Partnerships between Ministries of Education and international funding and technical assistance agencies

The case of Mozambique

Tuomas TAKALA
with Mmantsetsa MAROPE

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Introductory note

This study was planned and carried out as part of a more comprehensive study that was designed as an activity of the ADEA Working Group on Education Sector Analysis. The initial aim was to produce a comprehensive report containing three case studies (Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mozambique) and a synthesis. Findings from the three studies were presented and discussed at a seminar held in conjunction with the ADEA Biennial Meeting in Johannesburg, December 1999. Subsequently it became apparent that a comprehensive report would not materialize, and it was decided that the individual contributions could be published separately.

This study is based on interviews of a fairly large and representative set of respondents, and on documentary material. A total of 28 interviews were conducted by Mmantsetsa Marope and Tuomas Takala on the basis of a collaboratively designed scheme, in January and May 1999, respectively. Hence, the contextual information given in Chapter 1 focuses on the period up to May 1999. However, in finalizing the text key factual information on subsequent developments, until the end of 2001, has been added where relevant. The interpretations and conclusions presented have also been influenced by the participatory experience gained by Tuomas Takala in his role as a consultant in Mozambique since 1992 and by insights from earlier analyses of the sector-wide approach in the education sector (Gould *et al.*, 1998; Martin *et al.*, 2000). However, in spite of the delay in publishing this text, its content has not been substantially modified with the benefit of the author's (or anyone else's) hindsight, but has been retained primarily as an analysis of the different perceptions and interpretations of the birth process of the Education Sector Strategic Plan in Mozambique and of the resulting situation in developing 'partnerships', as reflected in the interviews made in 1999. The main concerns, and many of the lesser ones, that became evident through those interviews remain relevant today, and they can also serve as an input into the more generic discussion on partnerships and the Sector-Wide Approach.

Tuomas Takala is the author responsible for this text, parts of which also draw on a draft produced by Mmantsetsa Marope on the basis of the interviews she conducted. Comments from Lene Buchert, formerly Co-ordinator of the Working Group for Education Sector Analysis, have helped shape the structure of the text. Feedback from readers of this text will be welcome and can be sent via e-mail to the author at: katuta@uta.fi

Chapter 1 Context

Having been a one-party state and a state-controlled economy since Independence (1975), Mozambique became a constitutional multi-party democracy in 1990, and the first multi-party elections were held in 1994. Parallel to this development, liberalization of the economy was carried out. In 1992 the Peace Agreement signed between FRELIMO and RENAMO marked an end to a protracted civil war that had nearly paralyzed the country's economy and left the country with a seriously weakened infrastructure, including a badly damaged school network. The national poverty rate had increased from 15 per cent in 1980 to 60 per cent in 1995. In the mid-1990s, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was estimated at US$80 – then the lowest figure in the world.[1] The destruction left by the war, the low literacy rate (40 per cent in the population over 15 years of age), the very limited base of skilled human resources, and the annual population growth rate of nearly 3 per cent constituted a difficult environment for development.

Nevertheless, the Peace Agreement, the liberalization of the economy and the consolidation of democracy together provided an enabling environment for rebuilding the economy. The cessation of the war also ushered Mozambique into the collective Southern African Development Community's (SADC) effort to attain and sustain the peace and political stability that are prerequisite to the stimulation and sustenance of social and economic development. The rate of economic growth achieved by Mozambique in the second half of the 1990s has been impressive by any standard.

As a first step towards the holistic development of society, the Government of Mozambique (GOM) adopted a Programme of National Reconstruction which spanned from 1991 to 1994. The main objectives of the programme were the resettlement of refugees and of displaced people, as well as rehabilitation of infrastructure, such as schools. Underpinned by an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, agreed between GOM and the IMF/World Bank and implemented since 1987, the government further developed what could be viewed as the national development blueprint, i.e. a comprehensive programme of economic and social development for the period 1995-1999. This programme was based on FRELIMO's programme in the first multi-party elections and was subsequently adopted by the National Assembly. From then on, the development of all sectors of the economy, including education, was to follow this national development programme. In the words of a retrospective MINED document:"The government had been elected on the basis of an agenda for change, with pledges to prioritize education and make it more equitable. It had to translate its political will into concrete actions" (Ministry of Education of Mozambique, 1998b: 5).

