



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Education  
Sector



# Activating Policy Levers

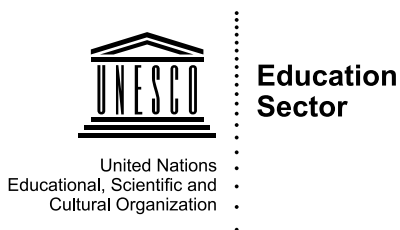
## for Education 2030

The Untapped Potential of Governance, School  
Leadership, and Monitoring and Evaluation Policies

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## UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



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UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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Evaluation Policies

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ADEA</b>	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
<b>AKF</b>	Aga Khan Foundation
<b>ARNEC</b>	Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood
<b>ASER</b>	Annual Status of Education Report
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
<b>CABE</b>	Central Advisory Board of Education (India)
<b>CapEFA</b>	Capacity Development for Education for All
<b>CNEF</b>	National Education and Training Charter (Morocco)
<b>CTE</b>	College of Teachers' Education
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>DISE</b>	District Information System for Education
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EEPCT</b>	Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System

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<b>ESP</b>	Education Sector Plan
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FBO</b>	Faith-based Organization
<b>FMIS</b>	Financial Management Information System
<b>GATS</b>	General Agreement on Trade in Services
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratios
<b>GMR</b>	Global Monitoring Report
<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education
<b>GRP</b>	Gross regional product
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ICFES</b>	Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IEA</b>	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
<b>IICBA</b>	International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa
<b>IIEP</b>	International Institute for Educational Planning
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>INEP</b>	National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (Brazil)
<b>IRRE</b>	Regional Institutes for Educational Research (Italy)
<b>KICE</b>	Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MOES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science
<b>NAEP</b>	National Assessment of Educational Progress
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization

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<b>NIE</b>	National Institute of Education
<b>NIER</b>	National Institute for Educational Policy Research
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>NPM</b>	New Public Management
<b>NPQP</b>	National Professional Qualification for Principals
<b>NQF</b>	National Qualifications Framework
<b>NUEPA</b>	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OSI</b>	Open Society Institute
<b>PISA</b>	Program for International Student Assessment
<b>PPP</b>	Public–private partnership
<b>PRI</b>	Panchayati Raj Institution (India)
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
<b>PTA</b>	Parent–Teacher Association
<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>SABER</b>	Systems Approach for Better Education Results (World Bank)
<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
<b>SAEB</b>	National Assessment of Basic Education (Brazil)
<b>SAMS</b>	School Administration and Management System
<b>SAR</b>	Special Administrative Region
<b>SAS</b>	Student Assessment System
<b>SASA</b>	South African Schools Act
<b>SBM</b>	School-based management
<b>SDB</b>	School Development Board
<b>SGB</b>	School Governing Boards
<b>SMB</b>	School Management Board

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<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>SRKS</b>	School Record Keeping System
<b>SSA</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>SSAC</b>	State Commission for Student Admission (Azerbaijan)
<b>SSE</b>	School Self Evaluation
<b>STI</b>	Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>TALIS</b>	Teaching and Learning International Study
<b>TES</b>	Teacher Evaluation System
<b>TI</b>	Transparency International
<b>TIMSS</b>	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
<b>TMIS</b>	Teacher Management Information System
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UIS</b>	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
<b>UNESCWA</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USE</b>	Unified State Examination (Russia)
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and training
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WEO</b>	Woreda Education Office

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# Foreword

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been unprecedented progress in education, especially with regards to access to primary education. Considerable efforts have been made to implement the right to education at country level; however, persistent inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes remain at various levels of education, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. This is the result of such barriers as economic, social and cultural disparities. In addition, gender equality remains a significant issue. While access to education remains high up in the national agenda of many countries, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action strongly reaffirm the central role of the right to education. These international agreements emphasize the pursuit of quality, inclusiveness, and equity as the overall goals of education policies. To realize the major reform efforts that are required to achieve the international goals, governments must maximize the use of policy levers for effective change and success.

In laying the foundation and conditions for the delivery and sustainability of good quality education, the formulation of strong legal frameworks and effective policies and plans remains central to achieving education development goals and promoting lifelong learning. As a recent history of education shows, the education sector is not short of ideas but often struggles to put them into practice. Well-worded policies may remain irrelevant in practice unless the right policy levers are used to address the persistent implementation gap.

This report focuses on three strategic policy levers that together can help governments reach higher levels of education quality, equity and inclusiveness. The report clearly demonstrates the untapped potential of adequate governance, effective and instructional school leadership, and better monitoring and evaluation systems that could be critical to the achievement of the SDG 4 — Education 2030, which is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.'

UNESCO has always served as an international platform for the exchange of ideas and knowledge between the research community and policy-makers as a trusted broker of innovative ideas that move from practice to policy and from policy to practice, with the help of research. It is with this vocation, and drawing on several policy research activities developed by the Section of Education Policy, that this publication, alongside many others, aims to provide useful policy insights and advice for governments and all education stakeholders, and in so doing, to nurture the ongoing policy debates about how to turn the ambitions of SDG 4 — Education 2030 into reality.

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UNESCO Education Sector

# Acknowledgements

This report is based on three comparative studies conducted by UNESCO's Section of Education Policy on governance, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation policies. The three of them began with a series of regional reviews and national case studies, which are available online on the website of the Education Sector of UNESCO. The Section of Education Policy provided the authors with a common analytical framework and research questions that guided their contributions. The results were extensively debated in dedicated workshop. The discussions constituted the basis of the comparative analysis presented in the chapters of this report, which is the resulting global syntheses, drawing on parallel comparative analyses of the regional reviews in an attempt to elucidate global trends and suggest valuable policy lessons.

The analysis of governance issues in education was led by Megumi Watanabe, assisted by Dalia Rafik, who carried out data analysis and research. Inès Boumaïza and Mathilde Nicoli provided support for additional research and coordination. The regional reviews under this theme were drafted by Abdeljalil Akkari (Mediterranean- Arab States, Southern Europe), Fred Dervin and Joseph Zajda (BRICS), Yaw Ankomah with the support of Sun Min Lee (sub-Saharan Africa), Mark Bray and William Brehm (East Asia), and Natia Andguladze and Arsen Mkrtychyan (South Caucasus) to whom the UNESCO Team would like to express its sincere appreciations. Rebecca Kraut edited the regional papers.

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# Introduction

*Governments are keen to learn from international experiences and successful examples of education reform. This natural interest is now being fueled by the aspiration to reach the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, for which many innovative reforms and policies are required. In response to the growing international interest in education policies in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO embarked on a series of comparative reviews intended to showcase the potential of existing, and yet often poorly used, policy levers for educational development — namely governance, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation.*

*This study offers a unique perspective intended to support reflections on how these three broad areas of policy intervention may provide opportunities for the major changes required in the coming years. By bringing together insights from international literature, the global consensus on education — most clearly reflected in SDG 4 — Education 2030 — and comparative analysis of real case studies, policy experiences and regional reviews from UNESCO Member States.*

*This report presents the main findings and resulting recommendations of a series of comparative studies on promising education policy levers developed by UNESCO over the past biennium. The focus of this publication is on school systems; however there are implications for all levels and types of education. Considering the multiple interests involved, the intention of this study is therefore not to produce any ‘best’ framework or model, but rather to promote an active dialogue and intensive research on critical issues to help policy-makers, planners and education practitioners, especially at the national level, better and more strategically use **governance, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation** in the pursuit of the internationally agreed education agenda.*

## Why these policy levers?

The rationale for choosing these three policy levers was a deliberate choice that combines very well researched policy areas posing new threats and opportunities to governments, with emerging ones whose relevance has been already acknowledged in SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in 2015.

For decades, discussion around education governance in developing country contexts has been reduced to the need to promote *decentralisation*. With the surge of public sector management reform over the last two decades, the paradigm shift from government to governance has so far been considered a threat. This is particularly true for governments that may lack the capacity to deal with incredibly complex maps of multiplying stakeholders and providers, including the pressure for

increased privatization, compliance to international and regional standards and growing influence of international donors. The shift towards governance can also represent a major opportunity for higher social participation and dialogue, and thus for increased local ownership of education policies and their stability and continuity over time. This double-sided nature of governance, and the fact that it influences for good and bad the whole policy cycle explains why it was chosen as the first theme for this analysis.

School leadership has until recently only rarely been researched comparatively from a policy perspective. For decades, and not only in developing contexts, school leaders were simply considered to be managers, at most, of poorly resourced schools with literally no say on curriculum or teacher policies, and no influence on what happens inside the classroom. Recent research has started to cumulate evidence about the positive effects of the empowerment of school leaders as change makers and the development of new approaches embracing the principle that instructional leadership matters and can make a difference to student learning. In many contexts, there is still a need for a policy change in this respect and an appetite for learning from different policy avenues that have successfully contributed to the transformation of school managers into influential and authoritative instructional leaders.

One of the most debated themes during the discussions at the World Education Forum, held in Incheon in 2015, was the role that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should play in informing policy. Virtually all countries can now count on some forms of education management information systems, basic national education statistics, and, increasingly, on different mechanisms to test or certify that learning is happening. There is a growing demand for comprehensive and well integrated monitoring and evaluation systems in education, as opposed to fragmented arrangements. Unless the underlying purposes of M&E are continually kept in the forefront, M&E systems remain data silos, producing an enormous number of statistical tables that are beyond the capacity of statistical units to analyse or interpret and with little value for identifying policy implications or making recommendations. For policy-makers to understand the evidence provided by M&E systems implies a high degree of dialogue between the technicalities of how to collect and analyse data and the policy questions of what is important to monitor and why. The challenge is, therefore, how to ensure that M&E systems, no matter how sophisticated, develop in such a way that they adequately feed and inform policy-making in education.

## The role of the levers in enabling SDG 4 policies

At first sight, these three policy levers may seem unrelated. In the wider context of SDG 4 — Education 2030, it becomes apparent that there is a need for renewed formulae for steering education development — that, in sum, the predominant “business as usual approach” will not achieve SDG 4 and other education targets. Certainly, there is the basic precondition of adequate funding and public investment in education, as recognized in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. However, even with redoubled funding efforts, there will always be questions about whether the current education policy environments are enabling enough to guide the system in the appropriate direction, whatever the targets.

Setting direction and steering the wheel are first matters of national ownership: the more public policies are resulting from governance environments where dialogue is a foundational characteristic, the more likely it is for consensus to emerge and consensus leads to national ownership. At a time when in developing countries there are many voices, ranging from international organizations and donors to private education providers claiming to know what governments should do, there is a need for even stronger and more capable States that can steer the education sector and promote consensus among stakeholders — notably bringing teachers on board. This is why the shift from mere government to governance is a promising avenue for educational development, irrespective of which governance approach is adopted.

Ultimately, when policies and legal measures are focused on achieving the right to quality education for all, they can effectively transform the daily experience in individual schools and classrooms. Changes in governance, most notably decentralization in its various forms, highlight the need for attention to what is happening at the level of educational institutions. School leaders may be an important missing link between public policies and better learning opportunities in practice. This will not only be the result of strengthening the power mechanisms that school headteachers may have at their disposal or ensuring that they perform better as managers of human, financial and material resources. More importantly, school leaders have to become instructional leaders capable of promoting teacher professionalism and development, and transforming schools into learning organizations where teachers are rewarded for seeking better learning opportunities for students. In many ways, questions surrounding how education systems can make the best use of their school leaders for the transformation of learning are at the interface of both governance and M&E policies.

It is often said that educational reforms, whether on governance, school leadership or other policy areas, should always be informed by evidence. Whether evidence should drive or merely inform policy making is subject to debate, as different political values and interests may read evidence in different ways and the education sector has cumulated quite an important body of knowledge. However, it would be naive to claim that evidence suffices to drive all decision-making processes at national, local or even school level. Education is a complex and multifaceted social activity that is one of the more difficult fields for a universal body of evidence that transcends cultural contexts and values. That said, the ever growing knowledge base, coming from not only experiments and international comparative surveys but also from national M&E systems, is not fully utilized and engaged in the policy dialogue about education. This is why improved M&E systems can also be seen as a powerful education policy lever.

## Putting governance at the service of educational development

Common and traditional approaches to governance are in question and do not seem to fully take into account the emerging challenges that countries are facing. The landscape is constantly evolving and the concept and practice of governance has become a more complex and fluid domain. The interplay of a multiplicity of stakeholders requires a paradigm shift in the action of governments and this is particularly challenging in developing countries and emerging economies because they do not have a plentiful supply of skilled personnel for dialogue and negotiation of roles. Consequently, the changes that are

occurring are challenging the capacity of governments to ensure equity in the provision of education for all. Education authorities must therefore recognize that governance is not the same as government. The education sector must take into account the constant increase in the number of new clients and suppliers largely dominated by the private sector and other non-State actors. The marketization in the provision of education by a strong private sector reflects a new distribution of power in education. This is not just a matter of private schools, colleges and universities, but also concerns the parallel 'shadow education' sector of private supplementary tutoring and education management services.

In this evolving scenario and in view of the 2030 Education Agenda, the role of education authorities at the central level is crucial in steering governance reforms as well as formulating a shared vision and strategy to govern and manage education systems. Equally, attention must be given to education authorities at other levels and to civil society and private sector actors, in a more pluralistic framework. It is essential to align governance reforms with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

Education provision has started to be decentralized, in particular through much greater school autonomy, hence offering wider choices of education provision. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to governance. While attention to governance can promote democracy and give voice to a vast array of stakeholders in education, approaches to governance have to be strategic and fit for purpose. Whilst recognizing the existence of a 'hybrid constellation of governance principles', taking a contextualized approach to governance seems to be relevant. This implies a coordinating role for governments, probably accompanied by a regulating role. The expanded roles of civil society and the private sector require new attention to regulations for both formal institutions and non-formal ones in the education sector.

## Transforming headteachers into school leaders

In their efforts to address current and emerging educational challenges and pursue better quality, effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery, many countries are struggling to reinforce school governance, management, and leadership. In so doing, countries have mostly invested in teacher training, learning materials, learning environment, and equipment and facilities, while research suggests that effective school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as the most important factor influencing pupils' learning and has an untapped potential to enhance school performance. In fact, school leaders are at the hub of education processes and reforms and serve as filters and mediators between policy-makers, teachers, parents, and students, to ensure successful implementation of education and, in particular, governance reforms.

School leadership development is a new challenge in many countries, where school principals continue to be considered as administrative managers. The question is therefore how to empower them to become effective instructional leaders. This necessitates relevant in-service professional development and appropriate support, and for policy-makers to draw on research findings, best practices and lessons learned from countries that have implemented successful reform. The content and modalities of school leadership reform may vary depending on political, institutional or cultural contexts.



While it is widely acknowledged that a headteacher's role is key in school management, effective school leadership emerges from collaboration — i.e. shared or distributed leadership, which empowers other staff and, in particular, teachers. There is also a need to define realistic expectations regarding school leadership, which, in the current circumstances, refers to its potential to improve school performance and students' learning outcomes. This is why the focus of policy attention is mostly on instructional or pedagogical school leadership.

There are, however, some preconditions to exploiting the full potential of school leadership: recognizing the potential of school leadership is not enough to feel its beneficial effects. In general, countries that have experienced the positive effects of school leadership on student outcomes have previously invested in creating the conditions for a political and educational environment that is conducive to success. These include:

- i. appropriate governance reforms;
- ii. adequate regulatory and institutional frameworks;
- iii. clear (re)definition of principals' roles and responsibilities;
- iv. related support in terms of training, appraisal and feedback, and;
- v. motivation through respectable status and decent remuneration for school leaders.

One of the most troublesome difficulties in developing and implementing effective school leadership policies in many countries is adherence to tradition and resistance to change. Thus, the instructional leadership should, for instance, take into account the autonomy of teachers by distributing leadership and enhancing teacher skills. Under a distributed leadership model, other forms of leadership are likely to emerge when there is trust among teachers and dialogue between all stakeholders.

The importance of sound, integrated and sustainable school leadership policies must also be highlighted. All school leadership policy dimensions listed above have to be integrated into national education policy, particularly with the policy components related to teachers and quality of education. Again, there is no "one size fits all" policy that will perfectly suit all countries' contexts — hence the need to take into account the specific context of the countries where the reforms must be introduced.

Cultural diversity or historical differences should not be used as an excuse to delay important reforms in the area of school leadership. In fact, the literature shows that in countries that have made progress in this area, all leaders draw on the same repertoire of skills or practices, namely:

- i. Develop a vision and set the objectives and guidelines to achieve that vision;
- ii. Understand the staff, especially teachers, and help them improve their skills;
- iii. Design or redesign school organization in line with the defined objectives and vision;
- iv. Manage teaching and learning activities.

The challenge for countries is to ensure that school leaders are equipped with these skills and establish an enabling environment so that they can function smoothly. While this environment, regarding political, regulatory and institutional frameworks, may vary among countries, these key skills are essential for any leader, regardless of culture.

Governance reshuffling is necessary to develop effective school leadership as hierarchical systems often hinder reforms. Successful school leadership happens with a more autonomous and systematic approach to the management of educational systems; giving more power to schools and monitoring tools at the decentralized level. The corollary of this is increased accountability for school leaders, suggesting the need for developing appropriate “contract-based” frameworks for the evaluation of school principals.

## Making M&E systems work

Successful implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action will also depend on functional and reliable M&E systems to enable informed and participatory decision-making and enhanced accountability, in conformity with States’ legal obligations under the right to education. Since monitoring progress towards SDG 4 — Education 2030 starts at country level, there is a need for countries to build relevant, effective and inclusive monitoring and accountability mechanisms which require capacity and commitment at all levels.

There is a need to find a balance between the accountability and development functions of M&E. The lack of such a balance may not only hinder the sustainability of M&E efforts but also cause a counter effect. Because of technology advances, there are simple means to collect massive amounts of data. However, education authorities are facing challenges in transforming masses of statistical data into the critical knowledge needed for decision-making. This is a major concern for many of the M&E systems in education. Furthermore, many fragmented M&E components (Education Management Information System [EMIS], teachers’ compensations database, inspections, students’ learning records, etc.) are still failing to connect to create the necessary synergies to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

Many current M&E systems in education are facing challenges in responding to ever growing user demands and expectations, as there is a need to advocate with users as to what M&E can and cannot offer. Furthermore, the issue of data privacy and who should get access to what data should be taken into account, as it will be a major concern for future M&E systems. For that, it is essential to put in place an institutional infrastructure (legal framework, data privacy policy, clearly defined organizational structure and responsibilities) to create a robust but secure M&E environment which can cater to the needs of a variety of clients and stakeholders.

While ensuring that the desired result is being achieved (‘doing the right thing’), it is equally important to pay attention to processes (‘doing things right’). M&E systems should strive to achieve a balance among the different dimensions of education (inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes).

In a rapidly changing world M&E systems must be designed flexibly, to be able to adapt and evolve, to respond effectively to continuously emerging needs in education.

Moreover, it is again important to understand that there is no “one size fits all” model. Bringing together all relevant stakeholders, fostering collaboration (for example between authorities, private sector, researchers, civil society organizations, parents and others) to make M&E a more open and participatory process would be a critical success factor for future M&E systems for Education 2030.

Therefore, M&E is the means not the end, and any M&E efforts should result in real and positive influences on education policies and practices, including at the classroom level. Furthermore, future M&E system in education should serve to empower the education institution and communities where actions take place. It is important build a culture of M&E and to ensure that relevant institutions, ministries and agencies understand their roles and responsibilities. Mutual accountability on M&E should be set up between duty-bearers and right-holders.

Although it may be challenging, all possible efforts should be made to ensure that M&E systems are free from direct political influence. Above all, M&E systems in the field of education should promote transparency and the public good.

## Untapped potential for attaining SDG 4 targets

Assessing the relevance of strategic attention to governance, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation policies must be done by using the overarching criteria of whether the policies contribute significantly to improving learning and development outcomes. In this respect, the three domains must be considered instrumental to those policies with a more direct influence on learning, such as curriculum and teacher policies. The three represent an untapped massive potential to speed up the process of attaining the SDG 4 — Education 2030 targets with a view to effectively realizing the main components of the right to education.

In a different context, where more participatory forms of governance are seen as a new mode to governing the education sector, the involvement of all concerned stakeholders, among them teachers, is required from the outset. This applies not only to domains directly related to teaching and learning but also to all those that may have a relevant influence on the quality of learning, such as governance, school leadership and monitoring and evaluation.

As this report shows, against this backdrop, UNESCO remains committed to supporting the effective design and implementation of policies in these domains, particularly through the production and sharing of knowledge and promising practices, the promotion of international/regional cooperation, the development of normative tools enshrining the right to education, and the provision of technical support, including capacity development.

# CHAPTER I

Education 2030 and the changing  
dynamics of governance

# Introduction

*Governance has become one of the key contemporary policy issues in the education sector internationally. Several factors have contributed to this, including an ever increasing number of stakeholders, the impact of globalization, the changing role of the state, and the influence of new paradigms in policy-making and public management. The governance of complex systems is already an important part of the policy agenda in developed countries (OECD, 2016). In developing countries the complexity of the education sector tends to be even higher for various reasons, ranging from the actual capacity of governments to an even wider landscape of policy actors, including donors and multiple development partners.*

*This chapter presents an analysis of emerging governance issues in the education sector and the resulting reforms and policy alternatives that are being explored by some UNESCO Member States, sometimes in quite innovative ways. The main aim of this analysis is to contribute to the global debates about education governance while providing opportunities for peer learning by sharing policy lessons and experiences. This comparative analysis of governance issues and reforms in education is intended to assist Member States in their making of strategic choices for effective governance arrangements in their respective contexts. To do so, this chapter begins by exploring the changing concept of governance and its value as an analytical perspective. The chapter then presents a comparative analysis, based on the regional reviews. This analysis takes contextual differences into account, maps a series of trends and issues, and identifies three governance approaches before drawing out some key policy lessons in the context of SDG 4 — Education 2030.*

## Exploring the concept of governance

This section examines the concept of governance in the education sector. From a review of the literature it identifies a shift of emphasis from government to governance. It then looks at approaches to governance in the overall development context and as an analytical perspective in education policy. It notes that, compared to sectors such as health and environment, less policy research attention has been given to governance in education until recently.

## An elusive concept

Although intuitively governance is usually identified with the mechanisms that governments use to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate their public policies, the interactions with other political actors in so doing and the resulting dynamics, the fact is that governance is a very elusive, if not ambiguous, concept.

Governance has been defined as “the manner in which something is governed or regulated; method of management, system of regulations” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017). However, there seems to be no widely accepted definition internationally (Bevir & Hall, 2011; Holmberg et al., 2009).

The way in which the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, for instance, have defined the concept of governance still assert that governance is what governments do and, implicitly, that their activities could be improved if governance became more effective. To begin with, the OECD defines governance as, “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation’s affairs” (OECD, 2007).

One of the most cited definitions of governance is, “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” (World Bank, 1992). However, ever increasing expectations about good governance have contributed to refine this definition as to include a major reference to the common good. Hence, the World Bank has re-defined governance as “the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good” (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, for World Bank (2013), “governance is the process — by which authority is conferred on rulers, by which they make the rules, and by which those rules are enforced and modified. Thus, understanding governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules, as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined, and linked together and with the society generally.”

UNDP defines governance more broadly as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels. It is a neutral concept comprising the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 1997).

‘Governance’ thus refers to all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market, or network. In this respect, according to Bevir (2013), “governance is a broader term than government because it focuses not only on the State and its institutions but also on the creation of rule and order in social practices.” Bevir also notes that different scholarly communities use the term ‘governance’ to address issues across fields such as development studies, economics, geography, international relations, planning, political science, public administration, and sociology. For instance, social theorists refer to ‘governance’ to frame and conceptualize analyses of social coordination and organization. Changes in patterns of governance across corporate, public, and global affairs have also been widely studied by social scientists.

In the growing academic work on governance there is a redirection of its definition, according to which governance signifies “a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed” (Rhodes, 1996, p. 652, cited in Stoker, 1998).

From a policy perspective, the surging interest worldwide on governance is an indication that the way in which governments have exerted their action of governing is, if not challenged, at least evolving towards increasing complexity — even if hierarchy remains the most common form of public organization. Therefore, from this perspective, governance is less about what a government does and more about how policies are formulated, implemented and evaluated in the context of the interplay of a multiplicity of stakeholders.

## A paradigm shift in governance

The perspective used in this analysis, which equates governance with a shift in public organization and public action from hierarchic bureaucracies, where governance was the sole action of government, to markets and networks, thus creating new arenas for policy development. The dimensions and implications of this paradigm shift from hierarchical “bureaucratic” to more participatory ‘post-bureaucratic’ governance is discussed further below, paving the way for the analysis of the governance issues identified in the regional reviews.

According to Kooiman and Van Vliet (1993), there is nowadays,

*... a baseline agreement among political analysts that governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred. The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government. The governance concept points to the creation of a structure or an order which cannot be externally imposed but is the result of the interaction of a multiplicity of governing and each other influencing actors.*

While the term government refers to a very specific State-centred mode of social and political organization, governance is defined as a multitude of formal or informal steering and coordination mechanisms “to make demands, frame goals, issue directives, pursue policies and generate compliance” (Rosenau, 2004, p.31), whether by public or private actors. Under this new paradigm, according to Stoker (1998), “governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action. The outputs of governance are not therefore different from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in processes.” Governance is thus associated not just with greater sensitivity to networks as a type of social organization but also to the spread of networks in a new politics, partly as a result of neoliberal reforms of the public sector.

Indeed, governments have experienced a vast array of reforms associated with marketization, privatization, and partnerships. As a result, present-day governance increasingly involves private organizations, voluntary-sector organizations and development partners working alongside public actors. According to Bevir (2013):

*Complex packages of organizations deliver most public services today. The resulting fragmentation means that the State increasingly depends on other organizations to define and implement its policies. Further, the State has swapped direct for indirect controls. Central departments are no longer invariably the pivots of policy networks. The State sometimes may set limits to network actions, but it has increased its dependence on other actors. State power is dispersed among spatially and functionally distinct networks.*

For the purposes of this analysis, a view of governance is taken whose “value rests in its capacity to provide a framework for understanding changing processes of governing” (Stoker, 1998). The common ground is that “governance concerns the use of power: the effectiveness of rules, policies and the functioning of public bodies that affect the lives of the members of a community, be that in education or in any other sphere of public policy” (Hulme, Savoia and Sen, 2014).

According to Jakobi et al. (2009):

*In response to the changing nature of real world politics the debate on governance mirrors the emergence of an enriched set of actors and policy-making levels which are involved in the political process. As an analytical concept it thus refers to processes of de-nationalization along two different axes of change: from public to private on the one hand, and from national to multilevel governing on the other. (see Leibfried & Zürn, 2005).*

In the public–private dimension of change, governance involves regulatory agencies with new constellations of actors. The interplay among these often implies a delegation of function formerly executed by the State to non-State providers or semi-private bodies (Schuppert, 2006). The new cooperative or enabling role of the State along this public–private axis of change has been referred to as de-hierarchization of the relations between State and society (Scharpf, 1991). The territorial dimension of change, i.e. the emergence of multilevel governance, has become most prominent, for instance, in the context of European politics in the shift of competencies from the national to the European or subnational levels (Bache & Flinders, 2005).

From an analytical perspective, approaches to governance in the international development context have fitted a multiplicity of dimensions: from the type and quality of political institutions, to the set of economic institutions and policies. For instance, the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators make reference to six elements of governance: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence/terrorism; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption (World Bank, 2012). In particular, political democracy is often considered as part of good governance (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2010).



Hulme, Savoia and Sen (2014) note that theories of development have different understandings of which and how many dimensions of governance are crucial to prosperity. In their view, “the concept of governance must be mapped according to the functions one deems key to development.” The regional reviews clearly show that different approaches to governance exist in UNESCO Member States.

