focus on the role of decentralised stakeholders (pedagogic supervisors, headmasters, teachers, school management committees, parents' associations, etc.)
- ❑ In more practical terms the aim of the study was to collect and analyse data
  - to show how the schools and communities implement a series of actions in the form of school projects to improve school results
  - to evaluate the current constraints and the contribution of decentralisation to the quality of basic education
  - to explore the impact of school canteens on pupils' performance
  - to make recommendations for an efficient implementation of PEQ projects, with a particular emphasis on their roles in setting up and managing school canteens;
  - to lay the foundation for an action-research project on the implementation of experimental PEQs.

### 4. Research Questions

The study wants to contribute to improving the quality of education in Burkina Faso with a particular focus on the roles of the decentralised actors. The general issue raised is how to bring the schools and the communities in their catchment areas to design, implement and evaluate a set of coherent activities and actions, in the form of school projects in order to improve school results.

To answer this general question we had to answer the following specific questions:

#### *Concerning PEQs*

- How are PEQ projects actually implemented in the schools?
- What can the schools do to draw the maximum benefit from PEQ projects?

#### *Concerning school canteens*

- What are the main results of previous studies on the impact of school canteens on the indicators of the quality of education in the world and in Burkina Faso in particular?
- What is the real impact of canteens on the main indicators of quality?
- What suggestions can be made to improve the efficiency, the sustainability and the management of school canteens?

#### *Concerning Decentralisation*

- What advantages and what problems do the current decentralisation measures for improving the quality of education in Burkina Faso present?

- What are the needs for training and capacity enhancement of decentralisation actors for a better contribution to the improvement of basic education?
- How do the various stakeholders of the educational system, particularly pupils' parents, assess and rank in order of importance the various measures aiming at improving education quality?

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Type**

The research on opinions about the feasibility of PEQs is essentially qualitative while the exploration of the impact of school canteens included the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data

### **5.2 Population and Sampling**

The target population is made of the following actors:

- at the central level (Ouagadougou): the central directors of MENA, members of basic education trade unions, officials of NGOs, associations, technical and financial partners working with MENA;
- at the level of the municipality: the prefects and the mayors,
- at the basic education district level (CEB): the inspectors heading the CEB;
- at the village level: the village chiefs, the religious leaders, the head of the village development committee (CVD)
- at the school level: the school headmasters, the members of the boards of parents' associations (APE), mother educators' associations (AME), school management committees, grade 5 and grade 6 pupils.

The sample was purposeful. The schools were selected on the basis of characteristics such as the presence or absence of a canteen, of an APE, AME, COGES, the age of the school, and the geographic location.

A first attempt to use random samples proved difficult to implement within the time and budget limits. Instead, six poles and schools around them were selected taking into account the criteria mentioned earlier. Another criterion that proved difficult to use was "priority" versus "non priority municipalities" which would have entailed a wider geographic dispersion.

To summarize, a sample of 70 schools was taken in 6 out of the 13 regions, 8 out of the 45 provinces, and 23 out of the 352 municipalities.

Table 2 below shows the initial sample and the actual surveys carried out in the field.



**Table 2 – Initial samples and actual samples**

| N°               | Target population             | Initial sample       |                 |               | Surveys carried out  |                 |               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                  |                               | Individual interview | Group interview | questionnaire | Individual interview | Group interview | questionnaire |
| 1                | Mayors / Prefects             | 22                   |                 |               | 20                   |                 |               |
| 2                | Inspectors                    |                      |                 | 30            |                      |                 | 24            |
| 3                | Head masters                  |                      |                 | 69            |                      |                 | 65            |
| 4                | APE                           | 69                   |                 |               | 65                   |                 |               |
| 5                | AME                           | 64                   |                 |               | 56                   |                 |               |
| 6                | COGES                         | 24                   |                 |               | 20                   |                 |               |
| 7                | Village chiefs                | 62                   |                 |               | 32                   |                 |               |
| 8                | Religious and opinion Leaders | 61                   |                 |               | 35                   |                 |               |
| 9                | CVD                           | 22                   |                 |               | 27                   |                 |               |
| 10               | Pupils                        |                      | 69              |               |                      | 43              |               |
| 11               | Trade unions                  | 3                    |                 |               | 2                    |                 |               |
| TOTAL            |                               | 327                  | 69              | 99            | 257                  | 43              | 88            |
| Achievement rate |                               |                      |                 |               | 78.59%               | 62.32%          | 88.89%        |