The expected contribution of the education sector to the actualization of the national development programme was captured in the National Education Policy and Strategies for Implementation that was adopted by the government in August 1995. While the above-mentioned immediate context marks in important ways a break with the past, in hindsight it is noteworthy that much of the substance of the new

1. This turned out to be an underestimate, however. A recalculation of national accounts data by the Ministry of Finance in 1999 resulted in the GDP being revalued upwards by some 70 per cent. In addition the 1997 census revealed a total population of 16.1 million – down from the earlier estimate of 18.5 million (Economist Intelligence Unit: Mozambique Country Report 2000, 24).

education policy document is already discernible in an earlier MINED publication of 1990: *A educação em Moçambique – problemas a perspectivas*. This earlier document in turn was explicitly linked to the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (see Takala, 1998).

The 1995 document expresses the government's vision for the development of the education sector, as well as education's expected contribution to economic recovery, reconstruction and development. The strategy for operationalizing the national education policy was in turn elaborated in the Education Sector Strategic Plan for 1999-2003 (ESSP), which was approved in 1998. The preparation of the ESSP also benefited from the work done during the previous years on sub-sectoral Master Plans and a range of thematic issues. The latter were analyzed by Technical Commissions, working in the following areas: textbook provision, curriculum development, evaluation and examinations, teacher education, non-formal education, decentralization, privatization, and institutional development.

In general terms, the articulation of the ESSP was conceived as an effort led by the Ministry of Education (MINED) and undertaken in partnership with civil society and the external funding agencies (Ministry of Education of Mozambique, 1998b: 7-8; different interpretations regarding the respective roles are analyzed below in the section on origin of and motivation to adopt the SWA). The main responsibility in the preparation was borne at the level of policy formulation by a Steering Committee, bringing together the main decision-makers and senior administrative and technical staff of MINED, and representatives of relevant other sectors, the civil society and the international agencies. At the operational level the work was carried out by ad hoc sub-sectoral working groups[2], under the co-ordination of MINED's Directorate of Planning.

The ESSP covers formal and non-formal basic education, general secondary, and vocational education. Among these sub-sectors, there is in the Plan a strong focus on formal primary education, which has also received an increasing share of total public expenditure on education. More concrete sub-sectoral strategies for general secondary education and vocational education have subsequently been prepared within the overall ESSP framework. Plans for the development of higher education were initially not integrated into the ESSP, but the three public higher education institutions have developed their own strategic plans. A working group comprising representatives of MINED and the universities has also been nominated and will articulate a higher education strategy which is to become part of the ESSP.

In the implementation of the ESSP, working groups whose thematic areas correspond to the components or sub-components of the ESSP have been assigned operational responsibility alongside the regular MINED structure. These groups are chaired by the MINED Directors and are composed of Mozambican experts in their respective thematic areas. Further concretization of the ESSP objectives and activities is being carried out in the Provincial ESSPs, the first versions of which were prepared in 1999.

2. The division of tasks between the groups was as follows: (1) primary and secondary education, (2) vocational and technical education, (3) teacher training, (4) gender issues, (5) non-formal education and literacy, (6) management and capacity building.

Chapter 2 Role of international agencies

In 1990, according to an estimate by the World Bank, external assistance accounted for 41 per cent of all education expenditure in Mozambique (USAID, 1992: 71). Since then, the sector's level of dependence on external funding has remained high and the number of international funding agencies providing project-type support and technical assistance to the education sector has increased. Throughout the 1990s, the most prominent bilateral agencies in the sector have been Sida and the Netherlands Government, followed by DANIDA and FINNIDA. The relationships between the respective agencies and the FRELIMO government pre-dates the economic liberalization and introduction of the multi-party political system in Mozambique. In the latter half of the 1990s, DFID, the Government of Ireland, and CIDA have also become visible as actors in the education sector. Focal areas of support for the above-mentioned agencies have been textbook provision for primary schools, pre- and in-service training of teachers, vocational education, and development of planning and management capacity. During the 1990s, some of the bilaterals have been designated a role by GOM in a geographical division, where each agency provides multi-faceted support to the development of primary education in a given province. In the rehabilitation and construction of primary schools several NGOs have played a significant role, in many cases with funding from the EU or other multilateral agencies.