The paradigm shift is evident in the changing language around governance, from the actions of government to more widely distributed social processes of good governance and effective governance. Good governance refers broadly “to a set of qualitative characteristics relating to processes of rulemaking and their institutional foundations” (Biermann et al., 2014). According to the World Bank (2006), “a central element of good governance is the responsiveness of policies and public institutions to the needs of all citizens. Policies and institutions must represent the interests of women and men and promote equal access to resources, rights and voice.” Good governance stresses participation, decentralization, accountability and governmental responsiveness as important dimensions along with social equity and justice. It has, according to Best (2014), cited in Biermann et al. (2014), become a controversial term because of its usage in the realm of international development assistance. Some developing countries have concerns that good governance targets and indicators are being used as an aid conditionality (Biermann et al., 2014).

Effective governance, however, “focusses on the capacities of institutions to resolve problems of public policy and implement effective rules” (ibid.). Such challenges are faced by all countries and are discussed in this comparative analysis. Effective governance implies a greater focus on “capacity building, foresight and long term planning” to deal with interconnected problems (ibid.). However, in contrast with good governance, for which multiple indicators have been developed, there is no universally accepted measure of effective governance.

## Governance as an analytical perspective in education policy

For decades, public policies in education in developed countries seemed to be designed to materialize the philosophy of the welfare State: the search for a stable equilibrium between redistributive interventionism and market freedom. Yet, that fragile equilibrium appears to be at risk. Historically, the public good was presumed to be homogeneous and well defined — something that could be rigidly and bureaucratically managed (UNESCO, 2015a). Clearly, today’s scenarios show that the demands on education systems are not only multiple but also increasingly heterogeneous, and can only be addressed with less rigid and bureaucratic forms of management. In sum, the paradigm shift in governance can be described as being from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic.

As stated in the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report:

*Education governance is not simply the system of administration and management of education in a country. In its broadest sense, it is concerned with the formal and informal processes by which policies are formulated, priorities identified, resources allocated, and reforms implemented and monitored. Governance is an issue not only for central government but also for every level of the system, from the education*

*ministry down to the classroom and community. It is ultimately concerned with the distribution of power in decision-making at all levels. (UNESCO, 2009, p.129).*

This new distribution of power necessitates revisiting not only the roles of different actors in education, but also the governance strategies of the State itself. As an analytical perspective, the reference to governance in education underlines questions that deal not merely with the outcomes of education but with the way the politics of education works (Jakobi et al., 2009).

*The search of the State for a new role in education, the consequences and the limits of de-nationalization – these and related trends of change raise new questions which can be easily addressed and subsumed under the umbrella of ‘new modes of governance’, a shift from a hierarchical mode of steering to various loci and ways of governance. In fact, once seriously examined, education turns out to be a particularly enlightening field of observation, in which many general patterns of policy changes, the conditions under which they take place, and the problems raised by them, can be analysed... While the political goals to enable or pursue the education of citizens are still fundamental in countries all over the world, and all the more in times of worldwide debates on lifelong learning (Jakobi, 2007, 2009), the provision of education increasingly differs, standards of education might be ensured by semi-private or private bodies, or the funding of educational institutions relies on private investments. We can observe business models built on educational provision, international processes that enhance convergence of national education policy systems, such as the Bologna Process or the definition of education as a service sector. (ibid).*

Typically, the concept of education as a global market is on the ideological spectrum, while at the opposite end is the concept of education as a public good. Whether governments are on the right or the left of the political spectrum influences decisions about governance in education, most notably regarding the balance between market forces and the States in the provision and future development of education.

For a number of reasons, the corporate approach to governance is not directly applicable to education, although it has to be acknowledged that the theoretical impetus from New Public Management has been an important rationale “for the transformation of several school systems in the last decade. These often include a standards-based reform with high-stakes testing and school choice policies that imply more competition among schools” (Kohlstock and Müller, 2012).

However, what works in other fields may not work well in education. For example, research on public management shows that employees in the public sector have a high degree of intrinsic motivation. Initial empirical studies corroborate the hypothesis of a crowding out effect of intrinsic motivation in the public sector when introducing extrinsic incentives such as rewards or certain control mechanisms (Georgellis, Iossa, and Tabvuma, 2010; Anderführen-Biget, Varone, Giauque, and Ritz, 2010; Stazyk, 2012, cited in Kohlstock and Müller, 2012). According to Kohlstock and Müller (2012), these findings, “on the crowding out effect and the characteristics and motivation of the teaching profession indicate that extrinsic incentives such as particular control mechanisms or performance-oriented reward systems need to be used in the educational field with caution.”

The study of governance in education has long been a neglected field for political scientists (Jakobi et al., 2009; Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2011; Agostini, 2012). Scholars in the fields of educational sociology, comparative education, and the economics of education have, however, analysed governance issues in the education sector (Bray, Adamson, and Mason, 2007). Rather, what is missing is an equivalent body of comparative public policy analyses dealing with governance in education to the one that other sectors such health and environment sectors have cumulated over the past decades.

This is why there seems to be a trend to reduce the multidimensional complexity of governance in education only to a few, and consequently more manageable, elements such as decentralization and school-based management or, in other cases, public–private partnerships or the internationalization of education policy. Admittedly the higher education subsector has received attention — although studies often focus solely on how individual higher education institutions are governed.

In education policy, discussions about governance have often been reduced to the issue of decentralization. This has resulted in most debates focused on school-based management and the best ways to address the capacity development needs arising from such a trend to increase the autonomy of education institutions. As an example, IIEP focused its 2012 research on governance on three main issues: the challenges faced by schools, the partnership between schools and communities, and the use and usefulness of school grants. The research also includes a thorough analysis of key challenges and issues, as well as advantages and drawbacks of decentralization as the major governance reform and lays out key principles for implementing governance reform (UNESCO-IIEP, 2012).

In addition, governance has been frequently associated with public–private partnerships (PPP). UNESCO-IIEP (2012) found that it is often assumed that PPPs may lead to “improve the quality and relevance of an education system or increase funding possibilities in order to allow the government to offer a better educational system” (ibid). However, very few governments are sufficiently equipped to collaborate with the private sector in a win-win scenario. Research by IIEP and UNESCO has contributed to the ongoing debate and provided insights to government for designing education policies and regulatory frameworks (see also Verger and Moschetti, 2017).

Beyond this emphasis on decentralization and public–private partnerships, only very recently there have been some attempts to adopt a more comprehensive approach to the analysis of governance in education by the EFA Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2009) and by the OECD’s Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) (OECD, 2016).

The 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report focused on an equity dimension and governance, under the title of *Overcoming inequality: why governance matters*. The key message was that while governance reform has been positive in some countries, overall outcomes have been rather disappointing. The report identified that governance reforms often do not consider their ultimate impact on the most disadvantaged population and regions. It explored four central themes in national governance, namely: 1) financing, 2) voice participation and choice; 3) governance of teachers and monitoring of learning; and 4) integration of EFA and poverty reduction strategies. The report also identified a close linkage between aid effectiveness and governance reforms (UNESCO, 2009). However, since then, there have been relatively few attempts to address governance issues from a comparative perspective in developing countries.

The work on education governance in OECD countries resulted in the two publications in 2016, namely *Governing Education in a Complex World* (OECD, 2016a) and *Education Governance in Action* (OECD, 2016b). As stakeholders in education in OECD countries have become more diverse, informed and demanding, partially due to increased school autonomy and stimulated competition, the study recommends national authorities to respond to an ever growing complexity in education systems.

## The pending agenda

This review of the literature concurs with Jakobi, Martens and Wolf (2009) that there are two major concerns driving the research agenda on governance in the education sector. The first concerns the future political role of the nation state in the context of internationalization (see also Zurn, 1998). Are current trends indicative of a transformation or a weakening of statehood? (Hurrelmann et al., cited in Jakobi et al., 2009). Second, Jakobi et al. (2009) rightly ask about the causal relationships that “trigger the emergence of new modes of governance and the transformation of the State.”

The key message here is that more research on the governance of education is urgently needed in both developed and developing countries. Rather than focusing on one theme or subsector a more comprehensive research agenda is needed that addresses the implications of changing concepts of governance for the education sector, and its complex, multi-dimensional character.

# Emerging governance issues and reforms in education: A comparative analysis

This section looks at local and global driving forces in the paradigm shift in education governance and maps out several key trends and issues arising in the regional reviews. It then contrasts bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic forms of organization and identifies three interrelated post-bureaucratic approaches to governance.

## Drivers in the paradigm shift in governance

The paradigm shift in governance can largely be attributed to market forces, whether at local or global levels. At the local level, among parents and students, there is what is known as excess demand for education, due to the fact that public education does not respond sufficiently to their demand. As noted by Belfield and Levin (2002):

*In many countries, education is viewed as an important way to gain social and economic advancement'. Therefore, the demand for education is high (James, 1987), and if governments cannot afford to provide and fund all the education that parents expect for their children, then those parents will seek private suppliers. This type of demand is 'excess demand', over and above what is provided by the government. Typically, this will encourage privatization at the secondary and tertiary levels, as parents seek to give their children more years of education than may be available in government schools. In addition, many parents want for their children an education different from that offered in public schools.*

Funds for the providing of education may be diverted to alternative public sector investments such as health and social welfare, which would result in a decline in per-pupil funding. According to Belfield and Levin (2002):

*Many parents may feel that the local public school is inefficient in providing education of the type that is most needed; this dissatisfaction can be seen across many nations (Hanushek, 1998; Rauch and Evans, 2000) and is often reported by parents in very basic terms (such as the inability of the school to guarantee their children's safety). These parents consequently seek alternatives, often in the private sector.*

At the global level, and closely associated with market liberalization, globalization has put pressure on governments to seek more efficient, flexible and expansive education systems. Policy reforms and initiatives undertaken in the last 25 years have essentially been driven by what is known as a post-bureaucratic model of governance, notably through public management reform initiatives and the promotion of a culture of monitoring and evaluation (Maroy, 2008). This new mode of governance is inspired by the neo-liberal paradigm and aims to achieve greater efficiency and transparency in education provision. This has led to a push towards results-based management (RBM), on the back of a culture based on efficiency, effectiveness and evaluation.

Globalization has transformed education policy. It has dispersed the sites and sources of authorities and shifted power not only from the national level but also from the State itself (see Verger et al., 2012). Globalization has created a “transnational private market of education provision that complements and/or competes with national education providers. This emerging global market challenges some of the core functions of conventional education systems such as ‘nation building’” (Robertson, et al., 2002). International political economy theorists argue that “the most important way globalization is affecting education policy is by altering the structural conditions in which education reform happens, including the conditions in which reform is framed and perceived by policy-makers as necessary” (Verger et al., 2012).

In this intensely competitive and resource constrained environment, finance-driven reforms such as privatization and decentralization become highly attractive (Carnoy, 1999). This, in turn, can weaken the capacity of States. According to Moutsios (2010), the main problem is that globalization favours important education decisions being made within transnational networks rather than by democratically elected institutions. The pressure of globalization is resulting in new configurations of knowledge and power, with consequences for how, and by whom, education is governed.

These pressures are closely interrelated as neoliberal reforms have often involved reducing the size of bureaucracies, decreasing public expenditure and introducing various forms of privatization. The shift from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic modes of governance has not necessarily been a deliberate policy choice but rather a realistic response to these pressures. Governments have therefore often felt themselves to be on the defensive to protect public goods, such as education from excessive marketization and commercialization.

The tensions can be observed in the understanding of key concepts such as efficiency and effectiveness. For the private sector, this typically relates to the efficient and effective use of human and financial resources measured as returns on investment. For public organizations, including government ministries and agencies, efficiency and effectiveness should also be measured against social outcomes, policy objectives and the broader concept of the public good. Assessing the effectiveness of governance approaches therefore depends significantly on the intended results and the combination of public and private interests involved.

## Mapping out governance trends and issues in education

In response to the changing global environment, the privatization, liberalization, decentralization and marketization of education are prominent policy responses. The overall governance challenge has become ensuring that these responses enable the State — as authority responsible for assuring the right to education — to fulfill its responsibilities. Policies must also enable simultaneous advances in inclusion and equity, and quality and relevance, in line with SDG 4 — Education 2030 and the public good.

The regional reviews were intended to provide an overview of the most salient governance trends and issues in each region and the policy alternatives, eventually leading to reforms, that have emerged as alternative responses. Five research questions guided each of the regional reviews:

1. What are the main governance models (typology) that have been put in practice in the region over the past decade?
2. What are the most salient governance issues that have emerged in the past decade in the region?
3. What have been the major policy initiatives or governance reforms in education over the past decade to address these emerging issues?
4. Are there indications of the stability of the current governance models, or rather the contrary, in the region?
5. Based on the regional review, what policy recommendations could be suggested?

The following table maps the main governance trends and issues from the regional reviews:

1. Decentralization, deregulation and recentralization;
2. The multiplication of stakeholders and providers;
3. The growing influence of international and regional bodies;
4. Marketization;
5. Privatization;
6. Equity concerns;
7. Accountability, regulation, and monitoring & evaluation;
8. Revisiting education budgets;
9. Reconsidering development assistance.

**Table 1: Overview of contemporary governance issues (adapted from Altrichter, 2016)**

	<b>Mediterranean (Akkari, 2014)</b>	<b>BRICS (Dervin and Zadja, 2015)</b>
1. Decentralization, deregulation and recentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegate some of their powers to emerging agencies operating under the central authorities</li> <li>• Reinforce local management of education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redistribution of power from central to decentralized levels</li> <li>• Deregulation of education provision</li> <li>• A policy shift from marketization to centralized governance</li> </ul>
2. The multiplication of stakeholders and providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge a steering role of the central authorities</li> <li>• Involve emerging players such as local authorities, political parties and civil society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge a steering role of the central authorities</li> <li>• Promote participation and decision-making at local levels</li> <li>• Increase civil society involvement in education</li> </ul>
3. The growing influence of international and regional bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-based governance reform discourage promotion of equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-based governance reform discourage promotion of equity</li> </ul>
4. Marketization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced a policy dilemma between equity and efficiency in education provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced a policy dilemma between equity and efficiency in education provision</li> </ul>
5. Privatization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent a new type of governance arrangements, including a quasi-market approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent inequality through public subsidies and oversight</li> <li>• Growing phenomena at secondary school level</li> </ul>
6. Equity concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequalities being increased by privatization</li> <li>• Address equity concerns through decentralization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address gender, socio-economic and geographic inequalities</li> <li>• Participate in private schools funding to overcome school education inequalities</li> <li>• Monitor whether public expenditures effectively improves equity</li> </ul>
7. Accountability, regulation, and monitoring & evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve research and information-sharing</li> <li>• Establish regulatory frameworks and administrative structures to ensure accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage research and knowledge-sharing</li> <li>• Require complex monitoring mechanisms that clearly define roles for each stakeholder</li> </ul>
8. Revisiting education budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very few could manage to increase their spending on education, following the 2008 financial crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector adjustment loans aimed at the restructuring of public sector education spending</li> </ul>
9. Reconsidering development assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles of aid effectiveness, harmonization and national ownership were promoted, following Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)</li> <li>• Shifted towards performance-driven support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles of aid effectiveness, harmonization and national ownership were promoted, following PRSPs</li> <li>• Shifted towards performance-driven support</li> </ul>



**Table 1: Overview of contemporary governance issues (cont.)**

	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa (Ankomah, 2015)</b>	<b>East Asia (Brehm and Bray, 2015)</b>
1. Decentralization, deregulation and recentralization		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decentralization policy becomes the main driver of marketization</li> </ul>
2. The multiplication of stakeholders and providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge capacity of the central authorities to steer and manage the education systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge a steering role of the central authorities</li> <li>Involve multiple actors in the supplementary education provision</li> </ul>
3. The growing influence of international and regional bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aid dependency impacts country-level governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results-based governance reform discourage promotion of equity</li> </ul>
4. Marketization		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shuffle existing governance structure and continues to exist through a “situated practice”</li> </ul>
5. Privatization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage private participation in education provision and funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage private participation in education provision and funding</li> <li>Impact household costs in particular for the poor families</li> </ul>
6. Equity concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address gender, socio-economic and geographic inequalities by guaranteeing equitable access to quality education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure equity in access to education between children from rural and urban areas</li> <li>Monitor supplementary education and inform households of their options and rights</li> </ul>
7. Accountability, regulation, and monitoring & evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen data collection efforts and monitoring and evaluation systems</li> <li>Reinforce transparency and school management at the local level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage further research</li> <li>Regulate supplementary education by commercial and educational regulations</li> </ul>
8. Revisiting education budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Severe budgetary constraints pushed the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in 1990s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the financial crisis in 1997, sector adjustment loans aimed at the restructuring of public sector education spending</li> </ul>
9. Reconsidering development assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principles of aid effectiveness, harmonization and national ownership were promoted, following PRSPs</li> <li>Shifted towards performance-driven support</li> </ul>	

**Table 1: Overview of contemporary governance issues (cont.)**

	<b>South Caucasus (Andguladza and Mkrtchyan, 2014)</b>	<b>Europe (ECER, Altrichter, 2016)</b>
1. Decentralization, deregulation and recentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegate some of their powers to emerging agencies operating under the central authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralization could be combined with centralized control over educational results</li> <li>• Hybrid constellation of governance principles</li> </ul>
2. The multiplication of stakeholders and providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge a steering role of the central authorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge a steering role of the central authorities</li> <li>• School autonomy and community involvement</li> <li>• Services of schools</li> </ul>
3. The growing influence of international and regional bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-based governance reform discourage promotion of equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) stimulated results-based governance reform</li> <li>• Function as peer pressure and constitutes a form of epistemological governance</li> </ul>
4. Marketization		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote efficiency and increases social inequalities</li> </ul>
5. Privatization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privatization is most pronounced at the tertiary level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate on privatization and its repercussions</li> </ul>
6. Equity concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fight against educational corruption (bribes for educational favours)</li> <li>• Ensure greater transparency in the education system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address social inequalities evidenced in the outcomes of PISA</li> <li>• Debates around the consequences for social equity</li> </ul>
7. Accountability, regulation, and monitoring & evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure greater school autonomy and implement schools evaluation systems</li> <li>• Centralized regulatory mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of effective monitoring systems</li> <li>• Boost educational research</li> </ul>
8. Revisiting education budgets		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the public spending on education in more than one-third of OECD countries</li> </ul>
9. Reconsidering development assistance		

## Decentralization, deregulation and recentralization

The regional reviews identified country examples of how the distribution of power among different stakeholders and authorities is a contentious issue, particularly where governance approaches are in transition. The reviews found that the redistribution of power can take various paths, including decentralization, deregulation or recentralization, and a combination of these.

Several examples from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries reveal a shift in power from central to a decentralized authority. In South Africa, education governance is characterized by a policy shift from a centrally controlled system to a participatory/democratic approach, with a growing private sector (Dervin and Zajda, 2015). However, such a shift often creates a potentially unstable scenario. This was the case in India, where a shift from centralized governance to privatization meant that a number of social issues such as gender equality, caste and other social inequalities remain unresolved.

Broadly speaking, decentralization is the process of redistributing power away from a centralized authority (Bray, 2013; Zajda, 2006). While decentralization is often pursued out of necessity, it can be interpreted as consistent with the logic of marketization, insofar as it relies upon market forces rather than government to distribute funds, people and functions.

Decentralization is a multifaceted concept that embraces myriad formations of authority and power that converge with situated marketization in various ways. While the regional review for East Asia shows the main logic and discourses of marketization as based on decentralization, in Morocco, decentralization in the early 2000s promoted the increased participation of local actors and reinforced their capacities for policy reform, with various legal and financial implications. Governance is central to concerns about education reform in Morocco. More specifically, these changes have been reflected in the reinforcement of the local management of education. Decentralization and deconcentration of services are at the heart of education and training reforms recommended by the country's national education and training charter, and measures have been taken to achieve more effective local management. Such a power shift may involve some form of deregulation or privatization of education provision. In the People's Republic of China, for example, a shift in governance from over-centralization to decentralization and economy-driven education is an example of a State-controlled decentralization process (Dervin, and Zajda, 2015).

Power can also shift in the other direction, with the State recentralizing responsibilities in education. The analysis of the distribution of power in education governance in Brazil demonstrates a policy shift from over-privatization/marketization and market-economy-driven education to recentralized governance. The governments in the Caucasus region have also delegated some of their powers to emerging agencies operating under the central authorities. Examples of recentralization can also be found in the Middle East and the Maghreb, although the power shift has been rather slow in this region. In Southern Europe, new players such as educational networks, local social and economic partners, associations (family or other) and private foundations have recently emerged in the discourse on education governance.

Yet, in most of the cases reviewed the regulatory mechanisms for the education sector remain highly centralized and are often guided by centrally led bureaucratic principles. This is clear in the

Maghreb region, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, and in the Caucasus region, and to a lesser degree in India, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. As a result, over the last twenty years, central regulatory frameworks have increasingly become a moving target to be challenged and often revised. The idea of moving targets is closely associated with the historical and political development in education systems over the same timeframe. For instance, participation in the provision of education has evolved substantially in terms of different players and their respective roles, which has in turn led to constant reassessments of and adjustments to accountability mechanisms. However, the bureaucratic model of governance remains in place.

## The multiplication of stakeholders and providers

Education governance in developing countries is increasingly characterized by the expansion and diversification of actors from the public and private sectors. The regional reviews confirm that the traditional role of the central/State education authorities in policy development and policy dialogue processes is being challenged by emerging education stakeholders, ranging from private providers to donors and cooperation agencies.

Governing and managing education itself is already a complex duty for education authorities. It becomes even more difficult to manage when multiple stakeholders and providers are involved. Some emerging stakeholders are sometimes considered to be counterproductive to the goals of public education provision, as they do not contribute to enhancing the capacity of the State to manage and govern education — and may even be challenging it. The question arises about who will steer, manage and coordinate the education system as well as formulate a shared strategic vision.

When a steering role in policy development and coordination by the central/State education authorities is being challenged, such authorities need to exert more effort in coordination and consultation with much less political leverage. Education authorities across the world are faced with a dilemma in defining the roles of the private sector and other emerging stakeholders, while at the same time fully ensuring adequate accountability and transparency in governance.

## The growing influence of international and regional bodies

Although the regional reviews did not explore the precise impact of international and regional bodies on national education governance in any great detail, the policy implications of such bodies and their influence are evident in some contexts.

Issues related to aid dependency illustrate another way in which international and regional bodies influence governance at the country level. It is even more difficult to steer an education system if aid dependency persists through an education agenda led by bilateral or multilateral donors. On the one hand, donors and other development partners spurred various governance reforms at the country level, yet on the other hand their role does not always result in national ownership.

In particular, the impact of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) since 2000 has pushed efficiency and effectiveness in the education governance model. According to Sellar and Lingard (2014), “OECD largely exerts ‘soft power’ influence through peer pressure on countries to conform to shared values and norms, and through the ability of its analyses to shift perspectives on economic and policy issues. This shaping of values and perspectives constitutes a form of epistemological governance.” OECD also exerts a form of “logistical power” (Mukerji 2010), according to Sellar and Lingard (2014), “by developing global data infrastructure in education, which shapes the environment in which analyses of educational performance and actions to reform education systems take place.”

What is known as PISA shock from the programme’s results has pushed results-based governance reform further in countries around the world. Examples from Southern Europe, the BRICS countries and the Caucasus region suggest that subsequent results-based governance reforms, which pursued cost-efficiency in education, have discouraged the promotion of equity in education in many contexts. From the rights-based perspective of SDG 4 — Education 2030, this narrow focus on PISA results and the economic returns on investment in education must be a cause for concern.

## Marketization

In reality, the marketization of education continues in many contexts. The regional reviews suggest that the rise of marketization leads to the promotion of cost-sharing in education financing, as well as the shuffling of existing governance structures, ownership and regulatory frameworks.

In theory, the marketization of education is also said to have the potential to produce a positive impact on learning. For example, it is expected to improve the quality of education through greater competition between schools (UNESCO, 2015c). It should also facilitate greater educational choice, as parents can choose what kind of education they want for their children. Moreover, privatization may reinforce parental participation in school organization (UNESCO, 2015b).

While the marketization of education may offer more choices and competition, it does not prioritize equity over excellence in education. Marketization potentially challenges two principles of SDG 4: that education is a fundamental human right and an enabling right, and that education is a public good.

Although education liberalization promotes more efficiency, it also increases social inequalities, having more positive outcomes for students with higher socio-economic status than for those with lower socio-economic status (OECD, 2016a). The provision of greater autonomy to individual schools may often lead to benefits for those in communities with higher socio-economic status. Schlicht-Schmälzle et al. (2011, p.17) expect “a deregulation of education to encourage an efficiency-versus-equality trade-off.” In their view, “while a stronger market dependency in education should increase educational efficiency, it is also expected to produce higher degrees of inequality in education” (ibid.).

In the Caucasus region, marketization of the general education sector was part of the reform agenda in Georgia, and some marketization-oriented elements have also been detected in Azerbaijan. In Georgia, the introduction of school choice and the “money follows the student” principle in general

education, means that parents are now free to enrol students in any school of their choice and per-capita funding follows the student to the school (Andguladze and Mkrtchyan, 2014). This approach was justified by the potential impact of competition among schools. The expectation was that schools would respond by competing for students, and that such competition by itself would improve the quality of the educational services provided by schools — although it did not happen in practice.

## Privatization

Privatization of education is inseparable from the recent marketization discourse. Indeed, “privatization entails an efficiency-versus-equity trade-off in education, which has to be seen as a continuum rather than as an inevitable choice” (UNESCO, 2015b). Privatization has its roots in a liberal perspective of the role of the State in education, which assumes that private providers, whether for profit or not-for-profit, operate under market discipline. Education is considered as a private good provided through the market, with a resulting equilibrium between provider and consumer choice (UNESCO, 2015b).

Privatization represents one of the emerging types of engagement in education provision, and has resulted in the establishment of new types of governance arrangements — including a quasi-market approach. This approach has several features that blend the public sector and the private sector:

1. Providers are in competition with each other, although they are not profit-making;
2. Entry into and exit from the schooling market are regulated and the government maintains an important role in terms of accountability for educational standards; and;
3. Demand by parents and students is partially expressed through educational vouchers and allocated funds (Belfield and Levin, 2002).

Privatization and decentralization in secondary education have been growing in Brazil, India, the People’s Republic of China and South Africa during the last decade. In India, 30 per cent of students are enrolled in private schools, compared with 15 per cent in Brazil, where private schools are competitive in attracting students and families choose between public and private schools. In the Russian Federation, the privatization of education first appeared in the 1990s. Private schools and the rise of supplementary tutoring courses for secondary students represent a new dimension of differentiated schooling in the Russian Federation (Dervin and Zajda, 2015).

The private sector’s share in the education systems of Southern Europe (Spain and Italy) is much larger than it is in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In terms of funding, there is strong support from the public authorities in Spain and Italy. In contrast, public funding of the private sector is limited and often non-existent in MENA countries. Privatization in countries of the MENA region is characterized by the fact that it is concentrated in certain areas and for certain sectors of the public: middle- and upper-class families, cities and economically advantaged coastal regions, particularly in private tutoring. According to Akkari (2014), the presence of the private sector in the Southern European region is longstanding and there is not a significant transfer of pupils from public to private as in the Maghreb.

## Equity concerns

Examples from the BRICS countries demonstrated that drastic governance reforms may destabilize existing governance arrangements and consequently result in inequalities in education provision. Education governance in the BRICS countries has experienced major policy shifts. Brazil, like the Russian Federation, has demonstrated a shift from over-privatization/marketization and market-economy-driven education to stronger centralized governance. By contrast, India and the People's Republic of China have shifted policy from over-centralization (power or administrative functions being excessively concentrated on one place) to decentralization and economy-driven education (Dervin and Zajda, 2015).

According to Zajda (2016), privatization may have led to rising inequality in the availability of funds among local education/regional authorities, as a result of economic and social disparities between rich and poor regions: "Regional inequalities in education funding have an adverse effect on access to quality education. Some poorer rural regions are socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged, with little access to high-quality education."

The equity dimension deserves more attention as it is an often neglected aspect of governance reforms. While privatization certainly aims to provide diverse education options for families and learners, the regional reviews show that it may further aggravate social inequality in education provision through curricular, pedagogical, ideological, ethical, religious and other mechanisms.

