Diagnosis of education quality management practices in Burkina Faso

Executive Summary

This study aimed to assess the level of education quality management within the Burkinabe education system. It was based on the capacity to perform four functions considered as fundamental for effective management:

« Definition of objectives and impetus for action », concerning the capacity to define clear objectives and targets adapted to territorial context and to stimulate action.

« Negotiation of action and allocation of resources », consisting of enabling a dialogue between the different actors with a view to adapting action to realities in the field and allocating the corresponding resources.

« Supporting and monitoring action », concerning the capacity to produce and use reliable information to guide, support and transform actors' practices.

« Capitalisation, assessment of the effects of action and regulation », consisting of documenting action, sharing and disseminating the information and using it to adjust and adapt projects and policies accordingly.

Function 1 - Definition of objectives and impetus for action

Limited impact of strategies due to poor differentiation and lack of contextualisation of objectives

The Ministry has at its disposal:

- A relatively wide range of documents to drive objectives and actions aimed at improving the quality of basic education: education guidance act, PDSEB 2012-2021, PSE 2017-2030, Integrated strategy to strengthen pedagogical supervision (SIREP), Integrated strategy for in-service training of teachers and pedagogical supervisors (SIFCEEP 2019-2030), Quality reference framework for basic education, etc.

- As well as tools for defining these orientations: tools for monitoring pupils' results, management tools such as individual and collective improvement plans (PAI/PAC) and synoptic tables.

However, the actors on other levels of the education system who are expected to use these resources, are not familiar with them. Moreover, the absence of exploitation of the data collected by using these tools, as well as their uncertain reliability, limits the Ministry's capacity to define targeted and contextualised objectives, i.e. which respond to the differentiated needs of regional territories.

As a result, the strategies elaborated have difficulty in finding their target and have only a limited impact on the quality of learning.

Function 2 – Negotiation of action and allocation of resources

A difficult balance between the resources needed and implementation capacity

The Burkinabe education system provides different spaces for exchange with a view to making the strategies it promotes operational: at the central level (pedagogical conferences, SIREP for example), at school level (management committees, parents' associations, …) and at communal level (communal coordination of school management committees). However, whatever the level observed, dysfunctions are observed which hamper their action. These dysfunctions are of a budgetary nature, related to difficulties in planning or in managing community mobilisation.

Substantial difficulties in the allocation and management of resources are also observed. While the lack of resources for implementation of the proposed strategies appears to be a central factor, the actors' lack of capacity in some fields (e.g. the management of harmonised schoolwork or administrative and financial management) also constitutes a serious limitation.

Function 3 – Supporting and monitoring action

Tools that are sometimes unsuitable and a lack of support for the actors

A variety of tools are available in the Burkinabe education system for producing information to support and monitor the policies to improve the quality of education (PAI/PAC, harmonised schoolwork, school exams, etc.).

These tools are however not always used in a reliable and consistent manner, limiting the possibilities of having relevant information available to trigger reflection-action.

For example:

- Individual improvement plans/collective improvement plans (PAI/PAC): virtually all central and devolved administration actors mention a lack of adherence (reticence, lack of interest) by actors to use the PAI/PAC in the classroom and in schools, the implication being that the information on quality recorded in these tools is not reliable. Moreover, when they use them, the actors deplore the absence of impact on remedial measures and school achievements, as well as a lack of monitoring and evaluation on implementation.

- End-of-year proposals: according to the actors interviewed, data on repetition collected through end-of-year proposals are often falsified by teachers in order to comply with regulatory texts. In other words, the strategy set up to monitor the implementation of repetition regulations seems neither relevant nor effective insofar as the data collected are not reliable.

In the absence of reliable data, it therefore appears difficult for the Burkinabe education system to put in place adequate measures to provide support to actors in the field to help transform their practices. And it is difficult to improve the quality of the system without transforming the actors' practices. The capacity of the pedagogical support policy to transform teachers' practices is another example.

Function 4 - Capitalisation, assessment of the effects of action and regulation

The capacity to document some local initiatives but a lack of dissemination and use

Innovative practices have been identified both in terms of pedagogy and management (exploitation of endogenous know-how, use of local languages, raising parents' awareness, etc.). They coexist with practices to encourage excellence (the latter do however raise the question of their negative impact on pupils in difficulty – emulation vs elitism). In terms of teaching practices, despite the suspension of the pedagogical facilitation groups, spaces for informal exchange have been set up, enabling peers to exchange on practices and to share experience.

In all cases, the documentation of these practices by the system is lacking. There seems to be no mechanism in the system to identify, list and then share these innovative practices. Moreover, they are not the subject of reflection in a formal framework that could lead to extensive sharing and integration in the formulation of educational policies.

The Burkinabe system has a strong capacity for defining objectives and driving action, and this is its main strength in the management of quality. However, this alone is not enough. Without a precise knowledge of the different issues at stake in each territory and the ability to negotiate action and allocate the appropriate resources, the entire management process is slowed down. It is thus very clear that administration actors experience multiple difficulties in performing the functions related to « supporting and monitoring action » and « capitalisation, assessment of the effects of action and regulation ».

Continuing to carry out reforms without improving the ministry's capacity to perform these functions will not produce more results. Supporting the education authorities in ensuring ownership and implementation of its strategies at local level is therefore a central issue for improving the management of education quality.