Among the multilaterals, the World Bank has been a lender to the education sector since the initiation of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in 1987. Through World Bank-financed education-sector projects, funds and technical assistance have been provided for construction and rehabilitation of primary and secondary schools, procurement of primary-level textbooks, development of teacher education, of curricula and of educational planning and management, and improvement of the Eduardo Mondlane University. On a lesser scale, other United Nations agencies have played a role in education policy dialogue and in the provision of technical assistance to the sector.

In the process of preparing the ESSP, some technical assistance was sought from and made available by UNESCO and UNDP. An early milestone in the dialogue between government and international agencies regarding the ESSP was a meeting with the external funding agencies' representatives, convened by the Minister of Education in 1995, in order to outline the new concept of a sector-wide strategic plan. Subsequently, a high-level meeting was organized in Paris in 1997, between MINED, the Ministry of Planning and Finance (MPF), and representatives of the major agencies, which focused on the relationships between sectoral development policy and the macroeconomic framework. The donor community was also represented in the Steering Committee of ESSP preparation.

In May of 1998, a joint mission of external funding agencies appraised the ESSP together with representatives of MINED and MPF. The agencies also indicated the volume and targeting of their potential funding to the Plan. As part of the joint appraisal, MINED and the external funding agencies formulated a Joint Statement on the principles of gradually harmonizing the management procedures of external assistance and on the steps needed to move in this direction. In Mozambique, parallel processes are underway in the health and agriculture sectors, of which the latter process is at a more advanced stage than is the case with the ESSP. The total projected

cost of the ESSP during its first five-year period is approximately US$700 million. Of this total, approximately three-quarters is to be met by GOM, NGOs and communities, whereas the remainder is expected to be covered by the external funding agencies.

Consciously deviating from the 'lender of last resort' principle, MINED and the World Bank have agreed on an IDA-funded programme within the ESSP, effective from mid-1999, which was designed with the aim of ensuring that progress can be made in the core areas of the Plan while other agencies take more time to finalize their support programmes. This decision required a separate appraisal, which analyzed particularly the macroeconomic context, the cost-efficiency and the fiscal implications of the programme, and implementation capacity. The programme is managed according to the World Bank's own procedures.

Following the joint appraisal of the ESSP, a new Steering Committee has been established for overseeing the implementation of the Plan. The donor agencies have been able to agree on an arrangement of shared representation on this body. Annual review meetings were held jointly by MINED and the agencies in 1999, 2000 and 2001, and the two latter meetings were preceded by joint Technical Review Missions.

Throughout the 1990s, the most prominent agencies in the education sector contributed, first, to the work of the MINED technical commissions and to conferences and seminars that prepared ground for the later work on the ESSP, and then to the working groups that were set up for designing the ESSP. The Code of Conduct adopted at the first Annual Review meeting also stipulates that technical assistance from the agencies to the education sector should be driven by GOM priorities and respond to TOR agreed with the relevant working group, and that it should not be viewed as narrowly supporting individual projects.

In the post-appraisal stage, some of the agencies indicated provisional willingness to provide budget support to the education sector, pending the design and introduction of a satisfactory system for the management of such funding. A joint mission explored the financial management issues in August 1999 and made recommendations for the development of GOM procedures and for related capacity-building activities. A subsequent mission, focusing on the capacity-building needs, concluded that improvement to a level which would meet the preconditions of agencies for initiation of budget support is a major task and can only be achieved through a concerted programme of capacity development. As a consequence, no external funding channelled to the education sector via the GOM budget is foreseen in the near future.

In the meantime, a group of agencies proposed a common interim management arrangement (outside the GOM budget system), which would enable them to pool part of their support to the education sector and channel it to targets agreed upon with MINED, without earmarking by agency. The respective procedures were negotiated and designed during a protracted process and eventually, in 2001, a Memorandum of Understanding to this effect was signed. An essential feature of the pooling arrangement is that it relies primarily on the existing GOM procedures of financial management, strengthened by use of separate bank accounts and external auditing. The group of agencies that will initially contribute to the common fund now includes the World Bank, Sida, the Netherlands, Ireland, DANIDA, CIDA and Finland. This kind of arrangement will increase the volume of funding available for implementing the ESSP and will doubtless also contribute to the kind of capacity building seen as a precondition for eventual introduction of budget support to the sector.