Privatization challenges the nation State's dominant role in education policy-making. It may also substantially alter the sectoral landscape, while creating tensions between education policy-making at the national and the international levels, as well as between public and private providers of educational services. However, privatization may be seen as the only feasible way to accommodate pressing demands such as acute demographical pressures and financial austerity.

An increasingly complex interplay between the private and public sectors implies a delegation of what were formerly State functions to non-State providers or semi-private bodies. In the interplay of multiple stakeholders, including non-State actors, building adequate government capacity to ensure equitable education provision and accountable educations is clearly relevant.

## Accountability, regulation, and monitoring and evaluation

It is challenging to clearly define the roles of all stakeholders in governing education and to combine that with well-established accountability mechanisms, as the Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8 clearly highlights (UNESCO, 2017). The regional reviews show that the involvement of diverse stakeholders in education governance often creates accountability issues that require complex monitoring mechanisms. Such issues become even more complicated if an education system operates in a federal or decentralized model, where governance structures are multilayered and fragile, when a country has a large and growing population (as in the BRICS countries), or in volatile crisis-affected settings.

A reactive rather than a proactive approach is being taken by the central authorities in some countries in East Asia, where the rise of the supplementary education industry is taking over some of the rules and policy development and implementation, as well as the operation of education that were traditionally monopolized by States. Non-State actors now provide valued educational services to consumers, and this seems to have caught many governments by surprise. As the industry has developed into an accepted element of education for most students, governments have responded by working to protect education consumers (through commercial regulations) and by seeking to regulate pedagogical practices (in the form of educational regulations).

In some East Asian countries, the general lack of regulations by national governments on the quality of educational provision in some subsectors has given rise to self-regulation by providers themselves. Private providers realize that their long-term health depends on consumer confidence, and that companies with high standards of quality may be able to squeeze out competitors. Although consumers may indeed benefit, such approaches remain clear examples of the transfer of power by national governments in relation to certain forms of marketization (Brehm and Bray, 2015).

The case of Egypt illustrates the need for administrative education structures to cope with emerging governance models. The formal establishment of school councils in Egypt in 2005 was an important milestone in the reform of school governance. Although the predecessors to these date back to 1993, in 2005 they were given new responsibilities such as budget allocation. Each council has fifteen members including the headteacher, five parents, five members of the community, three teachers and a social worker, with decisions taken by majority vote, with the power of veto allowed to the headteacher (Hammad, 2010).

In the Mediterranean countries examined for this study, secondary school governance reform is often achieved through new laws and a reorganization of the administrative structures of education. There is no question that this structure is a prerequisite for new models of governance to emerge. However, according to Akkari (2014), compliance with these new models of governance at a local level depends on the resources available and relevant political dialogue.

## Revisiting education budgets

Following the international debt crisis in the 1980s, structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America resulted in wide-ranging education reforms. Motivated by the institutional support of the International Financial Institutions (Mundy and Verger, 2015), these reforms have generally become associated with the reallocation of public education funds. This took the form of focusing public spending on primary education while encouraging privatization beyond primary level to achieve “cuts to student subsidies, (...) greater decentralization of educational systems, increased parental contributions to the basic costs of buildings, books and materials, and openness to private provision” (Mundy and Verger, 2015, p.12).



Certain aspects of structural adjustment loans — such as caps on government spending or conditionalities focused on cuts to the size of the civil service — had a clear bearing on education. At the same time, wherever a need for structural adjustment emerged in the context of fiscal insolvency (from Africa in the late 1980s to Mexico and former Soviet States in the early 1990s and in Asia post-1997), the World Bank also offered borrowing countries new sector adjustment loans with policy conditionalities aimed at restructuring public sector education spending (Mundy and Verger, 2015, p.12). Such measures often resulted in weakening the capacities of ministries of education.

The 2008 financial crisis led to a significant number of European countries cutting public spending on education. In Europe, the European Commission found that “six countries (Greece, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Iceland) reduced their national education budget by more than 5% in 2011, and eight countries carried out the similar budgetary reductions in 2012 (Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, the United Kingdom – Wales, and Croatia)” (EACEA/Eurydice, 2013). The financial crisis put more pressure on budgets overall, requiring governments to prioritize between education and other key public sectors, such as health and employment policies. In this context, investment in education must become much more efficient.

Unfortunately, data on public expenditure in the education sector are not accurate or particularly up-to-date in many developing countries: “On domestic finance, data series on public education expenditure continue to be incomplete and lacking in detail” (UNESCO, 2015a). It is therefore difficult to grasp the real impact that public budget pressures have on education financing and spending. Long-term evaluations of the trends in education financing and public expenditure are needed.

## Reconsidering development assistance

Development assistance experienced a dynamic paradigm shift towards neo-liberal counter-revolution in 1980s and 1990s. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) initiative made an attempt to secure commitments to poverty reduction goals and strategies from aid recipient countries. Indeed, linking policy-making with poverty reduction was a new form of aid conditionality (Booth, 2011). Building on the lessons of the PRSP experience, development assistance shifted towards a principle of aid effectiveness and harmonization, articulated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, followed by the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and later by the Busan Partnership agreement (2011) which sought to enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation.

In this context, some donors pursued governance conditionality by offering recipient countries performance-driven support; some literature has defined this as *ex post* conditionality. Critics of this approach suggest that donor agencies should devote less time and effort to proposing their own ideas about appropriate forms of governance and more to understanding the realities and needs of the countries they are supporting by carefully taking stock of what already exists on the ground. They further point out that development assistance should be geared less towards supply-driven support and more towards context-sensitive and politically informed support, which facilitates institutional change in the recipient countries (Booth, 2011).

## Approaches to governance in education

There is a great deal of evidence that the quality of governance is important in contributing to improved social and economic outcomes (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Rajkumar and Swaroop, 2008). For Pedro et al., 2015, “the education sector is no exception, and governance quality matters a lot for educational development.” The Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015 was not achieved and, when analysing the extent to which countries improved their primary school completion rates up to 2015, the quality of governance seems to be key (Richards and Vining, 2015). Among the factors that explain national primary completion rates, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and adult literacy are highly significant variables. However, governance, measured by comparative perceptions of political stability, government accountability and effectiveness in delivering services, is also important. Increased public spending on primary education does not appear to determine the level or any change in completion rates, except in the subset of countries enjoying the benefits of highly effective governance (ibid.).

As governance has become more complex, governance models have been evolving more rapidly than ever. While traditional governance models are still based on a bureaucratic paradigm, countries are experimenting with alternative approaches to governance that quite often coexist in — sometimes creating internal tensions. In this context, the quality of governance is difficult to assess.

**Table 2: Bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organizations**

Bureaucratic	Post-bureaucratic
<b>Policy and management culture</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization-centred</li> <li>• Emphasis on needs of the organization itself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen-centred</li> <li>• Quality service to citizens (and clients/stakeholders)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position power</li> <li>• Control, command and compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participative leadership</li> <li>• Shared values and participative decision making</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule-centred</li> <li>• Rules, procedures and constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People-centred</li> <li>• An empowering and caring milieu for employees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process-oriented</li> <li>• Accountability for process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results-oriented</li> <li>• Accountability for results</li> </ul>
<b>Structure</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralized</li> <li>• Hierarchy and central controls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralized</li> <li>• Decentralization of authority and control</li> </ul>
<b>Market orientation</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget driven</li> <li>• Programmes financed largely from appropriations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revenue driven</li> <li>• Programmes financed as far as possible on cost-recovery basis</li> </ul>

Source: Kernaghan, 2000, p.92.

The so-called post-bureaucratic model of governance has been driven by two principles: a culture of evaluation and a quasi-market mode of governance (Soguel and Jaccard, 2008). Table 2 below compares the main features of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organizations.

There is enough evidence in the literature and in the regional reviews to support the existence of at least three interrelated approaches to governance, each of which exhibits characteristics associated with the post-bureaucratic model: the evidence-based approach, the multilevel approach and the participatory approach. Each of them is presented here, with some reference to specific country cases. Although one approach may be most prominent in a specific context, the governance of education in most of the countries exhibits a combination of these approaches.

## The evidence-based approach

Accountability of actors and stakeholders, the distribution of authority and a results-driven perspective are at the heart of an evidence-based approach to governance. This model is known as an inclusive model “in which everyone takes responsibility for the success of the whole” (Godwyn and Gittel, 2002). Success is monitored by an evidence-based, results-driven evaluation. This model plays an important role for a State in terms of defining targets and objectives. The potential risks of this governance model are considered to be the control and constraints over actors, as there is a high value placed on efficiency and results (Courpasson, 2011).

The trend towards the evidence-based approach has encouraged education systems to become more performance- and output-driven through benchmarking and has also encouraged a focus on accountable, transparent, participatory, decentralized and competitive systems. Evidence-based governance has been greatly supported by New Public Management (NPM) over the last 20 years. Altrichter (2016) suggests the following six basic criteria for the identification of evidence-based governance:

- 1. Explicit and clear communication of goals:** This can be achieved, for instance, through formulating measurable performance standards or developing quality frameworks for school inspection;
- 2. Accountability for results (namely, goal fulfillment):** This can be achieved by evaluating the performance of students (such as through standards-oriented nationwide tests) and the processes and results of schools (through school inspections). Schools (their staff, management and, in some countries, the school board) are made accountable for their work;
- 3. Feedback of results to actors at various levels of the system:** The discrepancies between goals and results are meant to motivate and orient these actors to increase development activities (in other words, quality improvement);
- 4. Involvement of stakeholders and the wider public:** In many cases evaluation results are not only communicated to professionals in schools but also to the individual schools’ stakeholders and even to the wider public through the media. This reflects the idea that schools will be more responsive to development needs if they are directly accountable to their constituencies;

- 5. Links between different levels of the system:** The idea that cycles of goal formulation, evaluation and feedback will catalyze improvement is implemented at all (or most) levels of the system. Regions, and in some cases central ministries, are subject to similar instruments of performance management (whereby the results of standardized testing are communicated in personalized reports to different system levels). Instruments such as contract management between schools and regional officers, and between regional officers and central authorities, are used to link information flow and loyalty between system levels;
- 6. Support systems:** Finally, existing support systems must be aligned with governance models, and new support instruments must be developed (such as teaching material for competence-based teaching and diagnostic tests, which teachers can use to prepare their classes for comparative testing).

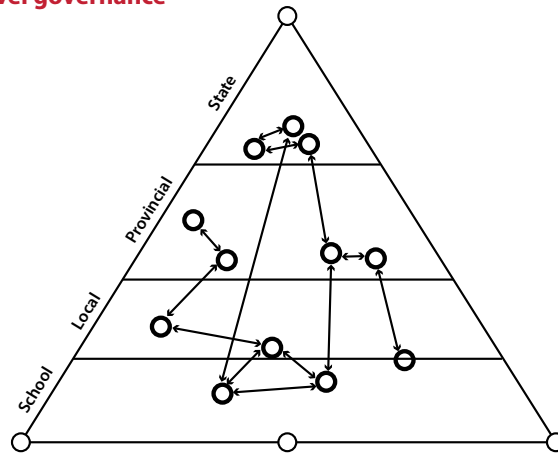
Although at first glance there appears to be some contradiction between school autonomy and accountability policies, in reality the two policy approaches can complement each other (Gronn, 2009; Higham and Earley, 2013). In this situation, the autonomy of individual schools is a precondition for making the school accountable for its results. At the same time, inspection and monitoring systems are developed to allow regular and reliable measurement of the quality of schools. In this view, quality in education is derived from the schools' capacity to react quickly and in a focused way to feedback on performance, as measured by student learning outcomes.

Shifts in governance systems potentially change the options for action and the influence of different actors. Barber (2004), one of the proponents of a determined New Public Management reform in England, describes the introduction of accountability in England as a kind of struggle with an uninformed teaching profession. Evidence-based policies were criticized for taking "control of the content and processes of education" out the hands of the teaching profession (Barber, 2004), thereby de-professionalizing teaching. However, it soon became apparent that evidence-based reform was in desperate need of a knowledgeable professionals that were willing and able to make efficient and responsible use of sophisticated instruments, such as data feedback (Altrichter and Geisler, 2012). Research on the implications of governance changes for different actors in education seems essential.

## The multilevel approach

Education systems are complex social systems whose governance can be also seen, at least in some countries, as multi-layered or multilevel because they are composed of several geographic levels such as national, provincial, and local, and are populated by various stakeholders with different functions. Each actor can have its own principles of action, and so this has to be taken into account for coordinating with various actors, as noted in Kuhlee et al. (2015):

*[...] not all actors interact with all other actors in the same way; instead there are typical constellations of actors and typical 'levels' with special principles of action which may be very different from the logic of action on another level. The concept of 'multilevel systems' raises issues of cross-coordination between system levels, which appears to be one of the main problems of system development.*

**Figure 1: Multilevel governance**

Source: Adapted from Altrichter (2016)

The blueprints for governance reform, which are produced and propagated by politicians, senior administrative staff and social scientists, do not represent the reform in its entirety. First and foremost, they are structural offers — in part, new rules and resources (see Giddens, 1992) — which are inserted into the transactions of a school system. They must be taken up by actors on various levels of the system, and translated and redesigned for the specific context, in order to have a chance of acquiring some social relevance.

Adopting these structural offers involves more than merely following prescribed action programmes — more than the implementation of given structures (see Ball et al., 2012) — and necessarily entails constructive and productive features. Actors have to make these structural offers more concrete, develop them further in light of the specific logic of action and the conditions of their particular level, and then translate them into feasible courses of action. Fend (2006) has developed the concept of re-contextualization to account for these processes (Altrichter, 2016). Figure 1 below illustrates the complexity of multilevel and multi-actor governance systems.

Recent governance reforms in the form of decentralization add further complexity to education governance. This change in governance structure gives more decision-making power to non-central authorities in terms of budget and organization. Decentralization does not necessarily imply a decline in State influence — rather, it could also be combined with a more significant centralized control over educational results (see Altrichter, 2016). The central level has to monitor educational provision and quality, even if education services are provided by another level as seen in Italy and Spain (see Akkari, 2014).

At least six possible levels exist, namely: 1. central, 2. State, 3. provincial, 4. subregional, 5. local and 6. school levels. The combination of these levels varies from one country to another, even if a central or State level has the same weight in the decision-making structure.

## The participatory approach

The diverse interests and resources of an increasing number of stakeholders in education – ranging from local communities to non-government organizations (NGOs), unions, national authorities and international organizations — can only be negotiated, and a consensus reached, through a participatory approach to governance. This requires frequent policy dialogues, participation and determination, as well as a solid vision with demonstrated leadership.

Under a participatory approach, the key question centres around who should be involved in governing education. Education stakeholders are diverse and vary from one system to another: from education authorities, line ministries and civil society organizations to higher education and research institutions, teachers unions, parents, students, the private sector and development partners, to name but a few. Likewise, the degree of their involvement varies from one context to another. Engagement in governance is considered to be the most important building block in determining a level of ownership of education, including in fragile States in sub-Saharan Africa.

To mitigate excess demand for education provision, as well as to respond to emerging governance challenges, the strategy of shared governance through involving diverse stakeholders will most likely continue to gain legitimacy. In India and South Africa, for instance, a legal framework clearly stipulates shared governance to ensure effective institutionalization and implementation. In BRICS countries in general, shared governance mechanisms are being implemented in response to acute demographic pressures by actively involving a wide range of education stakeholders in various stages of education provision (UNESCO, 2015b).

In India, education governance is a shared responsibility between the central and State governments. The Central Ministry of Human Resource Development is in charge of educational policy and planning and is guided by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which is composed of the education ministers of the different States. CABE plays a lead role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programmes, which are announced at the national level periodically. The twenty-nine States and seven union territories that comprise India manage education largely at their own discretion, except in cases of disagreement (in which case the national government steps in). Community-based organizations play a significant role in the local governance and functioning of schools. These organizations include School Management Committees (SMCs), established by the 2009 Right to Education Act, as well as other forms of local government called Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Although almost all State policies include SMCs, there are considerable variations in actual practices. Schools appear to be functioning better in places where communities are actively involved (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay [2010], cited in Dervin and Zadja [2015]).

Information and data have important roles to play in each of the three interrelated approaches. While education providers at various levels may share their information on school programmes and pupils' results, it is also possible for teachers and school administrators to be trained in data collection and analysis. In addition, parents can collect scholastic results through civil society organizations, as is the case in India, Pakistan and East Africa (Afridi et al., 2014). Collected data at various levels are the key components for improving the evidence base for M&E. Involving different stakeholders in the process of data collection is a powerful way to enhance shared governance and accountability.

# Policy lessons

What policy lessons can be derived from this comparative analysis? The diversity of contexts and approaches to governance makes it difficult to arrive at universal recommendations. The policy lessons presented below therefore take the form of general principles rather than prescriptive courses of action. They are presented as general guidelines that should be interpreted against the specific context of a country.

## Governance is a fluid concept and will be constantly evolving

As discussed previously, surging worldwide interest in governance is more than a phase: instead, it is an indication that the way in which governments have managed education is, if not challenged, at least evolving towards increasing complexity. From this perspective, governance is therefore less about what a government does and more about how policies are formulated, implemented and evaluated in the context of the interplay of many stakeholders — including governments. It involves a paradigm shift in what governments do, which is particularly challenging in the context of developing countries.

Governance relates to the “how” — the way in which major responsibilities traditionally associated with government are carried out. What is expected from government or public authorities in education provision has changed little: the public still expects the government or public authorities to attain essential policy goals in education, including access, quality and equity, as well as to execute on efficient resource management. It is the government that has to legitimize/justify its actions to attain defined education policy goals and objectives: the State continues to be the authority accountable for delivering on the right to education.

Six things have substantially changed over the last two decades:

1. the distribution and regulation of responsibilities and diversification of actors in education provision;
2. privatization;
3. delegation of certain responsibilities to schools, universities, and local governments;
4. deconcentration/sharing of tasks and responsibilities in education provision;
5. subcontracting of certain tasks to specialized agencies or enterprises; and
6. greater expectations from different stakeholders to have a feedback mechanism in education provision.

The changing nature of governance clearly demonstrates why governance in education is a growing concern and even more so why the question of how to govern has become so important in the last two decades. Not only has the dispersion of responsibility and power resulted in blurred or ineffective accountability lines and sanctioning mechanisms, but communication and influence channels are not well institutionalized or effective. There are also side effects of new governance arrangements, which are either not accepted or have a negative effect on the achievement of public education policy goals.

Governance is no longer static, nor a mere discourse around decentralization and centralization. It has increasingly become a dynamic concept that encompasses evolving interactions among stakeholders in education in search of consensus. The shift from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic governance is well underway and governments may therefore have to reinforce their capacities to find their roles in a constantly changing landscape.

## Complexity is a key factor in governance and the policy process

Such complexity arises from the apparent diversity resulting from so many stakeholders (public, private, governmental, non-governmental, national, subnational and international) bringing multiple values, objectives and political preferences to the policy process. Complexity also stems from the uncertainty of constant economic and social change, and the erosion of well-established knowledge and social practices. Governing can no longer be seen as the work of a few experts who apply their own knowledge and technologies. Rather, it is a social learning process that recognizes continuity and in which multiple stakeholders bring their knowledge and specific perceptions of reality and struggle to bear to identify a shared definition of the policy issues at stake.

In the current context, effective governance for sustainable development demands that public authorities retain a driving seat in a context of shared responsibilities. This may well mean that governments adopt new roles and use new government tools, including accountability mechanisms and more opportunities for social and political dialogue. The resulting governance of an education system will no longer be determined by a government but rather will result from the interactions between government and multiple stakeholders. In such a context, political power in the education sector becomes dispersed rather than concentrated in the hands of government alone.

## Effective governance models draw on a shared national vision

There is no single set of prescriptions or one governance model that can be mechanically imported to any national context. Rather, it is important to promote and steer national discourse on education governance with the aim of collecting evidence on how what would be effective governance. The best performing education systems have a shared vision and strategy to govern and manage them. They also align and coordinate policies and programmes across various entities. They are coherent and consistent in setting priorities, implementing new policies and strategies to achieve a shared



goal and policy objectives through steering and consultation. The best performing systems are therefore capable of optimizing existing government structures to achieve shared goals motivated by strong national ownership.

While it is true that the education sector must be coordinated, it is equally important that all policy fields that may be affected by governance changes also be coordinated, as noted in Altrichter (2016):

*The concept of coordination does not only point to the coordination of actors, but also to the coordination of policy fields: If a reform plans to push forward with a policy of system monitoring, then this might have repercussions on student assessment, the curriculum, teacher education etc. which have to be coordinated in a comprehensive strategy.*

To ensure that such a shared vision exists and that it results from national dialogue, it is crucial for any capacity development strategy to provide opportunities that empower all stakeholders. This applies to all primary stakeholders in education, including teachers, parents and students, but also to those representing the interests of different administrative levels expected to play a role in governance. The regional reviews confirm that substantial capacity gaps have been observed in terms of local authorities fully engaging in education governance. Without capacity, no opportunity is given to them. This vicious circle can be avoided by an empowering process that relies heavily on capacity development.

## Governance through the participation of diverse stakeholders

### operating in interrelated networks

In this context, rather than being static and objective, knowledge becomes disperse and shared among multiple stakeholders with their own definitions. Authority becomes a diffuse concept that can only be unpicked in the difficult context of permanent negotiations. The resources required for policies to be efficiency formulated are distributed across different actors. In addition, these actors do not always operate in the same layers — rather, there seems to be a threefold fragmentation of both government capacities and responsibilities:

- **Multilevel government**, as a system in which different institutional levels share decision-making powers across wide areas, instead of acting as silos;
- **Multisectorality**, as an organizational approach that promotes the interaction across different thematic areas, sectors, and public institutions against a framework of shared goals; and
- **Social engagement and participation**, where the traditional frontier between the government as a subject and the individual as an object of government becomes blurred. Governments have to count on social and community engagement to gain legitimacy in such a crucial sphere of public action as education.

## Governance reforms always require a compromise

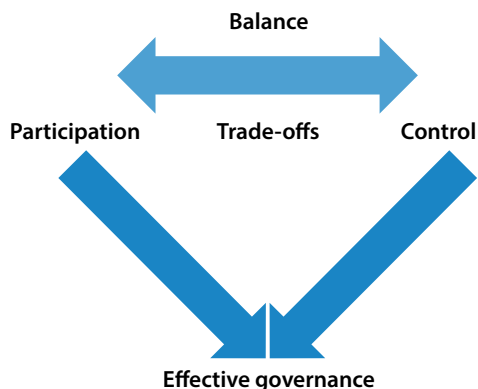
All types of governance approaches, structures and arrangements (centralized or at any stage of a decentralization process — deconcentration, delegation or devolution) could function properly under the appropriate enabling environments. It is more relevant to recognize the importance of a process dimension and an evolution of governance, including constant interactions with a wide range of education stakeholders across different levels.

Reform in education governance often requires trade-offs between two or more policy options, which may occasionally be contradictory. Education systems should find an appropriate balance between participation and State control; trust and accountability; and equity and efficiency. Steering policy reforms that affect governance usually requires an additional effort to reach not only consensus but compromise. Governance reforms that prove sustainable share the background of emerging from compromise. Such compromise can be revisited when there is enough evidence to revise the outcomes of the reform.

## Effective governance for quality education

In many education systems, emerging stakeholders experience a lack of quality assurance regulations. There is a need for an appropriate mechanism for effective governance that is fully contextualized and responds to local conditions. Such a mechanism must also inspire confidence in responding to the new targets, strategies and policy objectives — beyond returns on investment. Education provision demands a transparent and participatory governance mechanism, where a wide range of education stakeholders engage and coordinate in education provision. An effective governance mechanism therefore needs to strike an appropriate balance between participation and control (see Figure 2). Its effectiveness relates to how well the country is able comply with national legislation and international commitments in the field of education.

**Figure 2: Effective governance**



Recent research on data use in education suggests that the evidence-based governance model stimulates teachers, schools and administrators and other stakeholders to use the best available data to substantiate their policy decisions (Altrichter, 2016; Maroy, 2008). It also encourages and stimulates information, knowledge and experience sharing between different stakeholders and could inspire innovative education policies. The proper use of relevant data could therefore increase transparency and accountability, therefore making education systems more efficient and effective.

## The State's crucial role in education should be reaffirmed

The State has a crucial role in fostering educational development and fulfilling the right to education. As a means of national integration and a key tool to improve economic growth, education represents a core element of the nation State's sovereignty and autonomy. Education has also become a valuable instrument for improving the competitiveness of the national economy — a tool to produce great surpluses and wealth by coordinated human capital investment (Weymann et al., 2007).

The ongoing discussions about emerging governance seem, in many ways, to challenge the role that the State plays in education. Privatization and internationalization are the two most distinct trends. Neither international organizations nor markets are newcomers to the field of education. However, the extent of their influence on education policy-making has reached a new level. Education is increasingly a field of international and market governance, as international organizations establish rules and standards of education policy-making while educational commodification gives rise to new actors such as private education companies and new modes of regulation. According to Martens and Weymann (2007) internationalization and privatization have been particularly obvious in the field of education. Moreover, privatization and internationalization go together well. For example, the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the World Bank conceive education as a service and promote private investment in post-basic education (Jakobi, 2009).

These influences will continue to play a major role in the reshaping of the governance of education. When States are weak or have reduced capacities, they may see their central role in education challenged and feel that it is more convenient to rely on privatization and internationalization as the key drivers for educational development. However, none of these two forces have necessarily the public good as their main driver. Only the State can ensure that the sector, no matter how complex its governance becomes, is driven to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

## Conclusion: Governance and SDG 4

Our common and traditional approaches to governance are in question and do not seem to fully take into account the emerging challenges that Member States are facing. The landscape in governance is constantly evolving and is no longer as delineated as it was two decades ago. The concept and practice of governance has become a much more complex and fluid domain, with different, but compatible, emerging approaches.

Education authorities must recognize that governance is not the same as government. The education sector must take into account the constant increase in the number of suppliers from the private sector and other non-State actors. The marketization of education provision by a strong private sector reflects a new distribution of power in education. This is not just a matter of private schools and universities, but also concerns, the management of networks of schools in some countries, the emerging roles of digital technologies in learning, and the parallel 'shadow education' sector of private supplementary tutoring.

Clearly in the context of the interplay of multiple stakeholders, there has been a paradigm shift in the action of governments. This is particularly challenging in developing countries because they do not have a plentiful supply of skilled personnel for dialogue and negotiation of roles. Consequently, government capacities to ensure equity in education provision for all are being challenged, especially in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

In the evolving scenario and in view of the SDG 4 — Education 2030, the role of education authorities at the central level is crucial in steering governance reforms as well as formulating a shared strategic vision and strategy to govern and manage education systems. Equally, attention should be given to education authorities at other levels and to civil society and private-sector actors, in view of a participatory approach to governance in which all relevant stakeholders in education reach a consensus on the education agenda, including on how to implement international commitments.