The differences can be explained by a certain number of factors including:

- Unavailability of certain target populations in both urban and rural areas
- Organisational and communication problems
- Distances and poor road conditions
- Time constraints

### 5.3 Research Instruments

- ✓ Guidelines were drawn for carrying out documentary analyses on four topics:
  - Decentralization
  - PEQs
  - School canteens
  - COGES
- ✓ A questionnaire was used to collect factual and statistical data from the school districts (CEB) and school principals.
- ✓ A copious interview protocol<sup>3</sup> was designed to explore thoroughly the opinions, perceptions and suggestions of the main actors of the school-community encounter within the framework of decentralisation:
  - MAYOR / PREFECT / CVD
  - Central and deconcentrated MENA directorates: CEB / DPEBA / DREBA / DGRIEF / DGEBA / DRH / DAF / DEP
  - PTF / NGO
  - SP-PDDEB / DCPM / DAMSE
  - APE (Parents' Association) /AME (Association of Mother Educators) /COGES

3 53 questions for the mayor's interview

- Village chiefs, religious and opinion leaders
- Pupils

#### **5.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

A first mission was carried out in the six zones of the survey (Banfora, Sindou, Ouagadougou, Garango, Djibo, Dapelogo) to inform the CEB and prepare the field for the data collectors. (6-10 December 2010).

The data collectors, university students in the master's program of the department of sociology, were trained in early January and data collection was carried out from mid-January to early February.

The data collected from the documentary analysis were summarized into separate reports which served as the basis for drafting the questionnaires and the interview protocols.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were processed by computer into frequency tables with no attempts to use further statistic tests because of the small sizes of the samples. Even with the data drawn from the MENA database we refrained from deciding on levels of significance.

For the qualitative data we also resorted to a computer package (Nudist QSR full version 6) to process the mass of answers into nodes to obtain significant segments summarizing the opinions, and to draw key verbatim statements from the respondents on each of the questions.

## **6. Main Findings**

Given the massive nature of the data collected and some constraints related to time and financial means we have not quite finished exploiting systematically all the elements from the interviews. Instead of providing specific answers to the many research questions, we shall synthesize here the main findings concerning the four factors studied:

- PEQs
- School canteens
- COGES/APE/AME
- Decentralisation

### **6.1 Main Findings Concerning PEQs**

The field surveys confirm that few schools have PEQ projects: only nine (9) out of the 65 schools of the sample had a PEQ project, 8 of them located in rural areas.

PEQ projects appear as an essential contribution to the qualitative objective of PDDEB which is to improve the quality of the education system in Burkina Faso.

Teachers who do have a PEQ project find that it is a tool that can help many teachers in their tasks, and that the regular monitoring which is part of its activities is a good method of evaluation. The project engages members of the community that houses the school so that they

make good use of it. The project amplifies the benefits of school (education, job opportunities, opportunity to satisfy one's own needs). It allows the schools to improve their performance; it embodies the idea of school as a key to development.

Although the PEQ projects have been established only recently compared to the three other initiatives studied, they appear to improve the quality of basic education in the most visible way. These gains appear clearly in both quantitative and qualitative data. However the original timeline for the implementation of the project was not kept (80 schools during the first phase, 280 during the second phase and generalisation to all schools during the third phase).

## 6.2 Main Findings Concerning School Canteens

The respondents are virtually unanimous in recognizing the very positive influence of the presence of the school canteen on both attendance and student participation.

