

Diagnosis of education quality management practices in Madagascar

Executive Summary



This study aimed to assess the level of education quality management within Madagascar's 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.

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Function 1 - Definition of objectives and impetus for action

A strong capacity for defining objectives and strategies but difficulties with their implementation

This is the function that the actors in Madagascar's education system master the best, reflected in particular by:

- a good capacity for defining objectives and driving action: Madagascar's education system benefits from a sectoral planning document, the PSE, resulting from a national consultation process;
- the capacity to define objectives and targets illustrated by the existence of annual work plans (PTA) within the central Ministry of education, but also three-year development plans (PTD) that constitute a planning tool at school district (CISCO) and national education regional directorate (DREN) levels;
- an organisation aimed at collecting and producing the information needed to manage its actions, through regular school statistics, national and international evaluations, under the Directorate for educational planning (DPE) and the School achievement evaluation unit (UEAS).

However, the diagnosis carried out with the actors demonstrates that these tools are used very little for actual planning and for managing resources. The actions implemented seem to be more about conforming to instructions rather than the need for tools serving to drive objectives to improve the quality of education.

The diagnosis also reveals that the dynamics for driving action are hindered by frequent changes at the head of the educational institutions, which also impact the production and use of information.

Function 2 – Negotiation of action and allocation of resources

Barely operational spaces for exchange and dispersion of resources (both human and financial)

Madagascar's education system has, on paper, several spaces for exchange around the management of educational policy (such as the DREN's management review, action plan scheduling meetings, meetings of the ZAP heads, teacher networks).

These spaces are located on different levels and aim to promote regular exchange between the actors concerned. They are however barely operational, particularly due to political instability (and, more recently, to the health context related to the Covid-19 pandemic) and to the lack of human resources (training), and logistic and financial resources. Their operation is limited: they only involve a small number of directly concerned actors, are often dependent on funding from a partner and, in the case of those relying on the involvement of local communities (school governance for example), come up against the actors' lack of capacity.

At the same time, the strong presence of technical and financial partners throughout the country is not an asset since, without any real coordination, it leads to the multiplication of initiatives, sometimes even competing with each other, and exacerbates some of the regional imbalances.

Finally, the capacity to allocate resources through to implementation on the ground is limited and is often combined with a deficit of human and technical capacities to implement activities.

Function 3 – Supporting and monitoring action

A profusion of tools detrimental to the monitoring and evaluation of actions

Madagascar's education system is very well equipped, even overly equipped. Every level of intervention has a range of tools (which can be pedagogical management tools, planning tools or administrative management tools)

proposed by the Ministry or by the different partners in the framework of the projects, for each action to be put in place. Although, in theory, these tools should enable the collection of useful information for monitoring action, the fact that there are too many of them means that they are not used effectively. In fact, actors are restricted by a number of obstacles: some tools are duplicates, others are too complex or even do not make sense to them. And, in any case, they do not have enough time to use the tools properly.

Actors interviewed in the field also point to the weakness of monitoring-support by the authorities: monitoring and evaluation still rely largely on the central level, without any real accountability on the part of the DRENs and CISCOS. Also, due to the multiplication of initiatives, there is a lack of motivation for support and monitoring. This limits their contribution to quality follow-up. Thus, most of the large-scale actions put in place (particularly in terms of pedagogical training) have not been the subject of in-depth evaluation or monitoring in the medium term, making it impossible to adapt support or tools based on feedback.

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

A capacity for documenting, but not for using for regulation

This function also poses difficulties in Madagascar's education system, even though there is a strong capacity for documenting certain practices and impacts of actions made, especially through recourse to external expertise. In fact, the Ministry of education has a fairly large number of studies and evaluations at its disposal: some inform on the management of the quality of education, others suggest actions for improving the management of quality. They provide information on local supervision, planning, school projects under contract (PEC), the status of non-civil servant teachers (FRAM teachers), principals, etc. However, the different Ministry of education actors know little about most of these studies, due mainly to high turnover linked to political instability, and their results are not used.

It also appears that the system's capacity to review policies and actions in favour of the improvement of quality, is weakened by a number of structural factors: the existence of strong hierarchical relationships and complacency among the actors, an analysis of data often limited to a work of compilation, or even a simple numerical observation, and inadequate operation of the spaces for dialogue to promote sharing and reflection of actors at all levels on the issues affecting the management of the system.

While Madagascar's education system has a solid sectoral framework, clear objectives, precise indicators and a strong desire to drive action, recurring political instability constitutes a major obstacle to the effective mobilisation of actors to manage the quality of education.

The diagnosis thus reveals that the functions related to « negotiation of action and allocation of resources », « supporting and monitoring action » and « capitalisation, assessment of the effects of action and regulation » pose considerable difficulties. High turnover and the loss of institutional memory that ensues makes it impossible to follow through with the efforts undertaken and for the actors to assimilate the initiatives put in place.

The issues of planning, monitoring-evaluation and capitalisation on the actions undertaken therefore appear to be central to ensuring that the efforts made by the actors, each one at their level, have an impact on improving the quality of the education system.