# CHAPTER II

Leading better learning: School  
leadership and Education 2030

# Introduction

*Successive studies have warned that, in many parts of the world, students are graduating from school without the required skills. According to the 2017/8 Global Education Monitoring Report about 387 million children of primary school age, or 56 per cent, did not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading (UNESCO, 2017). Urgent and concerted action to address this challenge will be needed if the 2030 Agenda is to be achieved. The search for new levers to improve school performance and education quality becomes particularly critical in a context of increasing global competition and tight fiscal constraint.*

*In their efforts to improve education quality and effectiveness, policy-makers, inspired by a growing body of research, have emphasized the importance of the dynamics of teaching and learning, as well as the role of instructional materials. Better and more efficient learning outcomes can be achieved by optimizing the levels of inputs in the educational process such as teachers, learning time, core subjects, pedagogy, language of instruction, learning materials, facilities and leadership (UNESCO, 2004). While most of these factors are well-known determinants of learning quality and have been widely researched, the leadership role of headteachers and school principals requires further attention (Bush, 2013), especially in the developing world.*

*Evidence from a number of reform initiatives undertaken in OECD countries suggests that effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency, equity and quality of education, particularly when schools are granted autonomy and principals receive appropriate support to make important decisions (Pont et al., 2008). It also demonstrates that successful school leaders can improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their support of and influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008).*

*This growing body of evidence has led policy-makers in many countries to attempt to identify and promote the factors most critical to effective school leadership so as to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. At the same time many countries have reformed their education governance structures, with many moving towards decentralization and school autonomy, with schools and school leaders being held more accountable for results. As a corollary, evolving expectations of school leaders have necessitated a redefinition of their responsibilities and a review of policies regarding their training, recruitment, working conditions, professional development and remuneration. This chapter shows that governance reforms and school leadership policies are inextricably linked. For example, effective school leadership is essential for the success of decentralization in education systems.*

*While school leadership reform has become a high priority among developed countries (Jensen, Downing, and Clark 2017), its potential has not yet been adequately explored and realized in other contexts, particularly in developing and transition countries. To address this gap, UNESCO commissioned six regional reviews of effective school leadership to support international policy dialogue on this topic.*

# Conceptualizing school leadership policies

School leadership has been defined as a “process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils and parents towards achieving common educational aims” (Chance and Chance, 2002). It differs from the concept of school administration and management, which relates to the exercise of control and supervision. The concept of school leadership, in contrast, implies influence, dynamism, empowerment and pro-activity for school reform and improved performance, particularly in terms of better student learning outcomes.

It is also viewed “as a strategic, forward-looking process that involves the development and communication of a strong vision and attendant goals or objectives, along with a relevant plan for implementation, monitoring and review” (Smith and Riley, 2012). Leadership entails convincing others of their value, and influencing the way they think, feel and behave in order to realize their potential. Successful school leaders are said to be motivated and motivating visionaries – skilled communicators who listen, reflect, learn and empower their staff (ibid.).

School leadership encompasses the roles of principals, assistant principals and other executive-level staff members. This suggests that leadership can be distributed within schools and among staff. Recent studies of OECD countries show that, “while principals are vested with overall operational authority, school leadership tends increasingly to be shared or distributed, school principals are expected to facilitate and work effectively with other staff in leadership roles” (Anderson et al., 2007). School leaders, therefore, include those staff who, from their formal positions of authority in a school, work with others to provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve organizational goals, with particular focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes (OECD, 2006).

School leadership responsibilities should, ideally, be distributed within the school and its wider community; however, the principal’s role is certainly key; for that reason, this study focuses on the leadership of school principals. While the roles and responsibilities of school leaders are defined by policy-makers in line with a country’s educational governance context, school principals act as mediators between policy-makers and teachers, parents and students, and are therefore at the hub of the education process. Successful leaders apply core leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2008) to create an enabling school environment, and to support and motivate teachers, who, in turn, improve teaching and learning outcomes. Thus, the expected impact of school leadership on school performance and pupil learning is indirect (Hallinger and Heck, 1996), and occurs through improvement of teachers and school environment.

## A policy perspective on school leadership

School leadership has taken on renewed importance in educational policies around the world, generating a dynamic research agenda in both developed countries (Barber, Whelan, and Clark, 2010; Jensen, Downing, and Clark 2017; Pont et al., 2008; Walker, Hu, and Qian, 2012) and developing countries (Avalos, 2011; Weinstein and Hernández, 2015; Oduro, Dachi, Fertig, and Rarieya, 2007; OEI, 2017). In general, research has focused on the impact of different types of educational leadership on students' academic outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005; Mourshed et al., Chijioke, and Barber, 2010), the relationship between educational leadership and teachers' performance (Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2007), and the effect of educational leadership on school life and relationships between the different school stakeholders (Gross and Shapiro, 2016). Likewise, in recent years interesting efforts have taken place that aim to analyse the essential factors that should be considered for the creation, development and consolidation of school leadership policies that contribute to efficient, equitable and quality educational systems (Barber et al., 2010; Litz, 2011; Taipale, 2012). The following Figure 3 shows a synthesis of some of the main factors involved.

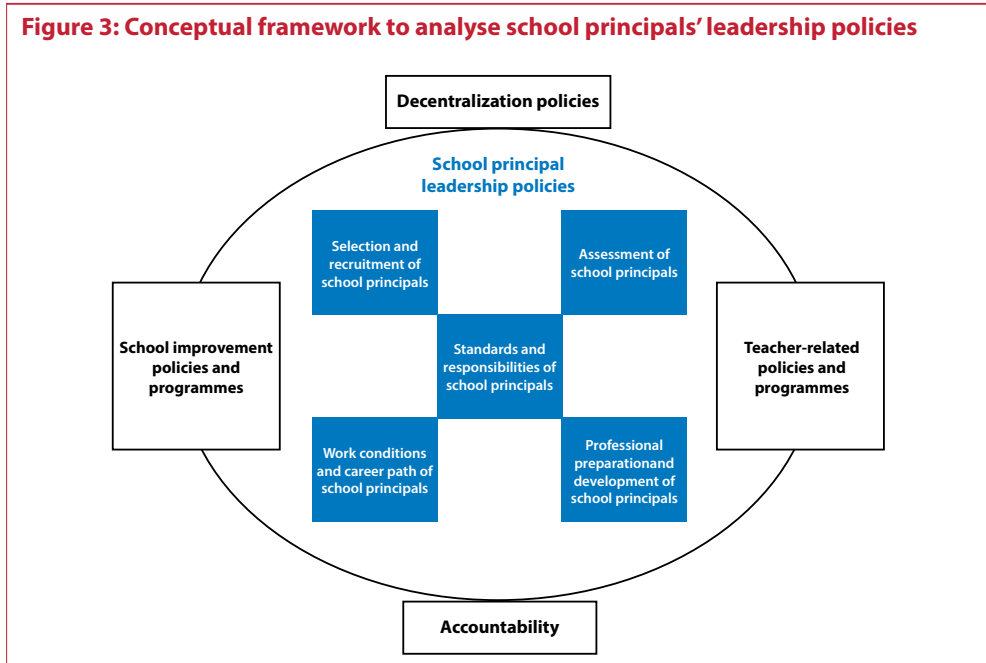
Three types of policies are outlined. Firstly, the school leadership policies are comprised of five areas related to the duty and characteristics of school principals:

- i. the standards and responsibilities of school principals;
- ii. selection and recruitment of school principals;
- iii. assessment of school principals;
- iv. professional preparation and development of school principals; and,
- v. working conditions and teaching career of school principals.

The level of coordination — in terms of time, processes and direction – of these factors will make it possible to determine the internal coherence of school principals' leadership policies. In addition, it is important to note that these different areas are guided by the definition of responsibilities and standards defined by the educational authorities of each country or region, which have a pivotal role in the configuration of school leadership policies, providing meaning and sense to the whole system (Ingvarson, Anderson, Gronn, and Jackson, 2006).

Secondly, there are policies and programmes, shown on the left and right of Figure 3, that directly influence the sense, characteristics and dynamics of school leadership, affecting the external coherency of educational leadership policies: those addressing school improvement and those related to teachers. However, school improvement programmes can affect the priorities of principals, school resources or the school's technical support (Finnegan and Stewart, 2009). On the other, actions directed at classroom teachers can generate transformations in the responsibilities, duties and capabilities of principals (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012) and strengthen or limit their capacity to generate distributed leadership (Spillane and Camburn, 2006) in such a way that both these policies have an impact on school leadership policies.



**Figure 3: Conceptual framework to analyse school principals' leadership policies**

Source: Adapted from Weinstein and Hernandez (2015)

Thirdly, there exist a number of school governance policies that exert significant influence on principals' leadership policies, by the means of organizing school systems. Of particular importance are countries' decentralization policies and the prevailing accountability systems in place, shown at the top and bottom of Figure 3. These policies cut through the two aforementioned levels. Thus, decentralization, for example, determines the range of action and influence of school leaders, affecting the duties held by these different stakeholders — teachers, principals, school boards, etc. (Elmore, 2010) while accountability policies affect how principals are assessed (Leithwood, 2001). However, these policies are also developed in other spheres of the educational field, affecting economic, political and organizational aspects different from, although linked to school leadership. These can, therefore, be considered as external policies.

## Leadership theories, practices and styles

School leadership research is informed by theories drawn from management studies and organizational science. Table 3 summarizes the main theories of leadership, showing the evolution of related definitions and hypotheses concerning leadership characteristics, behaviour and actions. As can be seen, a number of assumptions and considerations are used to define and/or identify leaders, including innate skills, personal background, character traits, perceptions, and typical behaviours and actions (Jamal, 2014).

**Table 3: Leadership theories**

Theories	Assumptions/considerations
<b>Great man theory (1840s)</b>	This theory assumes that competence for leadership is inborn, that great leaders are heroic people, born with natural quality and destined by birth to become leaders. In 1860, Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher disputed the theory by affirming that heroes are simply the product of their time and their actions the results of social conditions.
<b>Trait theory (1930s–1940s)</b>	This theory suggests that people are either born or made with certain qualities, such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and other values that make them excel in leadership roles. Many studies have vainly attempted to identify the traits among existing leaders, highlighting the many shortcomings of the theory.
<b>Behavioural theory (1940s–1950s)</b>	This theory posits that leaders are made, rather than just born, and that successful leadership is based in definable, learnable behaviour. It focuses on the behaviours of leaders, what they actually do rather than their mental, physical or social characteristics. Two general types of behaviour exhibited by leaders are: concern for people and concern for the organization or the production. Research on this theory has sometimes led to contradictory findings.
<b>Contingency theory (1960s)</b>	This theory argues that there is no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on specific situations, which means that there are certain people who perform at the maximum level in certain places; but at a minimal level when out of their element.
<b>Transactional leadership theory (1970s)</b>	This theory assumes an exchange between leader and followers, such that the leader must find a means to adequately reward (or punish) his followers for performing leader-assigned tasks. The theory states that humans in general want to maximize pleasurable experiences and diminish unpleasurable ones. Thus, people are more likely to associate themselves with individuals who add to their strengths.
<b>Transformational leadership theory (1970s)</b>	This theory contends that: (i) people will follow a person who inspires them; (ii) a person with vision and passion can achieve great things; and (iii) the way to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy. Thus, transformational leaders create and embrace a vision for an organization that inspires and brings the best out of people, while reflecting a belief system based on integrity and inclusiveness.

Source: Adapted from Leadership-central.com

Leadership styles in education organizations draw on the same repertoires as other organizations, while including additional aspects of task orientation and orientation towards people. The literature identifies different school leadership styles and models which, in most cases, depend on the governance structure of the education system and the development context. For example, in systems where school principals do not receive specific preparation, leadership tends to be autocratic and bureaucratic, with principals generally operating on the basis of what they learned from their leaders when they were teachers (Bush, 2013).

Transformational leadership focuses on vision, inspiration and relationships, with the aim of restructuring the school by improving teachers' working and pupils' learning conditions (Stewart, 2006; Robinson et al., 2009). Some researchers have suggested that the transformational model is the most effective for enhanced school performance and outcomes (Leithwood, 2004; Oyetunji, 2006). According to Jamal (2014), transformational leadership has proved appropriate to complex and dynamic work environments that present intellectual challenges, such as those faced by education managers and their teams. These debates have recently been focused on the two dominant models in school leadership literature, namely instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Stewart, 2006). These two models differ from others in that they focus on how administrators and teachers can improve teaching and learning. Instructional (or pedagogical) leadership focuses on the importance of establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum, evaluating teachers and teaching, and creating an enabling school environment. Yet, these two models are close and complementary, and their optimal combination is most likely to lead to better school results.<sup>1</sup>

There seems to be no single school leadership model for achieving success (Day et al., 2009). Successful school leaders make use of a mix of leadership models, and are responsive to context, i.e. school goals, school organizational structure and culture (Leithwood, 2007; Bush, 2013). While instructional leadership is particularly useful in guiding teaching and learning, experienced leaders combine different styles, depending on school environment and the broad educational context.

## Emerging trends in school leadership

### The implications of new public management reform on school leadership

In many countries, the growing focus on effective school leadership and related changes in the roles of school leaders has been prompted by school governance reforms in a context of increasing decentralization and greater accountability (OECD, 2005). Increased autonomy has been granted to schools, not only to allow school-level management and control over decentralized budgets and staff, but also to ensure instructional leadership through resource (budgetary and human) management. While this autonomy creates opportunities for school leaders to allocate resources to priority development areas, it also augments the accountability pressure on them. Increasingly, school leaders are becoming accountable for the results achieved by teachers and students, whereas previously they were held accountable only for their inputs into learning processes (OECD, 2009). This trend reflects not only the need for optimal use of limited resources, but also a recognition of the paramount importance of quality education for individual, social and economic development, especially in a rapidly changing, competitive and knowledge-based world.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion, see the next section.

These developments have significant implications for school leadership policy. School autonomy alone is not a guarantee of effective school leadership, unless accompanied by appropriate policies and strategies to create an enabling environment and develop school leaders' capacities (UNESCO, 2005). In other words, effective leadership can be achieved only when school leaders have "an explicit mandate and capacity, motivation and support to use their autonomy to focus on the responsibilities most conducive to improving school and learning outcomes" (OECD, 2009).

There is growing evidence that effective reform in the area of school leadership must be coupled with the revision of policies on principal recruitment, training, professional development, working conditions and remuneration. An OECD (2009) study of school leadership, covering twenty-two education systems in nineteen participating countries, concluded that in many cases, school leaders' roles were at odds with reforms intended to deliver greater decentralization and more school autonomy and accountability. The findings led many of these countries to redefine and expand the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, in ways that had important implications for the way in which school leadership is developed and supported. This was in line with the study's recommendations, which highlighted the need to:

- i. ensure a clear (re)definition of school leaders' responsibilities;
- ii. distribute school leadership among school staff and stakeholders;
- iii. develop the knowledge and skills of school leaders to enhance their effectiveness; and
- iv. make school leadership a more attractive profession (OECD, 2009).

A number of OECD countries have since undertaken reforms in these areas, with the aim of reinforcing the instructional role of school leaders.

## School leadership and learning outcomes

The importance of quality education and lifelong learning in ensuring the competitiveness of countries in a globalized and knowledge-based economy cannot be overemphasized. Faced with resource constraints, countries are exploring innovative ways of enhancing school performance and student outcomes, including through exploiting the potential of school leadership. Research has traditionally identified three main determinants of student success: students' socio-economic and cultural background; factors related to the education system at a macro level; and school factors, namely teachers' commitment and teaching practices. The attention given to school leadership owes a great deal to the large body of research that has found a causal link between school leadership and student achievement (Day et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2006, 2008). The international evidence suggests that school improvement rarely occurs in the absence of effective leadership and that school leadership accounts for up to 27 per cent of variation in students' learning achievement, second only to classroom teaching (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007).

The correlation between school leadership and students' outcomes is not direct. According to Leithwood et al., 2006, school leadership affects students' learning achievement by exerting a positive influence on the work of other staff, especially teachers, as well as on the conditions or characteristics of the school. An array of factors interacts in the complex chain of variables linking leadership to student learning. School principals play a central role in this interaction process. For example, case studies from the London's Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre suggest that students' learning achievement is affected by leadership actions that support teachers' activities, school organization and relations with parents and communities. Similarly, in studies conducted for the UK Department of Education, Leithwood et al. (2006) highlight the importance of school leaders' personal skills and values in developing strategies geared to influencing teachers' capacities and motivation as well as creating an enabling school environment, conducive to better learning achievement.

A systematic review conducted by Robinson et al. (2009) for New Zealand's Ministry of Education suggests that instructional leadership is more likely than transformational leadership to enhance students' performance. Their analysis found the impact of pedagogical leadership to be nearly four times that of transformational leadership. However, these two leadership models should not be considered as opposed, since transformational leadership incorporates elements that are specifically educational, while pedagogical leadership attends to relational matters, such as consensus on school goals. The study also revealed that the leadership dimension most inextricably linked with students' performance was the avenues by which teacher professional development is promoted. The strength (effect size) of this dimension was estimated to be twice that of any other dimension, which means that when school leaders promote and/or participate in effective teacher professional learning this has twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity.

Research has shown that some leadership roles influence teaching and learning more than others. They include: supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; goal-setting, assessment and accountability; strategic resource management; and system leadership or leadership beyond school borders (OECD, 2009). This supports the claim, already made by Leithwood et al., (2006), that "teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions." The impact of school leadership on teachers' professional development, commitment, motivation and working conditions are key determinant of students' outcomes.

All of these findings have radically transformed expectations of school leaders. They are no longer expected to be merely good managers and administrators; rather, they must become instructional leaders, able to guide and support teachers in fostering continuous improvement in students' learning achievement. Effective school leadership is now viewed as the cornerstone of successful, large-scale and sustainable education reform (Fullan, 2002).

While school leadership has become a priority issue in the educational reform agenda of OECD countries, the knowledge base for this domain is still weak in most developing countries. Therefore, it is worth considering how school leadership reforms and trends in OECD countries could usefully inform education policies in other countries or regions, particularly those with different cultural and political contexts.

## School leadership in the context of developing countries

As stated above, the increasing focus on school leadership is a response to a number of outcome-based pressures, dictated by both low learning quality in many countries and growing competition among education systems in a rapidly globalizing world. As effective school leadership is about enhancing school effectiveness, efficiency and students' outcomes, the need for it should be felt most acutely by developing countries where most of the indicators related to school performance and quality are weak. This echoes an assertion made by Leithwood et al. (2004), that "effective leadership has the greatest impact where it is most needed" — i.e. in the most challenged schools. Education systems in developing countries are replete with challenging school contexts, including schools deprived of basic infrastructure and equipment, schools in conflict or post-conflict situations, and small, poor, rural or remote schools.

The few existing research studies suggest that most developing countries still lag far behind with regard to the development of effective school leadership, despite the intentions of policy documents and discourses. For instance, a recent study by Ebot Ashu (2014), of Cameroon, stressed the need, expressed by headteachers and teachers, for the alignment of national school leadership policy development with international best practice in this area. According to the same study, headteachers and teachers also called for a structured leadership development programme to enhance the preparedness and performance of the headteachers.

Research in the past has suggested that school leadership in developing countries is often largely authoritarian and bureaucratic, not an effective way of educating for peace and democracy, and often a cause of weak school service delivery (Harber and Davies, 1998). As headteachers are generally appointed from the teaching staff and receive little or no specific training, they tend to maintain the authoritarian, top-down leadership style that they experienced as a teacher.

Quite often, there seems to be also a mismatch between the prescribed roles of headteachers and their day-to-day work. For instance, in analysing policy initiatives related to issues of educational quality in Ghana, Tanzania and Pakistan, Oduro et al. (2007) came to the conclusion that

*[...] with some notable exceptions, school leaders are still locked into a technicist, civil-servant transactional mode, where they are seen as being responsible for carrying out Ministry orders rather than acting as professional educators leading fellow colleagues in an endeavour to improve the education received by pupils.*

# A comparative analysis of school leadership

This section provides a synthesis of the main findings of six regional reviews. While the reviews highlight important differences of historical, political, sociocultural, economic and demographic context — all factors shaping the development of school leadership in the regions — they also reveal a number of features and concerns shared between and within regions and countries. Importantly, there is wide recognition of the need to further establish and strengthen effective school leadership as a means of improving education quality, school performance and students' learning outcomes. This section builds a bridge between the previous sections, which elaborated the analytical framework and methodology, and the analysis, findings and policy lessons from the regional reviews.

The first part of this section provides an overview of the profiles of school leaders in the regions and includes information on gender distribution, age distribution and qualifications. The second part discusses the types of school governance structure encountered, and their implications for school leadership, in terms of new responsibilities and models of leadership. As new responsibilities demand appropriate support and development for school leaders, the third part addresses issues related to the working conditions of school leaders, including the support they receive, remuneration and how they are supervised and evaluated.

## The profile of school leaders

### School leaders are still predominantly male

Although gender equality in education has been an important policy issue for some time (UNESCO, 2014b), evidence from the regional studies shows that educational leadership remains a male preserve. Although there are a number of exceptions, with women constituting the absolute majority of both teachers and school leaders in some Latin American countries (Vaillant, 2010) or in primary schools in the Arab States where schoolheads are mostly female (Ghamrawi, 2015), the proportion of men in leadership positions at global level tends to be greater than the proportion of men in teaching.

Even if there are more women than men in the teaching profession, all the regional reviews note that women are, in general, underrepresented in senior positions in schools. Where women do lead, they are more likely to hold positions at primary schools and small schools, as it is the case in some Eastern European countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia), in some South and West

Asian countries (e.g. Sri Lanka and India), in the Arab States and in sub-Saharan Africa. This is the case even in Rwanda, which has one of the best gender equality strategies in Africa. Interestingly, while the Arab region ranks very low in terms of gender equality, with low female participation in government and a significant gender gap in labour force participation, school leadership positions are dominated by women in the majority of primary schools (Ghamrawi, 2015).

Some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Kenya and South Africa, introduced targeted leadership programmes and/or quota systems to address barriers to women's upward mobility, with varying success. South Africa is also one of several countries that introduced programmes to improve women's administrative and managerial skills to support their participation in leadership positions. For example, in 2002, the government introduced a management and leadership programme, known as Women In and Into Management and Leadership Positions, and more recently in September 2014, the Female Principals' Support Programme, which aims to provide a sustainable support network to all women principals in South Africa. Gender discrimination remains a significant barrier to female representation in leadership positions throughout the region, as do lack of preparation for leadership and social and cultural factors. Indeed, leadership remains very much a gender-sensitive concept in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Egypt specifically targeted an improvement in girls' learning outcomes and worked to develop and strengthen the leadership skills of school principals to promote female literacy rates and expand girls' access to and participation in education.

In East Asia, school leaders' gender distribution does not appear to feature prominently on education policy agendas.

## An ageing workforce, near retirement

The ageing population of school leaders represents a growing issue in some regions, though it may provide an opportunity for change. Data collected in the regional reviews reveal that the average age of school leaders is 50 years or more in most countries. An exception to this pattern is in Eastern Europe where, in Romania and Serbia for example, the average age is under 50. Primary school leaders in Latin American and Caribbean countries are also slightly younger, with an average age of between 40 and 50. In Viet Nam, as per administration rules, female candidates for school leadership should not be older than 50 years old, and male candidates should not be older than 55 years old.

This general trend reflects the fact that the appointment of school leaders is, for the most part, based on teaching experience. The following subsection, which looks at the qualifications school leaders are expected to hold, sheds further light on age distribution within the profession.



## Uncertain qualification and appointment mainly based on teaching experience

In many countries, school leaders start out as teachers and advance to the position of school leader at the end of their teaching career. This seniority-based transition to school leadership is the main explanation for the high average age of school leaders. It appears that, in some countries, teaching qualifications and experience are the only requirements for school leadership. The authors of the regional studies report that this practice continues in many countries and highlight the urgent need to develop policies to professionalize recruitment.

In the Arab States, for example, there is an absence of policies requiring school leaders to hold degrees in education leadership. For instance, in Qatar, despite ambitious decentralization and school autonomy initiatives, almost 50 per cent of school leaders do not hold education leadership certificates. Recruitment policies and procedures overlook knowledge and experience of education management and leadership.

In most countries in Eastern Europe, teaching experience is a basic condition for school leader recruitment and appointment. However, in some countries (e.g. Romania and Slovenia), other criteria such as administrative experience or leadership training are also considered.

Limited information is available on South and West Asia, but in some countries (e.g. Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), the basic required qualification for school leaders is the same as that for teachers at a particular level. Qualifications required for school leaders are different from those required for teachers (except at the primary level) in Nepal, although recruitment often takes place on an ad hoc basis, making it likely that a large number of headteachers do not possess the required qualifications.

Evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean shows a remarkable predominance of primary school principals with tertiary degrees. The available data also show that a relatively high percentage of principals have received some form of specific training in school management and administration.

In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, school leaders do not need to hold a specific leadership certificate. In most cases, seniority and a successful record as a teacher are sufficient. There are some exceptions, however: in the Seychelles, for instance, training is offered at the Master's level, and in Tanzania, the Agency for the Development of Educational Management provides in-service training for primary and secondary school leaders.

The review revealed that, in some countries, including Azerbaijan, Cameroon and Kenya, school leader recruitment is sometimes based on connections rather than competence. Also, appointment of school leaders in a number of countries can be subject to political influence or corruption. This in turn "severely limits the capacity of schools to serve as truly democratic, efficient and self-reflective institutions" (Magno, 2009).

**Table 4: Profile of school leaders across regions**

	<b>Arab States</b>	<b>East Asia</b>	<b>Eastern Europe and Central Asia</b>	<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	<b>South and West Asia</b>	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>
<b>Gender (male–female distribution)</b>	Leadership positions dominated by women in primary schools, with men more strongly represented at secondary school level.		Female school leaders underrepresented except in primary schools in some countries.	Female school leaders underrepresented.	Female school leaders underrepresented except in smaller schools.	Female school leaders underrepresented except in smaller schools.
<b>Age (average number of years)</b>		Viet Nam: Candidates no older than 50 (female) and 55 (male).	50+ Exceptions: Romania, Serbia.	40–50		
<b>Qualification for recruitment</b>	Teaching experience. No requirement for a degree in education studies.	Varies across countries from teaching experience to school leadership training programme.	Teaching experience with additional administrative experience or school leader training.	Predominance of principals holding tertiary degrees. Relatively high percentage of principals having received some form of training in school management and administration.	Teaching experience.	Teaching experience and seniority. Exception: South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania. Often unsystematic recruitment practices.

Overall, the qualifying criteria for becoming a school leader vary between teaching experience and successful completion of a school leadership training programme. Although Master's degrees and other higher qualifications in education management are emerging trends in several countries, the regional studies report that, in addition to an ageing population of school leaders, countries are facing major difficulties in recruiting quality candidates, mainly because of the lack of support and training, the workload and the inadequate salary. Finally, as Table 4 shows, there are significant regional differences and commonalities in the profile of school leaders. Some major trends and exceptions can be noted. Gaps in the table indicate partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.

## The role of school leadership in the wider context of governance reforms

In the past two decades, many different institutional, legal, organizational and educational reforms have been designed to improve performance and quality. In many countries, changes to education governance have been important elements of these reforms, with the aim of rationalizing decision-making and strengthening accountability. The expectation is that improved governance will lead to greater school efficiency and better teaching and learning outcomes. However, changing governance conditions also impact on leadership patterns, with school leaders expected to take on new responsibilities or adopt new leadership models.

Many countries have moved from a tightly regulated, centralized education system to a more open, participatory and decentralized school system, with more responsibility granted to schools in the management of human, financial and physical resources. There appears to be a general trend towards greater school autonomy across the regions. However, there are significant differences between the countries and areas in which schools have been granted greater autonomy.

The overall rationale for these reforms is that improved governance can lead to greater efficiency in the use of resources, which can in turn help foster improved school performance. With the growing trend towards decentralization, school leaders are expected to take on additional responsibilities, which may require new skills.

Some countries, however, have failed to implement decentralization reforms for a range of reasons, including inadequate policies, lack of political will and weak national capacities at the local level (weak institutions, lack of qualified staff). In some countries, decentralization efforts have been hampered by longstanding traditions and norms, which affect the majority of schools and actors at the local level. Therefore, in many of the countries, important decisions in the education system are still taken by a higher-level authority or are subject to its approval.

At the opposite end of the continuum, there are countries that have established and implemented ambitious policies to decentralize their education systems over the last few decades. The devolution of responsibilities to schools led to changes in the roles of school leaders.

The following examples, drawn from the regional studies, highlight commonalities and differences in the degree to which the countries of each region have decentralized their school structures.



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### **Box 1: Latin America and the Caribbean**

Three groups of countries can be identified:

- Countries such as Argentina and Brazil: Central government finances a part of the provision of educational services, but at the same time, the subnational levels retain a high degree of autonomy.
- Countries such as Chile, Colombia and Mexico: Educational services were transferred to local authorities, States and municipalities, through decentralization policies, but central government retains considerable powers.
- Countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay: They have centralized systems, in which the governing authority is the national ministry of education, and few responsibilities fall within the orbit of local authorities.