In the near future, it is expected that even the agencies that have decided to channel part of their support to the education sector through the pooling arrangement, will continue to earmark part of their support on a bilateral basis to particular components within the ESSP. In addition, ongoing projects that fall within the framework of the ESSP are considered as being part of the Plan in its implementation. There are a number of agencies that will in the foreseeable future continue providing their support in the established project mode only. Some of these agencies have participated in the joint appraisal and/or in the follow-up meetings (CIDA, GTZ, JICA and the United Nations agencies), whereas other participants (e.g. France, Spain, the Islamic Development Bank) have for the time being remained outside the ESSP process of joint consultation and the discussions on harmonization of procedures. Notably, the role of the ex-colonial power (Portugal) in the ESSP process has until recently been that of an outsider, although it does provide support to general secondary and higher education.

Chapter 3 Concept and application of the sector-wide approach in the education sector

Different understandings of partnership and the SWA concept

Quite obviously, the agencies operating in Mozambique whose representatives were interviewed for this study displayed substantial variance in their conceptualizations of 'partnership'. This variance reflected the degree to which individual agencies have internally carried out reflection on and actually articulated their meaning of 'partnership'. To agencies which are most advanced in this respect, by virtue of sustained reflection and internal discussion, 'partnership' comprises four critical dimensions – the political, the moral/ethical, the substantive and the procedural. To others, with a less reflective stance on the concept, the substantive and procedural dimensions appear to be deemed adequate.

Politically, the promotion of partnership constitutes a critical dimension of overall foreign policy and therefore undergirds international relations with Africa and with other regions of the developing world. Agencies in countries that espouse this political dimension of 'partnership' have a broad political accountability to their foreign ministries and their citizens at large. In such circumstances, the agency is expected to report back to the foreign ministry on the progress it is making towards inculcating workable and enduring 'partnerships'. Therefore, to such an agency, 'partnership' is not just desirable, but it is somewhat mandatory that progress is made towards actualizing this ideal.

Within this advanced thinking, 'partnership' also has a moral and ethical dimension. It is within this dimension that principles of trust, mutual respect, reciprocity of understanding, clarity of communication, a textured understanding of contexts, sustained dialogue, etc. come to undergird human and institutional interaction. To the agencies sensitive to this dimension, the ethical issues are critical because their neglect can stand in the way of the substantive and procedural dimensions.

The substantive dimension encompasses the actual content matter around which the partnership is being developed. In our case, the substance is the education system in its multi-faceted dimensions, and this dimension of partnership relates to how the substantive issues are being discussed and a working consensus on them achieved.

The procedural dimension is emphasized in the less matured conceptualization. This dimension highlights the need to carefully define and agree on the operational procedures. To some agency representatives, it was problems at this level that stood in the way of an effective partnership. More specifically, the need to harmonize financial and other administrative procedures was seen as the critical issue.

Variance in the emphasis given to these four dimensions of partnership existed not only between the different agencies, but also in the levels of understanding and appreciation of 'partnership' between the agency headquarters staff and the field-level staff. Though not to the total neglect of the political and moral-ethical dimensions, field-level staff, especially within the bilateral agencies, tended to emphasize the substantive and procedural dimensions.

Given that the Sector-Wide Approach (SWA) is a fairly new approach to negotiating and administering international aid, it was of interest for this study to

ascertain the degree to which different constituencies understand the meaning of this concept. Even more important it seemed was to investigate the possible diversity of understandings of this approach. While the language may be the same, it was interesting to find out whether the depth of the understanding of the SWA and its potential ramifications was comparable in key constituencies on both sides of the partnership relationship. Discussions on this subject revealed unevenness in the understanding of the construct.

Many of our interviewees did not seem to distinguish between the SWA as a specific mode of aid administration and the ESSP as a conducive context within which this approach could be pursued. With Mozambican respondents in particular, discussions on the SWA invariably trailed into discussions of the ESSP. Consequently, questions seeking to ascertain how this approach worked in Mozambique were often answered with examples of processes that led to the development and articulation of the ESSP.

Some respondents from both the ministry and agency side confessed to having only a partial understanding of the SWA. They were not fully conversant with the arguments that undergird the approach, its underlying assumptions, its practical modes of operation and its potential ramifications for both agencies and ministries. They also felt that they needed training and more open discussion on the SWA as a generic approach. Only one MINED official among those interviewed had been to a forum (organized by Sida) that was meant to formally introduce participants to the SWA and to facilitate their understanding of it. Nevertheless, while extremely few people felt comfortable with their understanding of the SWA, virtually everybody we talked to welcomed the change from project assistance to the SWA and were eager to genuinely give the new approach a try. While they did not necessarily understand the details of the approach, it seemed they felt they understood enough to be convinced that the SWA is a good way to go.