Some people even argue that the canteen is the purpose of attending school, students are eager to return to school as soon as holidays end, to find the canteen

We attempted to use the quantitative data from the sample schools studied to show a link between the existence of a canteen and pupils' performance (in terms of promotion, success rates, and reduction of wastage) but this gave inconclusive results as shown by Table 3 below. These spurious frequencies may be due to several factors, one of which is the regulation forbidding repetition in forms 1, 3 and 5 which is now being enforced. (Burkina Faso, 2001)

We feel that longitudinal data on a larger sample of schools will confirm the link found in previous studies such as Magee (2006). We analysed for instance secondary data on several thousand schools over a four year period from the database of the Studies and Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Basic Education (DEP-MENA). As Table 4 shows, the promotion rates of students in schools without canteens tend to be lower than those of schools with canteens even though we did not try to establish levels of significance of these differences.

**Table 3 Existence of canteens and promotion rates based on the survey data**

|       |                          | Form 1 | Form 2 | Form 3 | Form 4 | Form 5 | Form 6 |
|-------|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Girls | Schools With canteens    | 95.0   | 92.0   | 91.9   | 90.6   | 92.6   | 68.8   |
|       | Schools Without canteens | 99.7   | 94.5   | 95.7   | 83.3   | 93.6   | 73.1   |
|       | Total                    | 95.7   | 92.4   | 92.6   | 89.0   | 92.9   | 70.1   |
| Boys  | Schools With canteens    | 94.5   | 95.6   | 92.7   | 94.1   | 94.8   | 64.5   |
|       | Schools Without canteens | 100.0  | 94.4   | 95.1   | 81.7   | 94.8   | 63.7   |
|       | Total                    | 95.5   | 95.5   | 93.2   | 91.5   | 94.8   | 64.3   |

**Table 4 Existence of canteens and promotion rates based on the data base of DEP- MENA**

| Form         | 2004 - 2005           |                          | 2008-2009             |                          |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
|              | Schools with canteens | Schools without canteens | Schools with canteens | Schools without canteens |
| Form 1 (CP1) | 84.4                  | 74.5                     | 90.4                  | 86.5                     |
| Form 2 (CP2) | 88.4                  | 75.3                     | 92.8                  | 87.6                     |
| Form 3 (CE1) | 83.6                  | 70.9                     | 85.8                  | 83.1                     |
| Form 4 (CE2) | 83.3                  | 72.3                     | 89.0                  | 83.1                     |
| Form 5 (CM1) | 73.5                  | 65.1                     | 73.7                  | 69.6                     |

### 6.3 Main Findings Concerning the COGES

The qualitative study shows that education stakeholders have diverse knowledge of the existence of school management committees, COGES. There are three groups of answers regarding the existence of COGES:

- A first and largest group of respondents who have specific knowledge of the existence of COGES includes opinion leaders, municipal representatives (CVD, mayors), and parents involved in school structures (APE, AME, COGES).
- The second group of respondents has a very vague knowledge of the existence of COGES.
- Finally, in the third group are those respondents who have no knowledge of the existence of COGES.

The quantitative data show that the relationship between the existence of a COGES, an APE and an AME and promotion rates, is practically nil for AMEs, mixed in the case of APE, (positive for Form 5 and Form 6, but negative for all other classes), and also mixed for the COGES (only positive for Form 4 and Form 6 but negative for all other classes.)

### 6.4 Main Findings Concerning Decentralisation

Decentralisation, with some reservations due to local governance issues among some mayors, is generally perceived as a positive factor in improving the quality of education, especially because the assignment of personnel directly to the municipalities allows for more direct administrative control and proximity pedagogic supervision. Many of the actors surveyed also find that decentralisation raises the commitment of the parents and other actors

Some respondents pointed out however some of the teething problems of decentralisation in Burkina illustrated by conflicts of competence between mayors and prefects and on the other hand between municipal authorities and local education officials. Those findings are in line with those of Lugaz and De Grauwe (2006) who studied decentralisation in three francophone African countries (Benin, Mali and Senegal)

The suggestions made by the respondents for improving the process of decentralisation in

the education system emphasize the need for providing more resources to the municipalities and the schools and sensitising the various actors to strengthen collaboration partnership around the schools.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study on the issue of decentralisation and the implementation of policies to improve the quality of education at school level, we propose the following recommendations to improve the contribution of the four factors to quality education in Burkina Faso.