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### **Box 2: East Asia**

Two groups can be identified:

- For example, Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong SAR, China: Each has a decentralized governance system supported by policies and a legal framework. The National Education Act (Thailand) engages local initiative in managing educational services, supports the integration of local wisdom in the curriculum, and empowers principals, teachers and parents. In Singapore, since the early 1990s, the role of principal has changed from passive manager to chief executive officer with full responsibilities. In Hong Kong SAR, China, decentralization reforms have impacted on almost all areas of school operation and aim to substantially alter the role of school leaders.
- For example, Viet Nam and China: All principals hold the formal title of government officer and are, in a very practical sense, the government bureaucracy's representative at the school level.



### Box 3: South and West Asia

Two main groups of countries can be identified:

- Countries such as Afghanistan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka: The participation of parents and local communities is being increased through the empowerment of schools and principals and by establishing school management committees. These efforts have resulted in some good practice, but challenges and issues remain. The gap between policy and implementation is one of the key issues in the region (e.g. India, Maldives, Nepal).
- Countries such as Iran and Pakistan: These countries tend to delegate some authority to regions and schools. For example, Pakistan intends to devolve the decision-making process on planning and budgeting closer to implementation level.
- All South and West Asia countries have focused on decentralizing school governance and strengthening school leadership, in one way or the other. Accordingly, these countries have created legal bases and developed policies and programmes to facilitate movement towards more decentralized and democratic practices, with increased roles for headteachers and school bodies.



### Box 4: Arab States

Two groups can be identified:

- For example, Egypt, Morocco and Qatar: These countries have established and implemented ambitious decentralization policies within their education systems over the last decade. Despite these initiatives, the gap between policy and practice seems to be quite wide and it is taking time to reach and empower the local or school level.
- For example, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Libya, Syria and Yemen: Schools in these countries are dominated by strong hierarchical, directive, bureaucratic and authoritarian leadership. School systems are maintained by: the direct control of governing and managing bodies; close and detailed surveillance and inspection of school activities; and the exercising of austere management rather than shared or democratic leadership.



### **Box 5: Sub-Saharan Africa**

Two groups can be identified:

- Countries such as Ghana, Mali, South Africa and Tanzania: These countries have decentralization policies, with responsibilities for the provision and management of educational services shared among communities, schools and governments.
- Countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique: These countries have engaged in some form of decentralization, albeit to an uneven extent across their respective countries. The decentralization has been driven by two forces, namely “external pressure from international development agencies and experts, and domestic political expediency in countries where governments are unable to organize or finance basic public services” (Lugaz et al., 2010).
- In sub-Saharan African countries, NGOs such as churches and boards of governors are responsible (with strict regulation by national governments) for managing secondary schools in many Anglophone African countries, while within Francophone Africa, historically centralized systems of managing secondary schools are gradually adjusting to decentralization policies.



### **Box 6: Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

Three groups of countries can be identified:

- Countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia: Ministries of education grant a large degree of autonomy to schools for managing financial and human resources. In Slovenia, schools are granted full autonomy in selecting school leaders.
- Countries such as Albania, Hungary and Poland: Many decisions are subject to the approval of a higher-level authority or are taken within established guidelines.
- Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey: Highly centralized education systems hinder reform and the implementation of policies. Local authorities do not have the power or flexibility to make independent decisions or to respond to local needs. Kyrgyzstan has been moving towards decentralization, but this has led to greater inequality between wealthier communities and poorer communities.

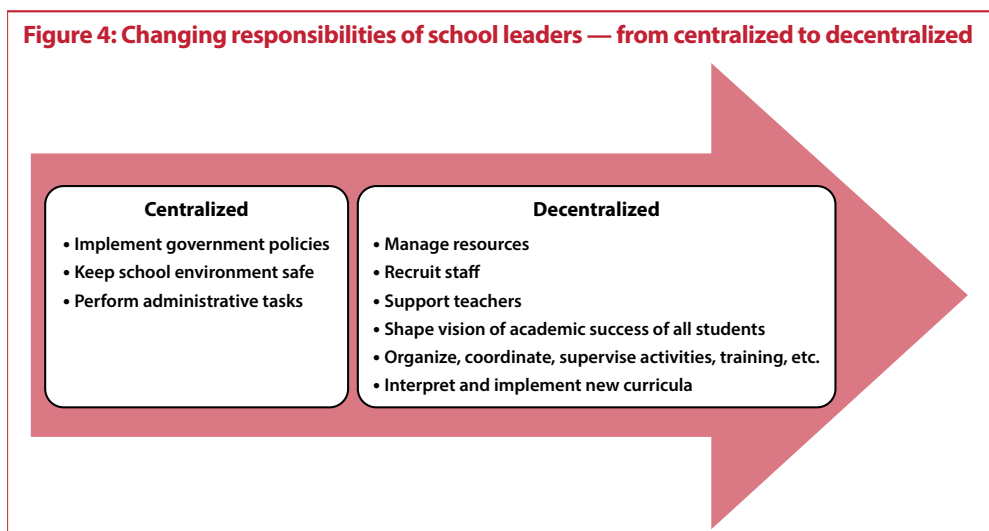
Attempts to decentralize education in developing countries respond to a number of different factors, including: pressure from international organizations or agencies; the inability of governments to respond effectively to the widely varying needs of local schools; common agreement among constituencies that the centrally-led structure is not working well; and growing competition between public and private schools.

Depending on the scope of local empowerment in their country, school leaders are asked to assume different leadership roles. For example, they might be asked to assist in staff/teacher development, to mentor staff or teachers, to develop curriculae, etc. They learn and implement different styles of leadership according to their responsibilities and the degree of autonomy granted to them.

In some cases, the gradual movement towards decentralization has led to an adjustment or redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Where the education system is centrally led, a school leader is often no more than a government officer, with little or no freedom in resource management, staff recruitment, teacher capacity development, school vision and strategy, or renovation of the school environment. In general, the leadership model in such a centralized governance structure can be described as formal managerial. The nature of the school leaders' role may vary, depending on social, ideological and political realities, but it is necessarily subject to a top-down decision-making process directed by government authorities.

However, as Figure 4 illustrates, with the trend towards school-based management, school leaders are being granted more autonomy and resources to lead their school, while also becoming subject to new accountability arrangements. They are expected to set clear goals, initiate and sustain school-based reform, support the school community — especially the teacher corps — and ultimately deliver an improvement in the quality of education in their schools. This has been echoed in many of the countries studied, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with the adoption of new public management and results-based management systems, which require school leaders to use monitoring and organizational techniques to assess the efficiency of teachers.

**Figure 4: Changing responsibilities of school leaders — from centralized to decentralized**



In the context of decentralization, some countries have developed school boards, municipal councils, parent associations and teacher unions, as well as representative groups drawn from community organizations. The participation of these groups in school decision-making is expanding around the world, albeit with varying degrees of success and impacts on school leadership. While the trend is undoubtedly global, the pace and degree of decentralization and management reform are different from region to region and from country to country, as are accountability arrangements.

For example, decentralization has resulted in genuinely distributed leadership in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where in most countries school leaders are expected to establish structures and cultures that promote collective leadership, and to lead by collaborating and negotiating with teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, students and local communities through school boards.

Current policies in most Arab States, by contrast, practice tight control over school leaders with high levels of bureaucracy and regulation in overtly or covertly centralized systems. Although some policies encourage school leaders to build teams, delegate power to school members and support parent and teacher associations, the actual practice of education authorities runs counter to these aims since school leaders are treated as the sole accountable figures. School success is measured narrowly by test scores at national examinations.

Continuous school reform in many countries in East Asia has presented school leaders with contradictory demands and made it difficult for them to identify their roles. On the one hand, they are expected to maintain their traditional role as stabilizers within the school system, while, on the other hand, they are called upon to change, reform and/or redefine their school's development plan (see Keeves and Watanabe, 2003). With the exception of those in China and Viet Nam, East Asian school leaders have often been granted greater autonomy to lead and manage changes in schools. They have a responsibility to experiment and drive improvements in learning and teaching, by participating in the definition of the school mission, managing the instructional programme and creating a positive school environment. There have been attempts to disperse power and authority to school leaders, and collaborative leadership is encouraged. However, shared leadership is a new concept in the region and school leaders need to find their role somewhere between the reforms being introduced and the societal context in which they are implemented.

In South and West Asia, while decentralization efforts have led to the adoption of related legal and organizational systems, changes to actual leadership practice and meaningful devolution remain questionable. School leaders often have little authority to bring about meaningful improvement in student learning. In India, for instance, school leaders' main responsibilities are administrative tasks, data entry, monitoring of schedules, report writing and testing. In some areas, small schools function without a school leader as no such position has been created.

However, in some countries of the South and West Asian region, changes in school governance have resulted in an actual redefinition of leadership roles. For instance, in Sri Lanka, school leaders are now responsible for learning outcomes, resource management, staff development and monitoring, while in Bangladesh, school leaders take more responsibility and authority in decision-making. In Iran, school leaders have been granted total management responsibility in schools. Their roles are officially prescribed and include planning, resource mobilization and teacher development. They are accountable to authorities and the communities.

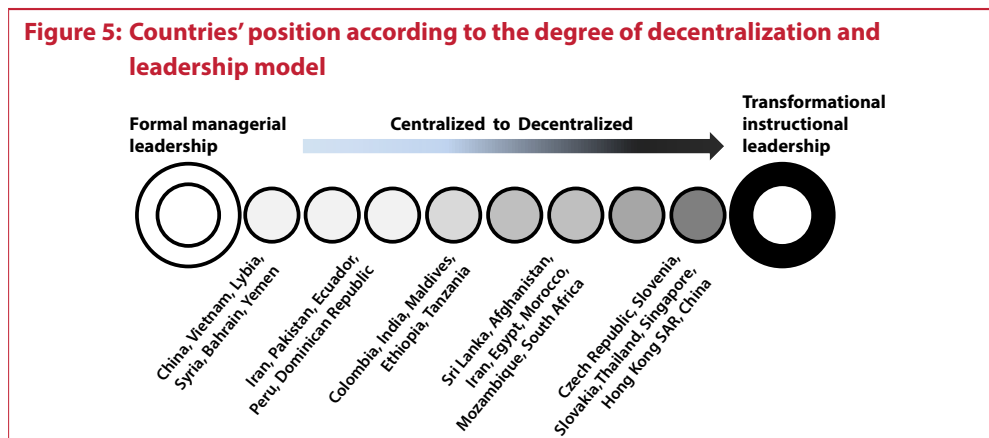


In sub-Saharan Africa, several historically centralized systems are shifting towards deconcentration and decentralized management of education is promoted in many countries — at least within policy documents. Nevertheless, in the absence of appropriate policy frameworks and specific preparation, school leadership in the region still appears to be based rather on formal, bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerial leadership. Roles and responsibilities are often poorly defined or not respected in practice. In Ghana, for example, school leaders regard themselves as no more than keepers of school possessions and implementers of government policies. In Mozambique's decentralized system, school leaders are expected to handle new and complex tasks, such as financial management, building maintenance, teacher professional development and implementation of new curricula. They can also offer professional development to teachers through classroom observation or discussion. In Kenya and Cameroon, too, school leaders have wide-ranging responsibilities; however, they are usually not well prepared to deal with these challenges. Where preparation is offered it is usually in the form of brief training sessions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean the review finds that, in many of countries, school leaders are often overwhelmed by administrative duties and have little time for tasks of a pedagogical nature. Issues such as teachers' professional development, use of textbooks and student evaluation form only a minor part of their workload.

A clear transition from a formal managerial leadership model towards a transformational and instructional leadership model can be observed in countries implementing reforms that aim to decentralize their education structure. Although this transition is not complete, it raises many challenges, particularly as it relates to the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, who often struggle with the shift from managerial to more instructional leadership. They may have poor understanding of their new responsibilities, and few opportunities for professional preparation and development support.

These findings suggest a need for a clear (re)definition of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders in most of the countries studied. In fact, as the reviews demonstrate, in several countries, the lack of a competency framework for school leaders is a major issue. Figure 5 illustrates how leadership models can evolve, following the levels of decentralization. Selected countries are positioned on this scale according to their degree of decentralization and the associated leadership model, ranging from a formal managerial model to a transformational instructional model.



## Demotivating working conditions?

To meet the demands of education reforms, especially the new accountability arrangements, potential and current school leaders need support to master their new roles and responsibilities. Working conditions comprise multiple elements, including leadership development training, remuneration and supervision arrangements. Table 5 captures the major findings from the six regional reviews. The empty spaces indicate partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.

The first part of this subsection will focus on the types of training provided across the regions; the second part will focus on the remuneration in terms of income adequacy; and the final part will present the main findings related to school leader appraisal and feedback.

### Training as a support

Education authorities and their partners, including universities and international organizations, have developed new leadership and training programmes or have adapted existing programmes. Regions vary greatly in terms of the availability of training programmes for school leaders, mostly because of policy and funding constraints. In general, there are three types of programme: pre-service, induction and in-service.

As noted in the reviews, effective school leadership involves a set of skills and competencies that can be learned. However, the opportunity for school leaders to access these programmes varies from one country to another. Several countries were found to lack policies and programmes for school leadership training and professional development. In other countries, depending on national policy, school leadership training can take place before or after appointment. Potential and new school leaders can acquire training within a specified time period. The length of the programmes has been identified as an issue in many countries. For instance, the duration of pre-service leadership training, where it is required, can vary from one week (Romania) to the completion of a bachelor degree (Thailand). Some countries are supported by donors, international organizations and NGOs in developing guidelines and systems for improving school leadership. The reviews reveal that most of this support is implemented on a project-by-project basis, without an overarching framework or curriculum, sometimes targeting particular areas of the country or principals from specific categories of school (private schools, faith-based schools, etc.). This suggests a need for more coordination by the education authorities to ensure better integration of initiatives and projects into the broader national education development agenda.

Across regions, a wide range of delivery methods are used: lectures, discussions, skills training, on-the-job training, case studies, group exercises, role playing, etc. The training usually covers, in whole or in part, important elements of effective school leadership, including the national education legislation, leadership skills, resource management, organization development and pedagogical/instructional leadership. Yet, despite such training, many school leaders are poorly prepared for

**Table 5: Working conditions of school leaders across regions**

	Arab States	East Asia	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean	South and West Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>Leadership development training</b>	Growing number of leadership development programmes, little evidence on impact.	Lack of systematic integration of leadership development programmes. Exception: Singapore.	Varies across countries, from pre-service, in-service and induction programmes, with varying length and quality.	Varies across countries, from 1.5-year to short-term courses.	Lack of systematic integration, mostly short-term in-service programmes.	Varies across countries, from one-year certificate course to short in-service programmes to professional qualification courses (South Africa).
<b>Remuneration</b>			Varies significantly across countries. Inequitable distribution of salaries within countries.	School leadership as teachers' pathway for achieving higher salary.		
<b>Appraisal</b>		Singapore: Regular monitoring and appraisal.	Varies across countries of Eastern Europe. Some countries have central appraisal framework.			

their role, as participation in such leadership programmes is often based on achieving certification rather than acquiring new knowledge and skills. Content is mostly theoretical and does not provide analytical skills or consider the application of what is taught in school contexts.

In some Eastern European countries (such as Czech Republic and Slovakia), school leaders attend only in-service training, workshops and seminars on school management, finance and communication. These are not sufficient to meet the needs of demanding school contexts. Lack of capacity means that most school leaders are confined to carrying out simple administrative functions.

In the Arab States, awareness of the importance of school leadership skills development is growing. This is apparent in the large number of planned or existing leadership development programmes in the region. However, there is little evidence of what impact these programmes have on instructional school leadership. In some cases, development programmes were not supported by policies that would have allowed leaders to practice in schools what they have learned.

In East Asia, the lack of systemic integration of training is clear. Programmes are usually provided on a project-by-project basis, in the absence of an overarching framework or curriculum. In the case of Singapore, efforts were reasonably successful, while in other countries, more investment is required to improve the capacity of school leaders. With some exceptions, there is little evidence of the changes in practice.

Similarly, there is an absence of systemic efforts and/or programmes for school leadership in South and West Asia. Short-term in-service programmes are conducted with a limited focus on certain aspects of leadership. In most of the countries, a national education development plan or subsectoral development plan focuses on specific areas which includes leadership development components.

In sub-Saharan Africa, school leadership development ranges from a one-year certificate course in Gambia to short in-service training courses (for example, Eritrea and Uganda). The Ministry of Education of the Seychelles has partnered with the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom to provide training at the Master's level. Tanzania offers training for primary and secondary school leaders. South Africa has established a practice-based, two-year part-time professional development programme leading to a National Professional Qualification for Principals — the first national qualification of its type in Africa. According to the regional reviews, the other countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region offer no formal training for school leaders.

In Latin American and the Caribbean, a relatively high number of school principals received some form of specific training in school management and administration. Nonetheless, countries differ greatly in the quality and length of the training programmes, which range from eighteen months in Chile to just twenty-seven days in Brazil.

Regardless of the specific type of leadership training, it must be improved and designed so as to cohere with national policies on education, recruitment and professional development. It is important that training is provided both before and after appointment. Despite the great interest numerous countries have in leadership development, it has not been a top priority on national education agendas. In addition, more evidence is needed on how to build school leaders' skills and effectiveness in various contexts.

## Unattractive status and remuneration

For most of the regions and countries studied, information on school leader salaries is either very limited or non-existent. Although their salaries are typically higher than those of school teachers, the small difference between teacher and school leader remuneration does not reflect school leaders' workload and responsibilities. This may explain why so few teachers are seeking school leadership positions. However in some of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, there is evidence that some teachers strive to achieve school leadership positions in order to earn a higher salary.

The reviews also suggest that school leaders' remuneration has not been a priority in recent educational reforms, even in countries where responsibilities were increased or redefined as a result of decentralization. In many countries, poor remuneration is seen as an obstacle to potential school leaders joining the profession, while those already in service often aspire to leave for better-paid jobs.

In some countries, the inequitable distribution of salaries and allowances based on gender or geography is another important issue. Teachers (including headteachers) are the lowest paid civil servants in East Africa, and the situation is exacerbated by the gender bias in remuneration (Biamba and Odero, 2015). In the Ashanti region in Ghana, for example, female teachers do not get paid maternity leave and are likely to be dismissed or transferred if they become pregnant, in spite of labour law protection (Bush and Glover, 2013). In Liberia, too, maternity leave is not paid.

In Eastern Europe, there are significant differences in school leaders' salaries. Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey offer the highest minimum annual salary while Albania offers the lowest. Inequitable distribution of salaries is also common. In addition to their fixed salaries, most school leaders in the region are able to take on extra work, such as teaching, to earn more income. With the current trends towards new public management and results-based management, some countries may consider adjusting school leaders' salaries in line with school performance and outcomes. Flexible salary scales related to school-level factors can also serve as incentives for school leaders who choose to work in disadvantaged schools or difficult locations.

## School leaders' supervision and appraisal: A mixed picture

What constitutes successful school leadership is context-dependent. The regional reviews suggest that school leaders' experience, the geographical location of schools, the governance context and the socio-economic backgrounds of students, must all be taken into account when evaluating leadership quality.

While most countries were found to have a performance appraisal process, the regional reviews reveal a number of issues related to the quality, mechanisms, responsible authority, period and consequences of appraisal. In the majority of countries, there is no central or State requirement to appraise school leaders, and authorities have not established policy frameworks establishing the procedures for appraisal. Instead, school leader appraisal typically takes place on a subjective basis, unsupported by a specific policy.

Where appraisal is required and regulated, the procedures also vary. School leaders can be appraised by local or regional education authorities according to a central framework, although in some cases, school organizing bodies are responsible for determining and implementing appraisal procedures. For instance, in Poland, school leaders are appraised by local and regional authorities according to a central framework (see also OECD, 2013). In some other Eastern European countries (e.g. Czech Republic and Slovakia), school organizing bodies are responsible for the appraisal procedures.

Appraisal periods do vary, but in general, appraisals are conducted on an annual basis. In Slovenia, school leaders are appraised on a mandatory yearly basis through a central framework. Singapore is an example of best practice in this area, as all school educators are monitored and appraised on a regular basis, and those with leadership potential are identified and encouraged to take on senior positions in order to develop their school leadership capacity.

The consequences of appraisal vary from one country to another. In many, salary adjustments and professional development opportunities are common rewards. However, an unsuccessful evaluation can result in sanctions, such as wage freeze and even dismissal. More importantly, the regional studies reveal the scarcity of links between appraisal and the development of improvement plans through induction and in-service training programmes. Nevertheless, according to OECD (2013), researchers and policy-makers have become increasingly aware of the shortcomings of current approaches to the appraisal of school leaders and are encouraging stakeholders to consider this factor when developing policies on school leadership.

## Research and knowledge gaps: Barriers to effective school leadership

The need to develop effective school leadership is increasingly recognized as essential for achieving high-quality education for all. However, there is a severe lack of data and information on school leadership. Very few countries have relevant data and information on school leadership, and there seems to be a general lack of national and regional information and documents related to school leadership policies and their implementation. Countries with relevant data tend to be in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, although there are also some in Latin America.

There is a large body of literature on school leadership; however, most of it relates to OECD countries as the subject is still not well explored in the developing world. Yet, as Hallinger (2013) suggests, in the case of East Asia, part of the literature on school leadership, available only in national languages, may not feature in international reviews. Clearly, a good deal of Chinese research on principalship is not accessible to an international audience because of the language barrier. A systematic review of existing research and documentation would help complete the global picture on school leadership.

A dedicated expert meeting, organized by UNESCO as part of the regional review process in 2016, highlighted a number of research issues which should be addressed in order to further explore the significance of school leadership, including:

- *The effectiveness of school autonomy:* The nature and status of decentralization and reforms to promote school-based management vary between countries. There is therefore a need to understand how the degree of school autonomy impacts on student learning outcomes. The literature is replete with normative statements about school autonomy, greater power and responsibilities for school leaders, and closer relations between school and community, but it does not describe the direct effects on students' learning outcomes. Evidence of the benefits of decentralization is less positive in the context of poor rural areas, which reconfirms the need for further comprehensive and systematic research and studies on effective school leadership practice.
- *Effectiveness related to roles and responsibilities of school leaders:* There is an urgent need, illustrated throughout this report, for comprehensive and systematic research concerning the specificity and appropriateness of job descriptions or task assignments for school leaders, and their effectiveness. In addition, the leadership models described in the literature suggest a common set of skills and competencies that would be needed for school leaders in all countries, without introducing elements from the local context. Further research may help to confirm or refute the suggestion that leadership styles are universally applicable and there is a generic list of competencies for school leaders.
- *The effectiveness of leadership training programmes:* Despite the wide array of school leader training programmes, there is very limited empirical information on their effectiveness, especially with regards to their length and type (pre-service, induction, or in-service) and their relevance to improved quality of education — and students' learning outcomes in particular.

The UNESCO expert meeting also reinforced the need to keep track of efforts geared to fill these gaps and to promote a forum for global debate and the sharing of information and best practice, especially for developing countries. The lack of relevant data and information constitutes a major obstacle for the formulation of evidence-based and effective policies on school leadership.

Countries across the six regions are at very different stages with regard to the development of school leadership, ranging from an embryonic stage in some sub-Saharan African countries to more developed forms of leadership in some Eastern European countries. Nevertheless, there are some commonalities that point to key issues, including the need for increased recognition of the potential and importance of school leadership, as well as the need to develop viable and effective policies and practices with regard to the selection, recruitment, training, professional development and supervision of school leaders. Strengthening school leadership should be seen as an integral part of education reforms. To effectively address these issues, there is a need to promote research and knowledge production and sharing, including through the facilitation of global debates on school leadership and by supporting regional and international cooperation for the exchange of experiences and best practice.

# Policy lessons

## Prioritize school leadership in the education development agenda

Despite an abundant literature on the importance of school leadership in enhancing school performance and students' outcomes, leadership development is not yet a priority focus of education reform in many countries. Too often, school leadership appears in policy documents only as a strategic action in teacher policy and development reform even though it is inextricably related to the success of governance and management reforms. However, given its potential benefits, especially in relation to decentralization processes, school leadership is a key policy lever for successful education reform and development. It is therefore necessary to:

- Promote a common understanding and interpretation of the concept of school leadership, particularly instructional leadership, among all education stakeholders: The reviews suggest that, even when the term "leadership" is used in policy documents, the job descriptions and actual practice of school principals do not support the intent of the policy but rather serve to maintain the traditional managerial and administrative role expected of school principals. In many countries, concepts such as instructional leadership and leadership for learning have yet to be translated into policy frameworks or the day-to-day practice of school principals.
- Ensure a systematic integration of school leadership initiatives/projects into the broader national education development agenda, including governance reforms. The regional reviews highlight a number of initiatives intended to develop school leadership capacity in a number of countries. They report that, in many countries, these initiatives are implemented on a project-by-project basis, sometimes in an uncoordinated way and without an overarching framework or curriculum. Strong coordination and systematic integration of such initiatives into national education plans are needed in order to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.
- Promote and advocate for the development of effective school leadership, using experience, best practice, lessons and evidence-based research from countries that have established successful leadership development programmes: This entails engaging relevant stakeholders (including principals' associations, teachers' unions, civil society organizations, parents and communities) in a policy dialogue to ensure common understanding and recognition of the importance of school leadership, so as to guarantee the adoption, ownership and support of the related education reforms.



## Establish appropriate institutional and policy frameworks for effective school leadership development

The smooth development of effective school leadership requires an institutional and policy framework that clearly establishes the rules of the game — namely the criteria for appointment to principalship (qualification, experience, etc.), and the sort of status, remuneration, support and working conditions school principals can expect. This entails a need to:

- Develop a clear vision for effective school leadership, drawn from national education policy and translated into a coherent school leadership competency framework. The competency framework is meant to guide the selection, recruitment, training, professional development and appraisal of school leaders.
- (Re)define the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, which should include instructional leadership, to ensure they reflect national policy on education quality and the need to enhance students' learning outcomes. It is important to ensure that cultural and contextual conditions are adequately taken into account when (re)defining principals' roles and responsibilities.
- Involve school principals at the different stages (policy formulation, adoption and implementation) of all reform initiatives intended to reshape their roles and responsibilities. As reforms in school leadership consist mostly of changing principals' roles and promoting effective leadership, it is vital that principals are involved at the outset and thereafter — from policy formulation to implementation. While the principals' role is particularly crucial at the implementation stage, their involvement in the policy formulation and adoption stages is necessary to ensure the ownership which facilitates good implementation of reforms.
- Adopt a multistakeholder and participatory approach to school leadership reform to ensure that all relevant stakeholders, including teachers and other education staff, communities, parents and civil society, contribute to the improvement of policy and practice on school leadership at local and school levels.

## Professionalize school leadership careers and make them more attractive

The regional reviews reveal that school principals are usually former teachers appointed shortly before retirement, often without adequate preparation or support to perform the responsibilities expected of them. It was also found that, in many cases, salary differences between teachers and principals do not adequately reflect the greater workload of principals and therefore do not motivate teachers to apply for school leadership positions. To maximize the benefits of effective

leadership, school leaders should be provided with adequate training to ensure they have the skills they need, namely the competence to serve as a facilitator, guide and supporter of quality instructional practices. In the same vein, prospective school leaders should be motivated by the prestigious status, attractive remuneration and career development associated with the role. More specific recommendations are to:

- Enhance school leaders' skills and competencies by (re)designing their training programmes (pre-service, induction and in-service) in alignment with the national competency framework for school leaders;
- Make school leadership a more attractive profession by establishing incentives and reward systems in order to enhance the status of school leaders and attract the best candidates;
- Improve the procedures for selection, appointment/recruitment and deployment of school leaders, and encourage the integration of young and female school leaders; and
- Mobilize adequate resources and partnerships to support school leadership reforms and sustainable improvements to policy and practice in this area.

## Set up viable systems of information, networking and research

### on school leadership

The regional reviews highlight the dearth of data, information and research on various aspects of school leadership, which limits investigation of the dynamics and development of sound policies in this area. While countries that use an education management information system (EMIS) have established systematic data collection on teachers, with detailed data collection instruments, most of them have no specific instrument for school principals, who are often counted as teachers. This partly explains the weakness of research on school principals, especially in developing countries. It may also help explain why there are very few programmes supporting school principals' policies, training and development, while the teaching profession has received increasing attention and support.

Effective policy reform of school leadership cannot be developed and implemented without reliable data and information on school principals. The data should be integrated into the national EMIS. In order to achieve this, countries, research institutions and development partners should support the creation of viable systems for the regular collection of data and information in order to serve the purposes of research and policy formulation. Networking within and between countries and regions should also be an important part of these efforts, with the aim of sharing best practices, including:

- Collect and share relevant data and information through annual education surveys (EMIS), baseline studies, follow-up studies, surveys and research of a national, regional and international nature to inform decision-making and policy development/implementation on school leadership.

- Create or reinforce networking systems to ensure close cooperation between universities, governments, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim of promoting the exchange of information and experience.
- Encourage and support research studies to better understand the dynamics of school leadership, for example, its impact on students' learning outcomes, its relevance in relation to different governance structures (school autonomy, centralized/decentralized systems, etc.), its effectiveness in different social and cultural contexts, and the effects of different training (pre-service, induction and in-service) modalities and duration on the performance of school leaders.

## Conclusion: School leadership in the context of SDG 4

The review of the literature and the six regional reviews highlight a number of urgent issues with regards to policies and practices for effective school leadership. Despite important contextual differences among the education systems in the countries studied, there is an emerging consensus on the role effective school leadership can play in positively influencing school performance and students' learning outcomes, particularly when principals are skilled and supported to act as instructional leaders. Certainly the progressive shift towards instructional or pedagogical leadership can be seen as one of the key policy levers towards SDG4. Teachers, and specifically teacher training, feature prominently in SDG 4 — Education 2030.

Having analysed the profiles of school leaders (age, gender, qualification, leadership styles, etc.), the related institutional and policy frameworks, and education governance structures in the six regions, the reviews suggest that the prevailing situation in most countries remains uncondusive to yielding the type of benefits expected from effective school leadership in terms of enhanced school efficiency, effectiveness, and students' learning outcomes, as well as the achievement of relevant SDG 4 targets.

While a global trend towards reshaping the roles and responsibilities of school principals is evident, the focus is not always on instructional leadership or leadership for learning. In many countries, principals' assignments are framed in merely administrative and managerial terms; and principals are not expected to provide instructional leadership. Moreover, with the exception of a small number of countries, school principals do not receive adequate training and support to function effectively as instructional leaders. Even where this concept of leadership features in national policy documents, it is often not reflected in the practice of school principals.

The literature makes clear that school leadership emerges from a range of different actors, not just school principals. Because of the central role of the principal in the leadership process, reform efforts in this area should target improvement in recruitment, training, working conditions and remuneration. However, the reviews reveal that many countries lack appropriate policy frameworks to serve the above purpose. Hence, school principals are mostly recruited among experienced teachers close to retirement. Many of these teachers lack the preparation and skills to act as effective school leaders. It was also found that, in many of the countries, teachers may not be motivated to become school principals as the small increase in salary does not fairly reflect the additional workload.

A number of initiatives in school leadership have been undertaken in countries across the six regions; however, most of these initiatives were unsuccessful for various reasons. Depending on the country, the main challenges relate to weak integration with broader education policy development, conflicts between reform components and the national context and culture, or weak national capacity to formulate and implement effective school leadership policies. School leadership policies and education governance reforms should preferably be in harmony and mutually reinforcing. In other cases, lack of political commitment and weak accountability resulted in situations where legal and policy provisions for school leadership were not translated into the expected results, in terms of enhanced school performance and students' learning achievement.

The regional reviews highlight an additional challenge in the development and implementation of effective school leadership reform — that being the paucity of relevant information and data. This should be addressed urgently at the national, regional and global levels, with strong information systems set up to close the knowledge gap. In the same vein, research and the production and sharing of knowledge are recommended as ways of supporting policy reform for effective school leadership. Networking, regional and international cooperation for capacity development, and the sharing of best practices should be promoted. To this end, UNESCO has an important role to help sustain countries' efforts in this strategic policy area.

# CHAPTER III

Effective monitoring and  
evaluation of education systems  
towards Education 2030

# Introduction

*There is a growing international consensus that policy-making should be, if not based on, at least informed by evidence. A solid monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system emerges as a prerequisite for building the required evidence-base and responding, as much as possible, on a real-time basis to the crucial issues that may emerge in the policy dialogue about education at the national or local levels. The progress made over the past three decades worldwide, with the emergence of the first national and international learning assessments, has been impressive and a testimony to the growing trend to support policy dialogue with evidence. A successful implementation of national education sector plans calls for a technically demanding approach to M&E and requires those countries still at a very early stage in this area to develop their capacities quickly. In addition, the international SDG 4 — Education 2030 agenda, which for the first time includes specific targets whose achievement should be recurrently reported by countries, adds even more pressure to ministries of education. At first glance, the necessary investment might seem out of reach for some but there is also a growing body of evidence demonstrating, precisely, that having an appropriate M&E system in place pays off, particularly when the analyses produced are valued by all stakeholders and do really inform education policy processes.*

*Despite such a growing international consensus, different approaches to M&E exist and governments are faced with alternative choices and trade-offs for which the experience of other sectors and countries might be very valuable. Acknowledging its mandate to support Member States by promoting peer learning, UNESCO conducted a comparative review of M&E systems in the education sector through the development of a series of regional reviews and country case studies (available online) on which this chapter draws. In conducting the review, UNESCO intends to contribute to a fuller understanding of how different countries are monitoring, measuring and assessing the performance of their education systems to address the major issues identified vis-à-vis the achievement of national and internationally agreed education goals and targets. By providing policy insights, this review aims to assist Member States to review, further refine and, whenever appropriate, redesign their M&E systems so that they can contribute to building a solid knowledge base for increasingly evidence-based policy-making in education. This will ultimately allow all stakeholders to check progress against national education targets, including the internationally agreed commitments. In addition, the main findings of this comparative review are expected to nurture the ongoing debates about the role of M&E in the SDG 4 — Education 2030 agenda, already sparked by the recent Global Education Monitoring Report on accountability in education (UNESCO, 2017).*

*This chapter begins with an overview of key concepts of M&E systems and policies. It then looks at how they are used in the education sector with reference to country examples. The evolution of M&E systems is then examined in relation to processes of decentralization and the international education agenda. Coordination is identified as a critical issue for M&E systems to contribute to improving the quality of education, educational processes and system performance. Factors that can build effective and efficient M&E systems are then discussed, including the use of digital technologies, data protection, technical capacities, and political commitment and leadership. Some of the barriers that M&E systems face to improving policy-making in education are then explored with reference to the country studies and regional reviews. These include the relevance and reliability of data, active stakeholder involvement, and the ownership and use of evaluation findings.*

*Three building blocks for effective M&E systems are then identified to inform reflection and policy learning from international and comparative experience. These are: (1) promoting strong national ownership; (2) strengthening systematic coordination; and (3) designing M&E systems a tool for decision-making at the national, subnational and school levels. The chapter concludes with some key policy lessons for effective M&E systems towards Education 2030.*

# Analysing M&E systems and policies

## Key concepts for understanding M&E

Monitoring and evaluation are two complementary and mutually reinforcing processes in M&E systems. UNDP (2009) has defined monitoring as “a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, programme or other kind of support to an outcome.” However, “evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making. Evaluations, like monitoring, can apply to many things, including an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector or organization” (ibid.).

Fournier (2005), cited in Mathison (2005), defined evaluation as, “an applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the State of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a programme, product, person, policy, proposal or plan.” Some writers suggest that evaluation “is thus intertwined with political power and decision-making about societal priorities and directions” (Greene, 2000, cited in Mertens and Wilson, 2005).

An increasingly influential concept for understanding the growing importance attached to M&E in policy making is results-based management (RBM), which has promoted a paradigm-shift in policy evaluation. RBM has been described as “a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact). The actors in turn use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting” (UNDG, 2011).

M&E within an RBM system is quite different from the more traditional M&E approach. The traditional approach to M&E was designed to address compliance, simply addressing the question of “Did they do it?” It looks more at questions of mobilization of inputs in time, completion of planned activities, and delivery of intended outputs at the end of the project. Such an approach to M&E usually provides information on administrative, implementation, and management issues, but does not provide policy-makers, managers and stakeholders with any clue about the reasons for the success, or failure, of a policy, programme or project. The RBM-oriented approach to M&E focuses more on monitoring and assessing performance of a project, programme, or policy. It also helps to answer other related questions, such as, “Are the goals intended at the policy formulation or programme design stage being achieved?” and “How can any policy impact or programme achievement be proved?” In this regard, more qualitative and quantitative information at the output level is gathered to determine whether and how they contribute toward the achievement or progress of the outcomes (Kusek and Rist, 2004).

## M&E in the social development context

Most understandings of M&E in the social development context look at providing those involved in the programme implementation process with the right information so that they can detect any early indications of problems or issues, as well as provide early indications of the likelihood of achieving targets or desired results. M&E also focuses on the achievement of financial and programmatic targets set for different points in time and includes systematic and objective evaluation of progress towards desired outcomes.

Monitoring in the social development context is critical to properly guide the programme implementation process. A good M&E system will make the decision-making process more practical and effective. Evaluation is not a one-off event, but an ongoing exercise involving assessments of differing scope and depth carried out at several points in time during a programme cycle in order to assess its impact on the target group or issue. Evaluations provide insights and knowledge that could be built into the next programme cycle to address any potential problems or to reduce delays. As an implementation proceeds, the same activities of monitoring gradually acquire a qualitative character with a greater focus on the outcomes of the investment made, problems faced, new challenges identified and, via these things, on the overall impact of the implementation process.

Due to the changing nature of development concerns and the growing of body of literature on what constitutes good development practice, the issue of what needs to be monitored, measured and evaluated is also changing. As more multidonor and sectorwide programme funding strategies are now considered the way forward, much of today’s discussions about M&E are dominated by concern for aid effectiveness, and locally led multistakeholder approaches and assessments of impact on target communities.

Particularly in the context of countries with diverse socio-economic and cultural patterns, data collection at the macro levels may not pinpoint all problem areas. In such cases, data on problems at suitable micro levels will greatly help to address these specific concerns. For instance, data on why certain communities stop sending their female children to school upon their reaching puberty may be one such micro level issue requiring reliable local insight. Similarly, a well thought-out advocacy programme can ensure timely and effective utilization of quality data for policy research, policy-making and programme implementation.



# M&E Systems in education:

## A comparative analysis

As in other development areas, M&E in education varies widely in approach and methodology depending on the objective, purpose, and socio-economic context. Since education includes formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning that cover all levels and ages from pre-school to adult learning, it is difficult to have a single framework to monitor, measure and evaluate the entire spectrum. However, there are some common issues, challenges and aspects that can be considered relevant to many education subsectors or plans, such as coverage, access and quality. In every education project, plan and policy, a component on M&E is likely to be found.

### The foundations of M&E systems in education

The paradigm shift towards RBM and performance-based and results-oriented outcomes in the development context — along with current education reform trends paying increased attention to quality in education — is influencing current approaches to, and practices of, M&E in the education sector. One of the main purposes of M&E in education in the context of SDG 4 — Education 2030 is to ensure that inclusive and equitable quality education is being provided to all of the population and at all levels. According to de Grauwe and Carron (2011), “the quality of education is a multi-dimensional concept composed of three inter-related dimensions: the quality of the human and material resources available (inputs); the quality of the management and teaching-learning processes taking place (processes); and the quality of the results (outputs).”

Only a few countries possess well-developed M&E systems for measuring not only education outputs, but education outcomes. Countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico in Latin America, Australia, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore in Asia, and South Africa, can be cited as having mature and well-developed M&E systems. However, as noted above with reference to the implications of SDG 4 — Education 2030, the scope of the interconnected nature of M&E in education is not static; it needs to continuously adapt to accommodate the dynamics of perceptions and needs of the sector and wider society. The evolution of M&E systems cannot therefore be seen as a linear process but more as a dynamic process that has many variations in its responses to changing needs in different contexts.

The growing importance at the country level of the effectiveness and efficiency of resources for education has led to the emergence of issues of governance, transparency, accountability and sustainability. The imperative of involving stakeholders, including civil society and local communities, has led to a growing interest in participatory approaches to and involvement in M&E. Increasingly, education stakeholders expect: well established reporting on programmes

and initiatives, the availability of good quality and reliable data, the efficient coordination among all government departments and stakeholders at all levels, and the necessary infrastructure and capacity for implementing the improved system.

Several orientations to M&E can be observed, depending on their focus (inputs, processes or outputs):

- **Compliance Monitoring — focusing on inputs.** This is a bureaucratic type of monitoring to ensure that the educational institutions comply with predetermined standards and norms set by rules and regulations. It is mainly focused on educational inputs of teachers, textbooks, classrooms, teaching equipment etc.
- **Diagnostic Monitoring — focusing on processes.** This type of monitoring focuses on the instructional processes relating to what happens in the classroom and whether the students are actually learning what they are supposed to learn. Since the teaching-learning process is equally as important as input variables in education, having such monitoring would give insightful information on explaining the quality of education provided by the educational institutions.
- **Performance Monitoring — focusing on outputs.** The emphasis of this kind of monitoring is on the academic achievement of the students, measured through testing to see what results have been yielded by the investments made in education. This is the approach most closely associated with RBM.

A comprehensive M&E system is likely to include all three orientations to produce a coherent picture about the behaviour of the system as a whole. Within a single education system, such types of monitoring — with various components — may co-exist, serving different purposes. Five of the most important and recurrent components are presented below and the focus and objective of each are summarized in Table 6:

- **School record-keeping system,** which aims to keep information at the school level. This typically includes data on students (school entrance, attendance, academic achievements etc.), teachers (individual profile of teachers), finance (school budget and expenses), and physical facilities (quantity and quality of school building, classrooms, furniture, equipment etc.). Usually information from such systems are consolidated and grouped at local, district, regional and national level through EMIS.
- **Statistical data system,** often called education management information systems, designed to collect, compile, collate and analyse school-level data (students, teachers, facilities, finance, etc.) for policy and programme formulation, implementation and monitoring at different administrative levels.
- **Resource management systems.** These could include (i) teacher management (Teacher Management Information System or TMIS), designed to support the management of teachers' recruitment and deployment, and (ii) financial resource management (Financial Management Information System or FMIS), which conducts the transactions and monitors the financial status of education institutions. In some cases, such systems are part of a larger system, usually managed by the ministries of finance or education.

- **School evaluation system**, which includes (i) a School Inspection and Evaluation System which is carried out by the Ministry of Education to observe and inspect whether schools comply with the rules, regulations and standards set by the relevant authorities, and (ii) a Teacher Evaluation System whose function is carried out by relevant education institutions to evaluate the performance of teachers. In some cases, such a Teacher Evaluation System is integrated into the TMIS.
- **Student evaluation system**, which can include an examination system designed for to certify or select students, usually covering the main subject areas in the school curriculum. It can also include a Student Assessment System designed to provide an estimate of the achievement level in the education system as a whole at a particular age or grade level (see Ho, 2012).

Many countries typically have provisions for M&E components but there is no strategy or systematic coordination mechanism to ensure that these different systems speak to and reinforce each other to create synergies and support for the performance of the education system as a whole. Due to the interrelations between education subsectors (pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), adult learning and education, post-secondary and tertiary), coordinated efforts among M&E systems should be made not only within the subsectors of education, but also across — and increasingly beyond — them.

**Table 6: Selected M&E system components**

	Focus of Educational Process		Objective	
	Input	Process	Outputs	
<b>School record-keeping system</b>	X	X	X	Supporting school level management
<b>Statistical data system</b>	X			Providing input for policy and programme at different administrative levels
<b>Resource management system</b>	X			Ensuring efficient investment in education
<b>School evaluation system</b>		X		Ensuring effective teaching learning process
<b>Student evaluation system</b>		X	X	Measuring the results of the education provision

## Development stages of M&E systems

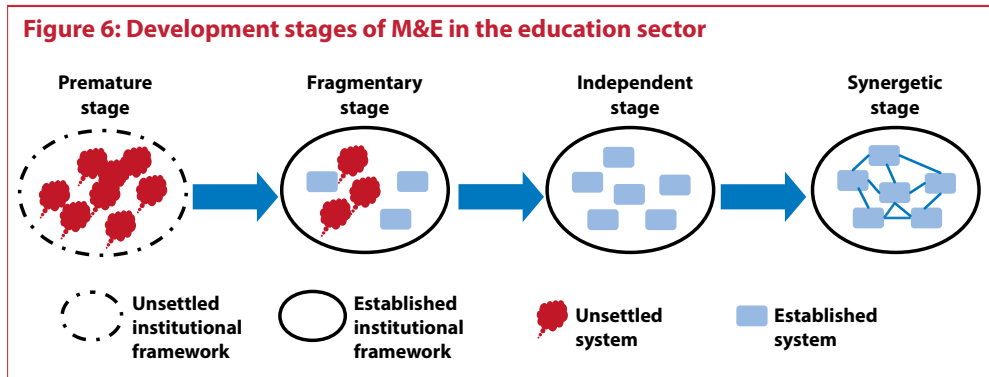
M&E systems in education have evolved over the years in response to changing needs of education planners, implementers and other stakeholders and their growing expectations of evidence on which to support the policy debates. In their initial stages, sector-based or programme-based M&E often focused mainly on financial and input–output indicators. At the same time, donor agencies developed project-based M&E systems to demonstrate that the intended activities were implemented according to project plans and the expected outputs were obtained. In such cases M&E was primarily for the purposes of the donor agency. Gradually, project-based M&E systems merged with the related programme/sector M&E systems. For example, in most donor-aided projects, funds were earmarked for capacity building both in terms of infrastructure and human resource skills to establish and operate sound M&E systems. When the projects ended, these systems were often maintained as a part of the overall sector M&E systems. However, the complete merger of these M&E data within the sector M&E system was gradual due to the need to identify the required resources (finance, infrastructure and skilled human resources) to scale up project-based activities for inclusion in the government’s regular sectoral programmes and budgets.

Although the pace, the path and the evolution of M&E systems in the education sector have depended on each country’s educational development context, the following typology of development stages can be proposed for simplification (Figure 6):

- Premature:** Stage of establishing favourable and conducive institutional conditions to set up a functional M&E system.
- Fragmentary:** Reasonable institutional and organizational conditions exist and M&E systems are becoming fully functional.
- Independent:** Different M&E systems are established and functioning, but they are operating as separate entities to serve their confined scope.
- Synergetic:** Different M&E systems are functioning harmonically and in a coordinated manner to provide effectively and efficiently relevant and quality information for policy and planning.

Premature M&E systems are found now in conflict situations, such as Somalia (e.g. Puntland, Somaliland and South Central Zone), where both the governance and the technical capacities of the system are often fragile at best.

In many developing countries M&E systems in the education sector would fall under either the fragmentary or the independent categories. Both use a conventional approach focused on measurement and catering more to the needs of donors and policy-makers, and less to beneficiaries and local people. Both also focus on conducting evaluations to make judgements more than on empowering target groups or on impacts and outcomes. These conventional approaches to M&E are designed as externally driven exercises that are concerned with cost efficiency and usually rely heavily on a quantitative approach to assessments. M&E is therefore often seen as a tool to control and manage projects and programmes, and does not involve beneficiaries or other



stakeholders in the planning and implementation stages. The heavy emphasis on quantitative methods for measuring results tends to ignore the qualitative information which is often linked to local sociocultural contexts and may help to provide a better understanding of the nature of the outcomes and the overall impacts of a programme.

The highly evolved synergetic stage is characterized by the use of new and innovative approaches to M&E. This approach makes M&E more participatory and inclusive and more effectively takes into consideration people's needs and the local sociocultural contexts. However, in many developing countries, this is not extensively practiced; although some attempts are being made to introduce more participatory approaches to M&E. No matter which advanced stage of development an M&E system is in, innovative trends can be seen in countries like Bangladesh, India, Kenya, South Africa and Sri Lanka. These countries have either strong civil society/community organizations, or they have a very active media culture that propels them towards making the M&E process more participatory. It is interesting to note that such participatory approaches to M&E have evolved furthest in non-formal areas of education, such as adult literacy, life skills and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), influenced by work in the field of development studies. Some of the emerging priority areas in education, such as interpersonal skills, citizenship and peace education, also warrant participatory M&E processes.

## How have M&E systems in education evolved in practice?

Over the last few decades, monitoring has been an integral part of the education process in most countries of the world. School level practices, such as school registration, school attendance and staff registration, were introduced to monitor performance at the local level. Furthermore, basic education data, such as the number of schools, geographic location of schools, student enrolment and number of teachers, were also gradually collected as part of national education statistics. Countries such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda,<sup>2</sup> to name a few, had simple monitoring tools already in the 1990s. Yet, some countries in sub-Saharan Africa still rely largely upon simple monitoring tools due mainly to their unstable political and socio-economic contexts. This section considers some of the trends underway, with reference to the regional reviews conducted.

<sup>2</sup> National EFA Assessment Reports of Sri Lanka (2008), Bangladesh (2008), Kenya (2011), Tanzania (2012) and Uganda (2012).

## Role of M&E in educational development

Even in the early days of Education for All (EFA), there was a clear recognition of the need for sustained M&E systems. Since the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien and the launch of the EFA movement, there has been increasing awareness of the importance of monitoring and evaluation of education. This was further reinforced and gained global attention since the 2000 World Education Forum, held in Dakar. Furthermore, advocacy and the provision of needed assistance for systematic monitoring as part of the EFA process by the UN (UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank) as well as other international and regional agencies (EU, OECD and others) and partners have resulted in the emergence of better ways of monitoring in many developing countries. However, with only a few exceptions (mostly in Latin America and Asia), there are limitations to the support that has been provided in the form of financial resources and capacity development inputs to the affected countries. The first challenge is lack of willingness on the part of the beneficiary countries to internalize the model, and the second is the lack of expertise in their regular M&E systems and the capacity to find the resources required to sustain such systems on their own.

Fifteen years after EFA was established, the Education 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015f) was adopted as a set of guidelines to support the implementation of SDG 4 — Education 2030. It revisited and further elaborated the international consensus and further emphasized the value of participatory processes to M&E. In a section on governance, accountability and partnerships, the Framework for Action calls for the participation of civil society, teachers and educators in all stages of education policy and planning, through to M&E:

*Governments should establish appropriate mechanisms, and strengthen existing ones, to be the main source of information for the regional and global monitoring process, with UN support. They will also establish procedures to drive, coordinate and stimulate interventions for education development, at various levels and across sectors, by genuinely involving all stakeholders in the planning, implementation and monitoring of education policies and strategies.*

The Education 2030 Framework for Action emphasizes that the primary responsibility for monitoring SDG4 lies at the country level and this makes this present study even more relevant. It was agreed that, “monitoring quality in education requires a multidimensional approach covering system design, inputs, content, processes and outcomes. As the primary responsibility for monitoring lies at the country level, countries should build up effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, adapted to national priorities, in consultation with civil society” (ibid.).

Given the increased prominence of quality, equity and inclusion, and relevant learning outcomes in SDG4 — Education 2030, it is worth noting that paragraph 98 of the Education 2030 Framework for Action stresses that,

*in order to better measure and monitor quality, equity and inclusion, efforts should be made to increase the capacity of governments to disaggregate data appropriately and use them effectively for planning and policy-making. Partners, in close cooperation with the UIS<sup>3</sup> and other institutions as appropriate, will provide direct and targeted support to Member States to strengthen relevant measurement and monitoring capacities. The UIS will facilitate sharing of best practices with a view to strengthening country data systems, particularly for African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. Efforts should be made to include quality frameworks in national education plans and to build the capacity of countries to monitor equity, inclusion and learning outcomes.*

This paragraph suggests that there are real constraints at the country level, not only in M&E systems overall, but more specifically in the capacities available to monitor equity, inclusion and learning outcomes. Similar concerns are expressed about the monitoring of spending and tracking of spending on education as “crucial funds for education are lost through corruption and inefficiency. Independent monitoring and tracking of spending can significantly increase the funds that schools receive” (ibid.).

The Education 2030 Framework for Action also emphasizes the development and implementation of a focused, evidence-based and dynamic M&E system for the education sector to adequately meet the demands generated by the new challenges previously discussed. This is a complex endeavour, however, as illustrated by current international controversies over how best to measure and assess learning outcomes.

The further evolution of M&E in recent times has resulted in some significant shifts in the way M&E functions and the way it is being used by governments and other stakeholders, such as development partners, NGOs and local communities. Three significant shifts in the development of M&E systems have taken place either concurrently or independently, according to the socio- economic and political contexts of different countries. These shifts may be identified as:

1. A centralized focus to a more decentralized focus in the M&E system
2. Increasingly holistic approach requiring coordination within and across subsectors; and
3. The shift from a simple compliance-based to a more performance-based M&E.

Because the changes can be interrelated, they may not be clearly delineated. It is important to note that these shifts have largely determined the way in which information systems are being developed, structured and implemented. Some critical transformations corresponding to these shifts are observed in the regional reviews and discussed below.

## M&E systems struggle to respond to increasingly decentralized education systems

### Reforming M&E systems to respond to decentralization reforms in education

As countries have moved towards decentralization of their education systems, demand has grown for evidence on the performance of the systems. As a result, and due as well as in part to changing priorities and consequent political commitments of governments, M&E systems have tended to place more responsibility in this regard on the regional, district, and school authorities. Many governments have reorganized their monitoring systems as part of a decentralization process to strengthen the management of education reforms. In parallel, the focus has shifted towards students and outcomes – that is, towards performance- or results-based monitoring. These shifts have led to the development of various components responsible for capturing detailed information about each student and the contexts in which teaching-learning takes place. EMIS, TMIS, learning assessments and school inspection are some of the components that underwent significant changes or were adapted to meet the new demands for emphasis on assessing performance rather than simply monitoring compliance.

Brazil, for example, has one of the most complete and complex M&E systems in Latin America, catering to the demands of the federal, state and municipal governments. The M&E system has evolved so that all components —such as the School Record Keeping System (SRKS), FMIS, EMIS and Student Assessment Systems — are interconnected and function in a coordinated way (Elacqua & Alves, 2015). Similarly in Chile, various components of the M&E system, like the School Inspection Evaluation System (SIS), EMIS and FMIS, are well developed and cater to all stakeholders and the community. In Chile, where the Adjusted Voucher Law “Ley SEP” (Ley de Subvención Escolar Preferencial) was adopted to increase the level of school accountability based on performance, parents use the school information system to make informed decisions regarding the choice of schools for their children (ibid.). All these innovations in monitoring and evaluation can be attributed to the decentralization of the M&E system. In Pakistan, decentralized M&E helped in the collection of gender disaggregated education data and this was vital in monitoring the participation of girls in education in the province of Punjab (World Bank, 2007).

### Using M&E systems to inform and engage the local community in the management of education

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing demand from donors and other stakeholders, as well as the public, for more evidence and accountability from education authorities. This information is needed by local communities so that they can participate more effectively in improving the local education provision. Due in part to international efforts — such as EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aimed at better quality and more equitable education — education management has undergone a number of structural changes intended to bring it closer to the user. This is particularly evident at the local level where one of the outcomes of the changes has been to give communities a greater stake in the management of the local education system. This process has aimed to increase accountability, oversight and responsiveness.



Decentralized systems try to consider the local needs through efforts to improve the participation of all stakeholders in a sustained manner. Some countries, such as Chile, have ensured easier access for parents to student information. In India the District Information System for Education (DISE) collects information from schools for use at the district and village level, as well as for national level decision-making purposes. DISE provides all student-related information on a website that provides disaggregated data by school, district, state and national levels. Kenya has initiated the use of an SMS-based online results management information system that allows students to query the database for their examination results. Similar systems also have been introduced in other African countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, and Swaziland (Bodo, 2011). Such systematic and focused information on school performance can help both the national level purposes and the local community-level needs. Similar examples can be cited from other parts of the world, such as the use of district plans, school inspection reports and school plans for monitoring which have been successfully adapted to suit local contexts.