- Considering that an effective management of education by the municipalities requires the presence of qualified staff in sufficient numbers and given the poverty of municipal budgets, we recommend that the State continue to put the right education managers at the disposal of the municipalities.
- The surveys reveal that many actors of decentralisation do not have a good understanding of the decentralisation process. This is the case of some presidents of CVDs, opinion leaders and parents. We recommend the organisation of training courses for decentralisation stakeholders focusing on the transfer of skills and resources in the field of education .
- Despite efforts by the State and its partners to increase the supply of education, those involved in education deplore the inadequacy or lack of certain school facilities in many locations. In order to increase the quality of education, we recommend the construction of new classrooms, the construction of boreholes and the establishment of school canteens where the need arises.
- Our investigations revealed that it is sometimes difficult to get good community mobilisation for the implementation of activities for schools. To promote an understanding of educational initiatives by grassroots communities, we propose the organization of awareness campaigns among school communities.
- With the policy of free basic education, schools receive allocations for textbooks and school supplies. The education actors experience difficulties related to the late arrival of quality textbooks and supplies. We recommend that the State find a better mechanism for transferring resources to municipalities to enable them to deliver on time supplies and quality textbooks to the schools.
- Many mayors are struggling to ensure the organisation of examinations at the end of the year (transportation and support for pupils and teachers). Most roads are indeed impassable during the rainy season, which causes difficulties in mobilising significant resources for transportation. We recommend a greater decentralisation of examination centres to reduce long distance journeys imposed on students and teachers.
- Quality school projects are part of strategies to improve student achievement.

Unfortunately they are slow to start but they are also often confused with other community projects. Actors deplore the lack of training for a proper installation of these types of projects. In the dynamics of further developments of PEQ, it is essential to: review the manual of procedures for PEQ to accommodate new actors such as the mayors. Steps should also be taken to inform and train stakeholders (teachers, principals, representatives of parents' associations) on the PEQ. Training sessions should also be held for teachers technical staff and financial support provided to schools for implementing and monitoring PEQ activities.

- This study has gathered important qualitative and quantitative data on the issue of decentralisation and the implementation of policies to improve the quality of education in schools. We recommend that the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy and its technical and financial partners (TFP) support the research team to enable it to continue to refine the analysis of the data collected.

## 8. Conclusion

The research team has identified a certain number of factors that can affect positively the quality of education at the school level, namely decentralisation, quality school projects and similar initiatives, school canteens and school management committees.

The results show that the study has largely achieved its objectives. Through documentary analyses and a field survey we have gathered data about the education sector and decentralisation stakeholders about the realities in the field of the four factors believed to impact the quality of basic education. Although the levels of this impact remain to be determined more clearly, the quantitative data show general trends. The PEQ projects appear to have more impact on promotion rates than older initiatives such as school canteens, school committees (COGES), parents' associations (APE, AME).

On the whole the decentralisation process is viewed positively by the stakeholders even though they pointed out its limits due mainly to teething problems. They also made suggestions for improving its impact on the quality of education.

We are aware that this summary presentation needed more flesh to reflect the full report submitted to JICA. We hope that this weakness will be somewhat corrected by the articles that the team members are preparing for publication on various aspects of the topic based on a more in-depth exploitation of the massive data collected.

Two lines for further research can also be identified. We can probe further into ways of implementing the PEQ project through action research. In relation to school canteens we can also carry out, a further study to examine the theme of children's schooling and the state of

household food security.

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