School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent–Teacher Associations (PTA) have gained more importance as they have supported the decentralization process and helped the authorities and the community play a greater role in monitoring the performance of schools. This can be seen in the case of African countries, including Ghana, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Uganda (Antonowicz et al., 2010).

Examples from around the world have shown that decentralization of M&E in education has been primarily met with positive results (Winkler & Gershberg, 2000), particularly when the process has been inclusive and participatory. It can facilitate community participation and empower communities to be more involved, which in turn leads to greater accountability and better resource allocation while at the same time ensuring the quality of education. Countries such as Chile, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda fall into this category (Katsiaouni, 2003).

Winkler and Gershberg (2000) conducted research in several countries that shows that positive outcomes are associated with increased local autonomy. Other studies have also found that increasing community participation and, in particular the participation of parents, has led to significantly lower rates of student and teacher absenteeism, for example in El Salvador (Jiminez & Sawada, 1999). Further studies have also shown that decentralization has had a positive impact on students' test scores as observed in Argentina (Galiani and Schargrodsy, 2002; Eskeland and Filmer, 2002); and that decentralized management of schools has led to improved achievement scores, for example in Nicaragua (King & Ozler, 1998).

## The weakness of coordination efforts remains a critical issue

### Handling the challenges of vertical coordination in response to decentralization efforts

The shift towards more decentralized M&E systems has encountered a number of challenges. As many countries have transferred responsibilities away from the central government, as stated in the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, vertical coordination — that is, the coordination between

different levels of authorities — remains a key challenge (UNESCO, 2009). This is primarily because the transfer of responsibility from the centre to the lower levels within ministries has not been complete. In primary education, most central governments (e.g. Cambodia, China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand) transfer authority in some areas but continue to play a significant role in others (UNESCO, 2015f). This means that fully functional monitoring at lower levels becomes a challenge with partial monitoring control remaining with the top level, thus affecting coordination at all levels of the sector.

Furthermore, to become an effective decentralized system, coordination mechanisms among all data producers and users are required. Some African countries, such as Benin, Chad, Kenya and Rwanda, who are pursuing decentralization in the education sector, face challenges in ensuring that vertical coordination functions effectively and efficiently at all levels, especially at the district and school levels (Channa, 2014). All stakeholders need to be fully aware of the M&E process and their roles. In Nepal, personnel, especially in the districts and schools responsible for entering data, are not well-informed regarding the purpose of the data collection or the results of such data in the M&E process.

### Promising reforms to improve vertical and horizontal coordination

Analysis of the M&E systems in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Hong Kong SAR China, Republic of Korea, and Malaysia, for example, point to some critical benefits of what happens when an M&E system is holistic and integrated. In such cases, the various components of an M&E system (such as EMIS, TMIS etc.) tend to be more effectively coordinated, as is the case in Brazil and Chile. The advantage of all the components functioning and communicating well under the one umbrella of M&E is that it helps to introduce common standards and classification systems using uniform coding for better monitoring. This also reduces duplication in the collection of information and is more cost effective. Moreover, the availability of an M&E framework as part of national education sector plan helps to connect various components of M&E under a single framework, thereby making the M&E system more efficient and effective. Lebanon and Palestine, for example, have such a framework within their education sector plans.

To meet these coordination challenges, the education sector may benefit from the experiences of other sectors. Ministries of health and ministries of agriculture are good examples, in most instances, of effective coordination both vertically and horizontally. For instance, the ministries of health in many developing countries, such as South Africa (Adeleye and Ofili, 2010), Kenya (DANIDA, 2012) and Rwanda (Government of Rwanda, 2012) have set up extensive mechanisms for intersectoral and vertical coordination and evaluation of a number of different projects and programmes for monitoring HIV and AIDS, with special tools for measuring the effectiveness of public investments in the sector. In many countries, however, environmental ministries still tend to work independently even in cross-cutting areas such as early childhood development where health, nutrition and education are the three critical inputs needed for every child.

## From compliance to performance focus

An increasing focus on performance to help meeting budget constraints and enhance government accountability

Linked to major international efforts to persuade governments to improve the quality of education, significant changes have taken place in the last few decades in the basic understanding of the purposes of education as well as in its monitoring. M&E in its initial stages was mostly about compliance and providing basic information demanded by authorities at higher levels of government. Its primary goal is to make sure that schools comply with predetermined norms fixed by laws and administrative rules and regulations (see De Grauwe, 2007).

Together with advances in the concept and practices of education planning, the focus is now on the importance of the allocation and utilization of resources in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and impacts. The growing demand for better provision of quality education and accountability has helped to redefine the purposes of M&E, shifting more towards outcomes and impacts than access and inputs, as explained earlier. This is partly due to various international efforts, such as the Paris Declaration, which focused on aid effectiveness and accountability and fostered performance and results-based M&E. They have resulted in the gradually change in context and content of M&E systems — going from a “Did they do it?” approach to a “So what?” approach. In other words, this shift is about moving beyond the extent of investment made and towards achieving the intended results and the impacts of a policy, programme or project.

This shift towards outcomes and impacts has helped countries to monitor and evaluate the provision of education quality more effectively. Particularly in the context of economies with scarce resources and competing demands, investment priorities need to be guided by their comparative impact potentials for policies. Therefore, the M&E system must collect all the relevant information needed for both policy formulation and for budget preparation. Key macroeconomic policy-makers — i.e. ministries of finance and planning — are increasingly focusing on the accountability factor, or the quality and effectiveness of public spending, with the expectation of better outcomes and impact of such public investments. Comprehensive school and learner information, including on student outcomes, is needed for effective results-based monitoring and local level planning. Furthermore, information on outcomes and the impacts of education on learners, and their lives as a whole, provides a clearer picture of the value of investments made and the impact of policy decisions.

From the regional reviews, such a shift appears to be uneven among different countries depending on the availability of necessary resources, political commitment, infrastructure and the capacity that personnel have to implement performance-based M&E. There are many examples of countries of South-East Asia, South Asia and the politically stable, fast growing nations of Africa, along with many Latin American countries, that have achieved the shift. In Latin America, for instance, the current movement to develop M&E systems emerged out of a desire for greater transparency and to measure performance in the public sector (Elacqua & Alves, 2015).

The assessment of student learning outcomes is an area of growing policy interest at the local, national and international levels. There are several reasons for this, particularly in the developing world where learning assessments are relatively new. The most prominent argument is the concern that many children are not acquiring the necessary skills expected of them at any given age. Student assessments are also gaining importance due to the demand by various stakeholders for more information on student performance. Many countries are interested in using, for example, the findings of cross-national assessments to maintain and improve the quality of their education systems (OECD, 2004).

As a result, a number of countries have set up national institutes (NIER in Japan, KICE in the Republic of Korea, NAEP in the United States of America, NIE in Singapore and ICIES in Colombia and others) or dedicated separate units (Rwanda and Zanzibar) within the Ministry of Education, which are responsible for conducting regular national assessments. According to the 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report, the number of countries implementing large-scale international student assessments such as PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, and the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) has grown from four in 1990 to over 100 by 2013, and this number continues to increase (UNESCO, 2015d). As well as enabling cross-national comparisons, international assessments also help build capacity in the countries through the assessment process, test development, analysis and drafting of technical reports. SACMEQ, for example, has helped countries such as Kenya (Wasanga et al., 2011) and Tanzania (FHI 360, 2007) to strengthen the capacities of staff involved in conducting national assessments (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports, 2005). Such international assessments tend to attract more political and media attention than national studies. Several countries in Africa, the Arab region, Asia-Pacific, and in Latin America and the Caribbean participate in international assessments of student learning outcomes.

However, other education-related elements require greater attention, particularly those relating to the teaching and learning process. Monitoring process issues such as school inspection, teacher appraisals, quality of the teacher learning process, for example, is still a work in progress in many countries, including those with well-developed M&E systems such as China, India, Kenya and Malaysia. One of the main reasons for this is the qualitative dimension of such processes or sub-processes. Most EMIS systems and other information systems are built only to handle quantitative information with very little attention paid to the collection and analysis of qualitative information. Another reason for this weakness is the lack of well-developed methodologies to monitor such “processes and the emerging aspects of education as, for example, in countries such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen, which are affected by continuous or new conflicts of various socio-political and cultural causes in the Arab region” (UNESCO, 2015g). Often for methodological reasons, M&E systems have focused on the impacts on students with less, if any, consideration for the effects of education on their future lives, such as their health, their social and economic opportunities, and wider societal benefits.

## What are the decisive factors in building effective and efficient M&E systems?

A good M&E system is more than a mere statistical task, a database or an external obligation. For the M&E system to be effective and efficient, it must be planned properly, managed efficiently and provided with adequate resources to make it sustainable. Effective policy-making in education requires information on whether governments are doing things right and whether the desired results are being achieved (Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2010). Strong yet adaptable M&E systems provide the means to compile and integrate all the necessary information into the policy cycle, thus laying the basis for enabling sound governance and accountability in education policies.

A synergetic M&E system can help not only governments, development partners and donors, but all those concerned with education and its quality and coverage. Since such an M&E gathers and disseminates robust data as evidence, it provides a reliable base for effecting improvements to quality and reach of education to all. This base should be made accessible to all the stakeholders. It would therefore be helpful to involve all stakeholders in the process of M&E to ensure buy-in and ownership. Furthermore, at this synergetic stage, the M&E system should be regarded as a long-term effort which requires a strategic commitment from the outset (Marriott and Goyder, 2009). According to Kusek and Rist (2004) there are six crucial components involved in building the sustainability of M&E systems, each of which needs continuous attention. These are: demand, clear roles and responsibilities, trustworthy and credible information, accountability, incentives, and capacity. Although these aspects are linked, it is difficult to establish the causal relationships between the various factors that contribute to the efficient performance of the system. Similarly, the exact nature of the contribution of each of these factors towards the performance parameters (effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) is difficult to establish.

## Harnessing technology to develop comprehensive M&E systems

There has been a growing demand for data comprehensive enough to meet the demands of users such as decision-makers, planners, and the community. Such data need to include details of disaggregation at various levels as also reliable data on key indicators and other qualitative determinants. Thanks to advances in digital technologies, a large volume of data can be made available. Technological advancements also have helped in the production of more data at the school level. Again, such data include, for example, not only the data sources within ministries of the environment, such as EMIS, but also data from other sources, such as significant household surveys, socio-economic surveys and special studies.

The key role of technologies in monitoring and evaluating education has been widely recognized by policy-makers, planners, donors and all stakeholders. When put to good use, technology can greatly reduce the time and administrative costs associated with M&E. Technology also improves the quality of data and reduces the time taken for collection, processing and analysis. There has been a significant acceleration in the use of ICTs for education since the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2013).

Brazil is reported to have one of most complete and complex M&E systems in the world (Vaillant, 2015). The system is used to formulate, implement and evaluate policies and programmes in the three tiers of government. Technical changes have been made over time to improve the M&E system in education to meet not only the political needs for the implementation of policy decisions and programs, but also to promote greater integration of the different components of the M&E system — a domain in which the capacity to benefit from technology developments has proved to be critical. Another example is that of Bhutan where “the National Education Assessment (NEA), is a system-wide assessment programme, is designed to investigate and monitor the ‘health’ of the education system” (Bhutan Board of Examinations, 2004). Its primary purposes are to provide policy-makers with information to monitor standards over time; to compare its performance with the international standards; to monitor the impact of particular programmes; and to make decisions about resource allocation, schools and teachers with information about whole school, class and individual pupil performance.

The extensive data collected under the Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy Program (ERfKE) in Jordan may be cited as another example. The programme is responsible for collecting and processing education data for analysis and interpretation, to evaluate the effectiveness of the education system and its internal efficiency, in accordance with the Strategic Plan of the Ministry. Similarly, the South African Schools Administration Management System has been introduced and is expected to eventually replace data collection through surveys. It is an integrated electronic application that is supplied free to schools and allows the capture of various types of school information such as parent and learner profiles and educator information as well timetables, finance, governance, assets and learning and teaching materials.

In addition, timely availability of individual student-level information helps to track student performance, as well as allocate resources efficiently. Countries such as Brazil, Nepal, Peru and the Republic of Korea can track student progress through the collection of student level information. Student tracking at the district/county level sometimes gets more attention through a systemwide approach to ensure that information on every student gets collected. Cambodia and two States in India are just two examples of where census-based systems are being gradually replaced and/or integrated with operational systems using information technology.

## Addressing the potential risks of generating large volumes of data

The generation of such large volumes of data, though useful from the angle of data availability, also poses certain challenges relating to the handling of big data. While technology has helped countries improve their existing databases and data-capturing processes using digital media, many countries (as for instance Cambodia, Jordan, Lebanon, Nepal and Palestine) have several databases, but they are not effectively integrated for data exchange. Indeed, some of these countries still upload data manually. In Asia, while some countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal face the challenge of insufficient capacity to use technology for M&E at all levels, others like India and Malaysia suffer from overutilization of technology. In some of the stronger economies where information and communications technology use has been growing, there is a tendency to have sophisticated technology that is not fully utilized.

The increasing volume of data collected may cast a burden on the data providers at the lower levels of authority. Often, demand for more information results in schools — especially teachers — being tasked with collecting several types of information, filling in survey forms and administering assessment tests, etc. This considerably affects their teaching schedule and the quality of teaching. Further, this can have more serious consequences on the provision of education in poorer countries, especially in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, for example, which has an acute shortage of teachers.

Furthermore, schools must ensure privacy and protect the rights of the respondents. According to Shroff (2009), “The moment a school collects information about a student, or a student’s family, there may be issues about the way the information is collected, how it is stored, how it is used and how and to whom it is disclosed.” An efficient information system must have strict measures to prevent any possible misuse of student information. The protection of student privacy is of significant importance in most developed countries. Some examples include the United States, which has enacted the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and New Zealand, which established the 1993 Privacy Act. In many developing countries, such legislation does not exist or is not robust, which raises questions about protecting student data from the possibility of misuse.

## Building strong internal capacity at all levels

### Building strong organizational and technical capacity at all levels of M&E system and improving career opportunities

The successful development of M&E systems, especially those developed using new digital technologies, depends first and foremost on the capacity to involve well trained personnel. Their capacity development needs range from design to analysis and data management. Staff need higher levels of ICT skills, proficiency in handling large masses of data, and training for statistical or database management and data analytics. The capacity to analyse and interpret data will increasingly have to focus on the needs of different users. The tools for data collection need to be carefully designed so that they do not omit any essential information and, at the same time, not include superfluous or ambiguous information. Attention must be paid to coordinating the capacity to design the tools and the capacity to analyse and interpret the data to ensure that outcomes can be achieved. In the absence of such a matching, the data system may run the risk of ending up with the collection of a large mass of unutilized data, while at the same time there may still be data gaps on certain specific demands of specific users. The proper storage and retrieval of such data is another challenge to be addressed by both technology and the capacity matching referred to above.

Many countries experience challenges related to M&E due to organizational and institutional issues rather than technical ones (see Bedi et al., 2006, cited in Holvoet [2014]; Wood et al., 2011). Addressing an M&E system’s gaps in technical capacities requires, “an approach that balances the development of individual skills with strengthening the organizational context in which M&E takes place. Newly trained staff must be supported by their organizations to transfer their new skills effectively into sound practices in data collection and use” (LaFond et al., 2007).

Training programmes should also reinforce the importance of M&E practices, emphasizing the use of M&E not only for reporting but for decision-making purposes. According to Holvoet (2014), one of the crucial elements in this regard is the establishment of an appropriate institutional structure to provide support and coordinate among the different personnel/units involved in the production, analysis and use of data. For this to occur, M&E personnel need a set of specialized skills and knowledge. However, in practice, the needed technical capacity and the ability of the M&E personnel to perform such wide-ranging tasks seldom gets much attention.

This present review concurs with LaFond et al. (2007) who also found that countries, generally, have taken the initiative to focus resources on assessing the capacity and performance of their M&E systems and have taken steps to develop a systematic approach to capacity-building. Since the needs are vast and varied, capacity builders must set priorities based on immediate as well as longer term needs. As noted by LaFond et al. (2007), “Performance objectives are useful for guiding capacity building and system strengthening and help avoid ad-hoc acceptance of assistance as it is offered.”

Lack of adequate support staff, lack of opportunities for continuous capacity development and lack of opportunities for career development seem to be recurrent issues faced even by countries with well-developed systems, as the Latin American countries cited above. The point is that without appropriate incentives and motivation, highly capable staff may not be easily retained. There is thus a clear need for establishing institutional support systems to sustain the technical capacities acquired by M&E staff.

The effectiveness of an M&E system can partly be judged by the demand for data within and outside the MOE, the quality and reliability of evidence produced and the extent evidence is used for planning and implementation purposes. The demand for evidence can be generated only when there is systematic, timely and reliable availability of data for all stakeholders. Ineffective use of data can be attributed to a lack of easy access to data as well as a lack of capacity of the user to use the data efficiently and effectively.

Countries could use awareness-raising and advocacy tactics to improve the effective collection and use of data — however, most countries have not yet made systematic efforts in this direction. For example, many governments do not prioritize media training on how to present data in the right way; this may result in elaborate monitoring and evaluation reports not being disseminated as broadly as possible.

Finally, traditional M&E systems typically involve developing and monitoring of key education indicators. However, many countries are moving towards more inclusive M&E systems that consider the inputs of all stakeholders — that is, those on both the demand and the supply sides. More active participation of the target beneficiaries/communities and NGOs is expected to improve the accountability of the governments, the quality of monitoring and access to data.



## Promoting the effective use of evidence collected by M&E systems within the media and civil society

A key learning point is that the effective use of information, even when it is available, depends on the capacity of the end users as well as the way the information is made available to users. Attractive packaging and appealing presentation of data are more likely to captivate the attention of the target audience and motivate their quick response to the problems identified. Systematic provision of awareness raising opportunities for different stakeholders about the use of information from M&E is uncommon. Only through systematic efforts and advocacy can the social accountability factor be improved and converted into an operational response mechanism.

## Political commitment and leadership for frameworks and funding

There is an undeniable need for high-level commitment and political will for making M&E systems work better and deliver up to the expectations of various stakeholders. Such commitment would lead to the provision of sufficient resources needed for developing the necessary infrastructure and the human resources to develop efficient, effective and sustainable M&E systems.

First, there is a need for governments to consider financial sustainability and have proper plans in place for developing and maintaining sustainable M&E systems. As noted by the Asia Pacific review of M&E systems, (UNESCO, 2015h), the initial development of M&E systems in many Asia Pacific countries were funded by international organizations including UNESCO. Now there is a need for more domestic funding by the countries concerned to sustain the systems that were created. National financial plans should factor in all the costs needed to both build and maintain the system, as well as other operational costs. It is therefore important that the ministry responsible for finance and planning hold line ministries accountable not only for the timely spending of the money allotted on the relevant programmes but also for ensuring achievement of the desired outcomes. For instance, in the Arab region, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine have considered the development of their M&E systems as part of a strong national commitment to attain national education goals (UNESCO, 2014). In contrast, South Sudan and Mauritania in Africa, for example, have built their M&E systems with donor funding and technical assistance.

Second, strong legal frameworks are essential to support the operationalization of effective M&E systems and ensure better accountability and transparency about the expenditure of funds allocated to M&E. They will also ensure the systematic availability of reliable evidence to measure the impact of policies and programmes, and the effectiveness of those expenditures. A system of performance management, located preferably at a high level in government is required. This in turn means that the whole system needs to be supported by statistical agencies that are responsible for the timely collection of quality and reliable data that is need based and, if necessary, goes beyond what is normally collected. An efficient M&E system will not be complete without a fully functional response mechanism from top management on alerts flagged for key national and international indicators. It is worth remembering in this context that what is measured gets done, and therefore performance measurement against key indicators is useful to assist management in establishing a focused and quick response to alerts.

Third, while most countries have a National Strategic Framework and a National Coordinating Body, a well designed M&E Framework is often missing. According to the Caribbean Health Research Council (2011), “This is because the entities responsible for implementing M&E systems are relatively new and have fragile institutional structures and weak platforms from which to advocate for M&E practice.” As a result, many governments have taken initiatives to build a more firmly institutionalized national setting conducive to continuous results-based M&E activities tied to planning, budget allocations and decision-making for implementation and accountability.

The development of a national M&E system in South Africa is a good example to demonstrate the above point. Historically, until 2000, there was no centrally driven M&E system. After 2000, there was a growing interest in M&E. As a result, the Presidency became interested in the role of M&E across government. Soon thereafter, in 2005, the cabinet approved the development of an M&E system (National Treasury , 2007). A functional M&E system was planned for each department, including education. In 2007, a policy framework was published to guide the M&E system, which included the need for frameworks for programme performance information and for statistical data quality and evaluation. This in turn helped to strengthen the links between the Presidency, the Treasury, and the national statistics agency. As a result, policy frameworks were developed for these elements between 2007 and 2011 (Engela & Ajam (2010), cited in Phillips et al., (2014)).

Other examples exist, like Benin, where an office for the Evaluation of Public Policy has been in place since 2007 as part of the Office of the Prime Minister, with a clear mandate to evaluate all public policies. The national M&E system is now organized around a chain of parties which carry out planning, programming, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, in Kenya, an M&E unit was set up in the Ministry of Planning in 2008 (Republic of Kenya, 2012). According to CLEAR (2013), one of the main tasks of this unit is to prepare all monitoring products, particularly the Annual Progress Reports on the National Medium Term Plan related to Kenya Vision 2030.

Equivalent national M&E units have been set up in Brazil, India, Jordan, Sri Lanka (Sivagnanasothy, n.d.), Malaysia, Nepal, Palestine, Papua New Guinea (Government of Papua New Guinea, 2008), and others. However, there are also countries in the developing world that have yet to establish a fully functional and operational national level M&E unit. For example, in several countries of the Caribbean region, and in countries in conflict areas, such as Afghanistan, Central African Republic and Somalia, and there is lack of well-developed national M&E systems.

## The barriers M&E systems face to improve policy-making in education

The value of evidence-based policy-making in education has been well documented and argued widely as discussed in the preceding sections. The true impact of policies can be realized only through systematic monitoring of the implementation of the policy and measurement of its impact. A good M&E system for education can help policy-makers and planners articulate better evidence-informed policies that take into account both the political perspective and the perspectives of users.

## Striking the balance between overwhelming data and relevant evidence

As discussed in the earlier section, abundant data are being produced by various M&E systems through school census, school assessments, and other M&E initiatives. These days, statistical reports and school databases are often available online. In Palestine, all quantitative data for various indicators are compiled through existing databases using computerized matrices linked to the computerized financial system. These computerized calculation mechanisms are used in transforming qualitative results to quantitative measures. The monitoring mechanisms for the school information system are computerized and placed on the web page to link with schools on an ongoing basis. The publication of the reports on the ministry's web page supports public awareness. Chile is another example of a country that publishes its education data on a dedicated public website. In Colombia, school-level and aggregate SABER test results are widely disseminated and made available for downloading on the ICFE website.

However, although the availability of such comprehensive information could help policy-makers to identify areas that need more attention (such as school drop-out numbers, achievement rates, accessibility in remote areas, quality of teaching, and others), they are not often used as part of the policy-making process. The use of evidence is dependent on the way the information is disseminated. It may be that the information that is produced may not cater to specific user demand or to a specific audience. For example, in Colombia, the information disseminated does not fully cater to the specific needs of local policy-makers, principals, teachers and parents; it caters more to national policy-makers and the press. Another example is Myanmar, where the country report noted that schools and teachers are not being informed on what the data says, and that the analyses are not being effectively used to improve the curriculum, education policy, or planning. Similarly, in Nepal, while there is a standard and well-developed school-record-keeping system, it does not yet meet the needs of schools in the areas of management, decision-making, and enhancement of the teaching and learning process to improve the quality of education. In the case of Egypt, reports produced by the M&E systems are either routinely generated regardless of demand or produced on an ad hoc basis.

In addition, many countries have poor dissemination mechanisms to subnational levels: for example, statistical reports may be too technical with many aggregated tables, or may be disaggregated only at the provincial/district level and not further down. National level data may not be of much help when it comes to the micro subprovincial or district level in a remote inaccessible area where the data are not well understood. It is not uncommon to come across situations where certain macro-level data look quite fair but not so at particular micro levels. This is the case for example for enrolment or drop-out rates. It is therefore important for local programme planning and implementation to disseminate in a timely way data that are relevant to the particular level. In addition, most publications, especially in Africa, are not available in local languages.

The perceived unreliability of data is an additional reason for such data being infrequently used to inform policy and planning. For example, the Regional Review of M&E practices in the Asia Pacific region mentions that there are low levels of trust in the quality of data produced in many countries. While some countries produce abundant data, the lack of trust in the quality of the data and lack

of necessary capacity among the lower levels of education systems, such as in Myanmar and Nepal, can also lead to poor utilization of data for policy-making (UNESCO Bangkok, EPR Unit, 2015).

Another related factor is the lack of culture and technical capacity to fully harness M&E systems, as noted in the Regional Review of M&E systems in Latin America (Elacqua and Alves, 2015). The review points out that many countries do generate abundant data, but not much of it is found to be informing policy-making. This is also the case in the Arab region with many countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Palestine producing substantial data with no proper measures to ensure evidence-based policy-making in practice. The regional reports of M&E systems in the Arab region (Ouaj and Belkachla, 2014) and in Africa (Wako and Sibanda, 2015) also mention that there is low utilization of data for policy-making, and even when it does, it is influenced by political decisions (UNESCO, 2014; 2015g; 2015i).

At the national level, many policy-makers are often too busy to read and thoroughly understand the policy implications of a statistical report. Again, in some cases, lack of capacity and inclination may be the cause. In such circumstances, they tend to depend on their own intuition gained from years of experience, from their familiarity with the sociopolitical context, and from short briefs prepared for them by their staff that tend to gloss over finer details and disparities that exist at the local level. The end result can be that many local level problems fail to attract the attention of top policy-makers and are therefore neglected. At subnational levels, even though the functionaries may not have the same time constraints as top-level functionaries, they may still lack adequate capacity in data understanding, resulting in issues not receiving appropriate and timely follow-up. The situation at the micro level is often no better given that the functionaries at that level may not even know why they are collecting information or what the data mean.

The normal benchmark for the effectiveness of an M&E system is the extent to which the information produced is utilized. Effectiveness is also linked with its sustainability. In short, 'for evaluations to be useful, they must be used' (OECD-DAC, 1991). When evidence is well utilized it improves the overall efficiency of the M&E system (e.g. Brazil, Chile and Republic of Korea).

## Active stakeholder involvement remains a key challenge

In most developing countries, depending on specific constitutional arrangements, national governments are responsible for providing basic education. However, as a result of the growing number of countries that are pursuing decentralization of their education systems, transferring of responsibilities to the subnational level has taken various forms including devolving management responsibilities to lower levels of government (see also King and Cordeiro Guerra, 2005). In many countries, civil society plays the role of education provider to the socially marginalized and the poor, and in some other cases they constitute the only source of education, such as in the refugee camps in Kenya (Mackinnon, 2014), or providing essential services including education to remote indigenous population in Nepal and the Philippines. Communities get also involved in providing supplementary resources to the education system as for example in Bhutan, where many primary schools are run by the community (Bhutan Royal Government, 1999), and in Cambodia where the

school system heavily relies on inputs from the community (Bray, 1999). There are similar cases of private sector involvement in the provision of education, such as Azim Premji Foundation in India, and Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and others working in several countries of Africa and Asia.

However, unlike other social development sectors like agriculture, health, and community development, the quantum and quality of involvement of stakeholders such as NGOs, faith-based organizations and the communities, in M&E of education appears to be negligible. Although many countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific have apex NGO coordinating bodies — which could provide a platform for better coordination of monitoring progress among NGOs and between NGOs, governments and donor agencies, wider systematic involvement of NGOs and the community in M&E activities in the education sector is limited. The presence of apex NGO coordinating bodies in many countries occasionally triggers their involvement in the planning or the dissemination stages of a government-led programme, but this can by no means be considered as being involved in the monitoring process. The South Africa report, for example, states that although civil society has influence, it has tended to be largely peripheral to the activities of the State. In Chile, voluntary services are limited to establishing and distributing awards for excellence to teachers.

Developing the role of communities in monitoring has remained largely theoretical, and has not yet been translated into reality. Even where attempts have been made to operationalize the concept, they have become so routine that they seem to have remained mere ritualistic meetings for purposes of record only. There are still some examples of community-led initiatives of monitoring in education, such as ASER (India and Pakistan) and UWEZO (Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda) where volunteers and parents are involved in collecting annual student performance data and surveys at the household level. Results of such activities are communicated to the governments, ministries, teachers and parents to assess the quality of the schools. The assessments are used as accountability and governance mechanisms by communities and civil society organizations to raise issues of education delivery and quality (Banerjee et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the results of their surveys and studies are often hardly considered in policy formulation processes. Community monitoring can be effective only when the target groups are trained in the appreciation and use of data for monitoring and evaluating the performance of a school or a learning institution situated in the community. The lesson is that for doing this, the data need to be simplified and presented to the community monitoring and evaluation committees in a way that makes sense to them and may spur them to remedy the problems or issues being brought to their notice.

## Local communities are often unlikely to use evidence from evaluations

Increasing levels of participation by various players, including local communities, in the provision of education has generated greater demand from stakeholders for evidence to ensure greater accountability and transparency. However, the ability to effectively utilize such evidence for monitoring is hampered for several reasons. The first relates to difficulties in accessing such information. In many countries there is a right of the public to obtain any information from the public domain or any information that is not classified. There are also special commissioners in some countries to ensure the provision of such information to members of the public who may

want to have such information. However, it is not uncommon to see some hesitation on the part of the functionaries in charge of such information to part with the same on demand. The process of obtaining such specialized information, or information pertaining to particular micro-level units, is usually desultory at best. This may discourage people from further pursuing their enquiry. In addition, many countries try to restrict access to such data due to sociopolitical or other administrative reasons.

The second reason relates to poor data quality. In some countries, data collection mechanisms may not be reliable and often the data that are produced are not of good quality or relevant. There have been instances where the logic of causal relationships between two variables that are correlated has been found to be too weak to gain credence. Confusing formats of cross-tabulations are also not uncommon. Important local level information, such as the socio-economic context of the learner, is usually not covered fully in the final reporting formats. Furthermore, timeliness is sometimes lacking both in the reporting process from subnational to national levels, and in the response mechanism from national to subnational level. Since the time between the collection and publication of data is usually quite long, micro-level planners and administrators at local levels often do not get to use the final product in a timely and therefore useful manner. Ensuring such timeliness will not only involve making suitable infrastructure and training available, but will also entail some attitude-building exercises for the staff involved, particularly at the subnational and school levels, to gain a better understanding and use of M&E.

Some sensitive issues, such as the education of indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants or education in prisons, tend to be less reported and largely unaccounted for. Apprehension about perception of certain data by the public as reflecting performance in a poor light may result in a lack of trust about providing such data on the part of data providers. In some cases, where inadequacies are revealed, governments may not trust civil society and the community in general, due to concerns that these data may be used against the government. For this reason, data providers are generally reluctant to disclose too much information as they fear that it may lead to complications and sometimes avoidable trouble with or for the government.

To cite an example, the advent of social media and other social networks that use electronic media has increased the pressure on governments and ministries of education to release certain data, such as exam results, in a timely manner. In Africa, NGOs like Uwezo, functioning in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, have made use of mobile phones to instantly release results of their student assessments to the public. As a result, thanks to mass media and social media, the performance of students is discussed and debated widely in the public arena. This has raised several questions aimed at the government regarding education outcomes in terms of the capacity and skill levels of students.

A final point relates to the lack of ownership of information due to a low level of awareness of the importance of evidence and its potential use. Often in countries with low literacy levels, such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Niger and Somalia, there is less awareness about the importance of education. Again, due to cultural reasons, certain communities may ignore such evidence, such as girls' education (in some countries in the Arab region, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia for example). In some cases, ignoring the data may also be due to the lack of certain basic infrastructure in schools — for example, proper toilets for girl students. Education may also not be prioritized in

some communities where conflict and migration are pressing issues. In such cases, the communities are more concerned about their survival and consider education a low priority. Low demand and lack of ownership of evidence is common in these situations as well.

## The building blocks for developing effective M&E systems

The following section synthesizes some major building blocks for M&E systems beyond the foundations detailed above. The building blocks were identified from the literature and the regional reviews, which could inform policy recommendations for their further development:

- Promoting strong national ownership and accountability;
- Strengthening systematic coordination; and
- Designing M&E as a tool for decision-making at the national, subnational and school levels.

### Promoting strong national ownership

Countries lacking strong national ownership, as well as ownership at subnational or local levels, are unable to have sustainable M&E systems

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness established country ownership as a key principle of aid effectiveness whereby “partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development actions” (OECD, 2005). Strong national ownership and leadership are the most important critical factors for ensuring good development outcomes and sustainable monitoring and evaluation systems for education. The ownership principle in the Paris Declaration States that partner (developing and transition) countries will exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development efforts themselves (ibid.).

Lack of ownership can result in a weak M&E system that can affect the evidence-based policy and planning efforts in education at the national level. The role of donors and international organizations can be to provide support for sustainable national M&E systems through capacity development. However, such capacity development must be owned and internalized by the countries involved and used to develop their own M&E systems. An M&E system is at a well-developed stage when it is independent and/or synergetic, and often has good national ownership — as demonstrated in many Latin American countries such as in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, where the M&E system is used for formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes at all levels. Also, the M&E system includes all stages of education from early childhood education to tertiary education. This is possible because of the strong national ownership and realization of the need for a well-developed and coordinated M&E system for education (Elaqua and Alves, 2015).

It follows from the principle of ownership that the data collected should be analysed at levels as close to their collection point as possible. However, data collection at the subnational level, and other micro levels, rarely get analysed and discussed at those levels and this puts the element of ownership at great risk. This is a common scenario in countries even in an independent or synergetic stage of development. For example, countries like India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tanzania (mainland), and Viet Nam have district-level or provincial-level data collection mechanisms, but the data is sent to the central EMIS unit without much use of it for monitoring or planning at the district or local level. The final products that come out of EMIS (i.e. statistical reports) have very little impact at the local level. This may result in situations where the administrators, managers and teachers at subnational levels (provincial, district or school) who are often engaged in the collection of data are often not fully aware of the purpose of collecting the data, and what their possible relevance might be for them in their activities. Therefore, there is hardly any surprise when the functionaries at these levels consider such data collection as a mere routine which they have to follow just because it is demanded of them by their immediate supervisors, senior officers of the ministry or by the representatives of a donor agency.

In sum, ownership and accountability are considered two important aspects that sustain an M&E system (Whitty, B. 2010; Busia, K. 2010). They can lead to the development of a holistic approach to accountability, which promotes better utilization of information at all levels and by all stakeholders, as demonstrated in some of the advanced M&E systems mentioned above.

### Effective M&E systems focus on delivering on the main issues education faces in the country

There are structural variations between the different countries in the delivery of education services to the various target groups. The issues of coordination of M&E systems within the contexts of such structural variations need to be addressed adopting a country-specific approach. Some examples are discussed below with reference to contextual issues.

In many countries, basic education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, tertiary education, non-formal education, literacy and early childhood care and education are run by different ministries or departments (e.g. Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania and others) with no proper coordination mechanism in place. In India, for example, there is a separate Ministry of Women and Child Development responsible for running an early childhood care and education programme through its Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme. This situation has, in turn, resulted in the creation of several databases — sometimes more than one for each department/ministry (India and Sri Lanka). In contrast, the EMIS for the Department of Education falls under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Back in 2015 several countries conducted comprehensive national assessments of their progress towards achieving EFA goals since 2000. The country-led assessments in Asia Pacific and Africa revealed that not many countries in these regions had clear M&E plans for education and development issues that emerged over that period of time. For example, peace education is a critical issue in many post-conflict countries or countries that have encountered isolated violence (e.g. Kenya, Uganda and Sri Lanka). Nevertheless, no clearly focused and issue-specific M&E mechanism is available to capture data on the various peace education initiatives undertaken in these countries.



In the Arab region, there are two major emerging issues common to many countries. The first issue is linked to ongoing or new conflicts of a political, religious or ethnic nature, for example in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen and to some extent Jordan. Internal conflicts have led to population movement (refugees and internally displaced people, or IDP) which, in turn, has raised the issue of provision of education to such populations. The second emerging issue is centered on the concept known as Arab Spring, which involves the advancement of social justice and youth employment. Addressing these issues involves significant changes to the curriculum to integrate peace education and 21st century skills, for example (Ouaf and Belkachla, 2014).

Similarly, for HIV and AIDS education, M&E is seen to be quite weak. There is no systematic integration of HIV and AIDS education data into the education database and the monitoring of programmes is largely driven by donor agencies, with no clear framework or standards being developed by the governments. While some countries (e.g. Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda) have made great progress in the area of HIV and AIDS education, there is a general lack of availability of systematic and reliable tools to measure these achievements. Even where such information can be obtained through proxy indicators identified from Demographic Health Surveys (often produced by ministries of health), its use seems to be negligible. For example, in relation to HIV and AIDS, there is a critical shortage of reliable and disaggregated data on absenteeism of students and teachers, teacher shortages, classroom and school closures, class sizes and school enrolments, and all lacking data disaggregated by sex and age (see UNESCO, 2006). This shows that ministries of education need appropriate M&E systems to provide comprehensive data about the impact of HIV and AIDS on learners, teachers and schools so as to assist policy-makers and planners in developing better targeted interventions with built-in mechanisms for timely responses. While many countries do not have an M&E system that can cater to such emerging challenges, some countries have managed to address the issue successfully. Uganda is one of a few countries in Africa to achieve such a significant reduction. An important tool in this success was the use of evidence and information to educate Ugandans about the existence of HIV and AIDS and ways to protect themselves (Bakilana et al., 2005).

As discussed, the impetus for M&E in developing countries has emerged from international multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, and is largely due to the critical nature of the crises that many of these countries have faced in terms of health (HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria), and poverty (famine, drought, armed conflict and migration). However, many emerging issues are not properly monitored due to a paucity of data. Often these programmes are run as donor driven initiatives with specific objectives and expected outputs. Measuring outcomes of some of the emerging initiatives, such as peace education, life skills, nomadic education, refugee education, 21st century skills, HIV and AIDS education, citizenship and sustainable development, warrants the availability of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to study progress and assess impact beyond the end of an education programme or intervention. This is often difficult due to the traditional quantitative study design of most data collection formats in the ministries of education.

Such policy issues pose new challenges which, then, raise critical issues regarding the designing of an M&E system that is flexible enough to integrate and adapt to changing priorities and dimensions.

## Strengthening systematic coordination

There is a need for an overarching coordination framework across all institutions responsible for the provision of education

The process of education from pre-school to the completion of tertiary education is a process that spans over fifteen years depending on the choice of stream that an individual pursues. Monitoring progress of an individual's education and hoping that the desired outcome will be achieved at the end is a formidable challenge for any government. It is widely accepted that the availability of comprehensive, systematic and reliable information can help governments to monitor any cohort of students over a period of time. The existing monitoring mechanisms for education around the world have been developed separately under different ministries providing different streams of education. There is a need for establishing overarching coordination framework across all such institutions responsible for the provision of education.

ECCE is one policy area that relies heavily on intersectoral coordination and benefits from an effective decentralization of services. However, the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010 notes that coordination between the relevant sectors is weak (especially for services for children aged 0–3 years) (UNESCO and UNICEF, 2012). Still, some countries, such as Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Thailand, have been successful in integrating the various services provided for ECCE through coordination mechanisms developed at the national level. Bangladesh Early Childhood Development (ECD) Network and the Philippines ECD Council promote better coordination between the MOE and the Ministry of Health and other agencies (ARNEC, 2010). However, many such efforts suffer from a lack of accurate, reliable, valid and disaggregated data. Some countries in the Asia Pacific region also face the challenge of a lack of proper integration of data from different sectors to make M&E more effective (ARNEC, 2011). As a result, most education monitoring systems lack an overarching coordination framework that works both horizontally across the ministries and vertically to include all levels of the government and all levels within the MOE.

Evidence from the regional reports suggests weak coordination within MOEs and between line ministries responsible for education. For example, in Myanmar, the MOE, the Ministry of Border Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs all collect data on the education programmes they implement independently using different methods and frequency for collection. Similarly, in Malaysia, about thirty-eight divisions of the MOE are responsible for monitoring their own subsectoral work. Each division collects its own data and is responsible for such collection and analysis across the federal, state and local levels of the education system. However, many countries have realized the need for a strong vertical and a strong horizontal coordination for effective and efficient functioning of M&E, and for many, plans are being made to realize this need. Even very small countries in the Pacific region, such as the Solomon Islands (Pedersen and Coxon, 2009), Kiribati (MOE Kiribati, 2008) and Fiji (Ministry of Education Fiji, 2014) have made good progress in trying to strengthen the coordination within and across their respective systems.

## Systematic communication and coordination within and between government line ministries/departments will result in more effective monitoring

Even though it is widely accepted that the availability of comprehensive, systematic and reliable information can help governments monitor any cohort of students over a period of time, the existing monitoring mechanisms for education around the world have been developed separately under different institutional arrangements. As a result, and as already mentioned, most education monitoring systems lack an overarching coordination and communication framework or an explicit reporting and governance structure to make them more effective.

There is a need for effective monitoring of students all the way until they complete their education. Some countries, such as Brazil, Peru, Republic of Korea and South Africa, have come up with different mechanisms to monitor the implementation of some of their own programmes through coordination. However, not all such efforts are considered to be effective. An efficient intersectoral coordination framework is much needed to integrate the reporting processes for monitoring the implementation of policy recommendations as well as for clarifying responsibility and accountability across sectors. Establishing a coordination framework will ultimately result in more consistent and timely implementation of policy recommendations (World Bank, 2007). It will also ensure better coordination between different mechanisms developed by different ministries to more effectively harness the monitoring efforts of each ministry. This will reduce the risk of the duplication of efforts and ensure that all priority areas within the education sector get the attention and coverage that they require and deserve. However, this is easier said than done and the harmonization of data sets from different sources is often still unrealized, especially in developing countries. In sum, there are real challenges in ensuring that the implementation of monitoring processes is comprehensive, rigorous and timely and that they promote the overall coherence and cross-sectoral consistency of implementation.

The implementation of an effective coordination mechanism generally relies on strong leadership at the top level of the administration and on the participation of all the involved ministries. Such coordination mechanisms could help to monitor and evaluate the contributions of education to other fields of development, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Designing M&E as a tool for decision-making at the national, subnational and school levels

### M&E should be an integral part of any policy or planning cycle

The effectiveness of a good M&E system depends on several factors, including those highlighted above, such as coordination among line ministries and departments, and between stakeholders; the availability of financial and human resources; the potential for generating high-quality and reliable evidence; and the availability of the infrastructure necessary for such a system to function.

M&E systems focus on measuring the results produced by the programme-implementing departments. According to Lopez-Acevedo et al. (2012), “such M&E systems may exist at the level of an individual agency, a specific department, the ministry, or the government as a whole.” However, the issue is whether such M&E can provide timely and relevant quality information about the performance of education policies, programmes, and projects — at the national and subnational levels. It should be “able to identify what works, what does not work, and the reasons why” (ibid.).

Ideally, an M&E system should also provide information about the performance of functionaries at the district level, such as administrators/managers, and at subdistrict levels right up to the frontline units at the school level. How well such a system functions is highly dependent on the priority given to M&E at all levels and stages of a programme and its implementation.

It is evident from the regional reviews that many countries tend to look at M&E as a programme-specific activity that is often recommended by an external donor agency. Low priority is given to M&E as an important management tool, which, in turn, results in insufficient allocation of technical staff and financial resources for this component from the concerned countries’ own budgets. Too often the end-result is an irregular and passive monitoring and evaluation exercises being undertaken which cannot provide a full picture of the outcomes and impact of the overall programme to the government and other stakeholders.

Prioritizing M&E as an integral part of any policy or planning cycle can result in a good M&E system. An effective and sustainable M&E system has three important characteristics. According to Lopez-Acevedo et al. (2012), the first is the intensive utilization of the M&E information provided by the system in one or more of the stages of the policy cycle and by various stakeholders. The second characteristic is the production of reliable and quality information, which should also be relevant and need-based. The third characteristic has to do with the sustainability of the M&E system, that is, the likelihood of an M&E system surviving and continuing to be operational, efficient and adaptable despite changes in the government or top officials of the concerned departments/ministries, changing policy issues/priorities, or the withdrawal of funding support of a donor agency.

Regular monitoring and evaluation is required in order to assess impact and to inform decision-making

M&E is a continuous process: indeed, M&E is about assessing changes in a given situation over a period of time. Such changes and their quantum and quality may be anticipated; but sometimes they may be unanticipated too. What is important is that such measurements contribute to a full understanding of the changes, whether they are positive or negative. Expected changes and windfalls may be positive in nature; however, sometimes some changes may reflect failures or unexpected problems. Understanding the causes of negative changes is particularly useful in revising or correcting policy design and/or implementation issues.

Monitoring seeks to answer the question of “what is happening?” and “how is it happening?” Only a good evaluation can answer the “why” questions of both what has happened and what has not. As previously noted, M&E activities cannot be split into distinct monitoring and evaluation modes: the distinction is only in the emphasis that is placed on one or other aspect at any point in the process. It is quite evident

in many countries, monitoring is given more prominence than evaluation when it comes to National Education Sector Plans, where evaluation activities are often, reduced to mid-term and final evaluations.

Evaluations are often carried out by consultants or independent agencies, and are often conducted as a requirement of funders and donors. Conventionally, emphasis has been more on input–output monitoring against benchmarks, which triggers the release of tranches of funding. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, however, more emphasis is placed on outcomes and the impacts on learning. Evaluations, if conducted at the right time and done well, can help to answer questions of impact of education on the learner, and the impact of policy implementation on the beneficiary group(s), goals and targets.

The traditional emphasis on the monitoring aspect may be due in part to the fact that countries rely largely on conventional data-gathering methods, principally surveys. Even with such methods, important information from open-ended questions are usually not summarized because it is extremely difficult to do so in the absence of systems to group them into convenient codes for consolidation. Doing this manually is a time-consuming and tedious task, so this type of information is not usually fully captured. Sometimes, key points may be captured but this is subject to the interest taken by the analyst. This leads to a situation of data processors tending to club vast arrays of responses into a few overall descriptions that they think could accommodate all the variations, which in turn means that important information may not be considered in the final analysis.

In cases where special studies are conducted on specific aspects of a policy or programme that may not lend themselves to closed-question survey formats, such findings need to be balanced with the findings of the main survey. However, in practice, what tends to happen is that there is a distinct lack of balance between ongoing performance monitoring and the conduct of planned evaluations.

Due to the aforesaid reasons, evaluations are often undertaken too late and tend to focus on the achievement of stated objectives. Too often they do not adequately assess the implementation process itself or the wider impacts or consequences. Thus they are unable to throw sufficient light particularly on issues arising and improvements needed. A better balance may possibly be achieved by initiating special evaluation studies alongside the monitoring process while implementation is still underway. It is important to ensure that such special studies are undertaken by fully trained and competent professionals. An important lesson is to ensure that independent evaluations are free to express what they actually find, positive or negative. Only then will the findings achieve their full value for introducing changes and informing future efforts.

Finally, evaluation results are generally not disseminated widely. Even if disseminated, they are often not owned by the implementers and too seldom reach the decision makers, partly due to the lack of adequate communication and advocacy skills on the part of the disseminators. Furthermore, evaluation results are often seen as just one of the final routine tasks of the implementation phase. The result should rather be seen as a continuum of the M&E process where findings from evaluations are to be used for the next policy formulation cycle. Too often there is hardly any effort to identify advocacy champions to trigger improved change processes. The hard lesson is that using evaluation findings in the preparation of policy notes and briefs as part of the process of achieving policy change is not yet sufficiently recognized as an essential part of M&E.

# Policy lessons

Countries must have a legal framework that recommends the setting up of a national M&E system for monitoring and evaluating education performance

Advocacy efforts should be taken to the top level of government for the development of proper legal frameworks for monitoring and evaluation. If a framework is already available but not updated, efforts must be taken to review and revise the framework, taking into account the current M&E needs. The needed technical support for developing the framework should be provided and the framework should clarify the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of key players; for example, division heads, deputy heads, monitoring officers, evaluation specialists, programme managers, inspectors and others responsible for decision-making within the Ministry of Education.

To ensure that the M&E system becomes effective, a suitable national M&E framework and relevant standards and mechanisms for monitoring at all levels must be established

The MoE, together with all ministries responsible for education, should ensure that M&E is integrated into all stages of policy, planning and implementation. To do so, the roles and purposes of M&E, and how it can help promote the efficient management and functioning of the education systems must be understood across all line ministries and departments. A coordination and communication framework could be developed with a view to integrating all the reporting processes from the different levels of the various ministries responsible for education and for monitoring implementation. Systematic capacity development efforts will be needed to ensure that suitable national M&E frameworks, with relevant standards and mechanisms for monitoring at all levels, are established.

The national M&E framework should be aligned with regional and international frameworks, targets, standards and mechanisms, including SDG4 — Education 2030

M&E systems at the country level should be developed in alignment with regional and international monitoring frameworks. For M&E systems to support the policies, goals and targets for education in a jurisdiction, they should produce data, knowledge and information that can be used for comparative research and policy analysis. Educational development does not proceed in isolation and the study of

other systems of education has a distinguished record of informing innovations at the country level. Such alignment of M&E systems implies identifying relevant indicators for meaningful comparisons and ensuring, to the extent possible, that the key terms have conceptual equivalence. Where countries participated in several regional or international organizations the process of alignment is inevitably more complex. Indeed, negotiated compromises may be called for. Alignment should help to simplify the process of prioritization of certain indicators over others and reduce duplication of efforts and the associated costs.

### Adequate resources, both human and financial, must be provided for the setting up of a national M&E system for education

The M&E framework must have a detailed budget for setting up the M&E system with costs included for both infrastructure and technical staff. Steps should be taken by the MoE to ensure that there is strong and committed central political leadership and a comprehensive national M&E plan available to guide the actions to be taken to achieve the objectives of the M&E system. Efforts should be taken to sensitize all senior government functionaries, including Parliamentarians and Senate members for example, to ensure that adequate resources are allotted to support systematic monitoring and evaluation. In addition, attractive staff incentives and career opportunities should be created in order to retain highly skilled staff in M&E units. Lastly, resources should be dedicated for conducting special and parallel evaluation studies.

### Adequate professional capacities should be ensured at the top national level to facilitate effective coordination between government departments and agencies

Capacity development opportunities for able and responsive professionals at the top level should be made available in order to ensure the proper functioning of the M&E system within and across ministries responsible for education. Where such capacity is available but found to be weak, provision should be made to build adequate capacity. Such capacity should particularly include skills of data appreciation. Strong leadership should further ensure that necessary capacities are similarly built in all the coordinating institutions and agencies at all levels. Systematic assessment of the capacities of the M&E staff should be conducted periodically. Adequate funds and other resources must be provided for regular training of M&E staff on various technical aspects of M&E, including its use as a tool for effective and responsive programme implementation. Finally, M&E staff should also have the capacities for the effective presentation and dissemination of evidence to all stakeholders, including the public.

## Systematic and genuine coordination between the M&E system and other stakeholders should be ensured to promote transparency, accountability and continuous improvement

To improve firsthand knowledge and understanding of M&E and its uses, opportunities should be provided for education officials to be exposed to different approaches and techniques for M&E in the different ministries concerned with education. Governments could set up suitable platforms to assist coordination with the various stakeholders, including NGOs, community organizations and beneficiaries, in the areas of planning, implementation and M&E. Possibilities of using Apex NGO coordinating bodies, where available, could be explored for the coordination of monitoring activities of NGOs working in several geographical regions of a country in order to achieve more harmonized progress reporting. Proactive community and NGO engagement with the MoE should be encouraged as a way of ensuring sustained strengthening of M&E systems. Greater efforts should be taken to ensure better coordination between producers and users of information through effective involvement of stakeholders.

## All efforts should be made to promote the effective use of data

Action should be taken to sensitize all the relevant actors across the concerned ministries to proactively access and use evidence from M&E for the purpose of improving implementation. Both monitoring and evaluation must be seen as essential inputs to the regular reporting exercises of line ministries to Parliament. Efforts should be made to improve the transparency and accountability of M&E processes. Particular efforts are needed so that M&E data are used to improve understanding of impacts and results. Evaluation reports should be made available to all stakeholders. Actions should be taken to ensure that:

- the findings of evaluation studies form an effective basis for further action on applied research, analysis and briefs for advocacy in order to bring about suitable changes;
- the timeliness of data reporting and the feedback from top management are streamlined so as to make M&E an operational management tool for timely adjustments in planning and implementation; and
- all stakeholders, including NGOs, community organizations and beneficiaries, as well as functionaries of other relevant ministries, are sensitized through advocacy and have the capacities needed to use M&E information in ways that result in substantial improvements to education performance.



## State-of-the art technology and technical capacities are the most critical requirements

Wherever needed, state-of-the-art technology in handling voluminous data should be introduced with a view to achieving speed and precision in handling such data; this may warrant the allocation of adequate resources for installing the needed hardware and software and also for recruiting and training the needed skilled human resources to operate them and deliver the expected results. A suitable data development strategy should also help to increase data processing speed and quality, these being critical to the credibility of an M&E system. The capacity development needs of M&E staff should be addressed so that they have the technical capacities for different types of evaluations.

## Conclusion: Monitoring and Evaluation in the context of SDG 4

To achieve harmonious development of the education sector in its broad scope, corresponding to the holistic vision of SDG 4 — Education 2030, a comprehensive approach to education information and data is essential. This could help improve understanding of transitions between levels and types of education, and the outcomes of education in terms of learning and its contributions to sustainable development.

The monitoring of SDG 4 — Education 2030, nationally, regionally and internationally, implies the progressively closer integration of M&E activities, including the different surveys and databases on education, training, and lifelong learning. However, such integration is a complex and long-term endeavour that is technically challenging and also requires intensive and systematic coordination and cooperation, particularly as responsibilities for education, training and lifelong learning are normally shared between several ministries. While countries have committed to reporting against agreed targets and indicators, it will also be important that such reports have in mind the big picture of education and lifelong learning system development. In practical terms, this means attention to possible synergies between different subsectors, the SDG4 targets and their indicators, so that progress in one area of education policy supports other areas.

Ensuring the interoperability of data is a strategically important measure that should help to reduce duplication of efforts on data collection and analysis. To optimize the contributions of education and lifelong learning towards other SDGs, it is necessary to incorporate, or elaborate upon, the monitoring of the impacts of education on many other aspects of sustainable development. As the international education agenda (SDG4 — Education 2030) is fully integrated into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, education systems will be expected to report on their contributions across the SDGs and on a wide range of contemporary issues such as the needs of refugees and migrants, preventing violent extremism, social exclusion, climate change and disaster preparedness. Just as synergies should be identified for the M&E of progress towards SDG4, links between SDG4 and policies corresponding to other SDGs should be made. Indeed, the SDGs are integrated and indivisible and balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The whole of sustainable development is greater than the sum of the parts.

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## Activating Policy Levers for Education 2030

### The Untapped Potential of Governance, School Leadership, and Monitoring and Evaluation Policies

In laying the foundation and conditions for the delivery and sustainability of good quality education, the formulation of strong legal frameworks and effective policies and plans remains central to achieving education development goals and promoting lifelong learning. As a recent history of education shows, the education sector is not short of ideas but often struggles to put them into practice. Well-worded policies may remain irrelevant in practice unless the right policy levers are used to address the persistent implementation gap.

This report focuses on three strategic policy levers that together can help governments reach higher levels of education quality, equity and inclusiveness. It clearly demonstrates the untapped potential of adequate governance, effective and instructional school leadership, and better monitoring and evaluation systems that could be critical to the achievement of the SDG 4 – Education 2030.

### Stay in touch

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