This partial understanding of the SWA is actually not that disconcerting, as it suggests a learning process that often accompanies change. However, to the degree that there is a serious imbalance in the understanding of the approach, the pace of change may leave some critical stakeholders behind. The imbalance in the degree of understanding may also lead to lopsided negotiations. Furthermore, it is not unlikely that the genuine partnership that is characterized by joint decision-making, joint ownership and shared control would be seriously curtailed by imbalances in understanding between the negotiating parties.

Limitations of project assistance

Owing mainly to financial and technical constraints, African Ministries of Education have had to accept, in varying degrees, international aid administered mainly through projects. Mozambique's education sector is one example of heavy dependence on external funding. On the side of the international agencies, a key strategy used for addressing what the agencies perceived as priorities and for serving their needs for accountability, was to set up specific projects, as well as to recruit personnel to implement them. The co-ordinators and other key personnel of the projects have been placed in specially created Project Implementation Units or Project Management Units, which then have had responsibility for reporting on project activities and for their financial management. There has also been ample use of short-term technical assistance recruited by the projects.

While the origin of Project Assistance (PA) may be understandable, this mode of assistance has some serious limitations and our Mozambican interviewees rendered an overwhelming critique of this. What follows below is a summary of the points mentioned by them, but it should be noted that many of the issues had also been felt as limitations on the agency side.

The first limitation of PA is that the international partners became used to defining priorities rather than listening to the Mozambicans' definition of their priorities, vague as the latter may have been. PA therefore encouraged a type of partnership where Mozambicans were minors in the decision-making process regarding the allocation and terms of external assistance. Consequently, the focus of projects was not always in consonance with the felt priorities of MINED.

Second, as projects were administered through separate implementation units, the loyalty and accountability of the personnel of these units were divided between the agencies that funded them and MINED.

Third, project co-ordinators tended to know more about the project than the directors under whom the projects supposedly fell. Across directorates, the cumulative effect of this situation was that the top echelons of MINED's management no longer knew what they were supposed to manage. Through PA-based 'partnership', MINED in a sense lost a grip on its own education system.

Fourth, owing to the separate implementation mechanisms and the poor information flow to MINED's management, projects tended to fragment the education sector rather than consolidate it. PA therefore weakened rather than strengthened the Ministry structures, as well as the co-ordination and articulation across these structures.

Fifth, the project-specific implementation arrangements also meant a multitude of different procedures, such as for procurement of goods, disbursement of funds, recruitment and deployment of human resources, reporting, monitoring, evaluation, etc., which overextended MINED's management capacity where it had to contribute to meeting these procedural requirements. Instead of building MINED's capacity, such arrangements therefore weakened its capacity to not only manage the education system but to manage international assistance as well.

Sixth, and related to the poor flow of information from the project managers to the Mozambicans, in the view of the latter the projects tended to have less than desirable accountability and transparency, especially with respect to the use of funds. This problem was most acute in cases where agencies chose to deal directly with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that served as their implementing agents, without consulting MINED (the EU was cited as an example of this tendency). At a higher level, the poor supervision made it difficult for MINED to report to the Ministry of Finance and to gain a comprehensive view of the total flow of funding to the education sector.

Seventh, the use of diverse implementing agents also had the far-reaching effect of interfering with MINED's implementation plans – however humble they may have been. An often-cited illustration was the case where NGOs, with the assistance of international agencies, put up schools without consulting MINED authorities, who then only became aware of the schools when they requested subsidies for recurrent expenditure. Such implementation of projects also threatened to fester tensions between MINED and the populace, which saw MINED's reluctance to support such schools as a contravention of its own policy of expanding access to education.

Eighth, project managers tended to guard their resources – human and

non-human – rather jealously, leading to uneven development of the various sub-sectors and of the different provinces and districts.

Ninth, the presence of Technical Assistance (TA) personnel who were brought in to implement projects led to skill imbalances across the directorates of the MINED and made skill rationalization virtually impossible.

Finally, the use of TA personnel de facto siphoned a substantial share of the supposed project funds back to the donor countries.

In this criticism, there is of course much that is also familiar from the evaluations commissioned by donor agencies on projects they support. These reports have presented a recurring set of recommendations on how to better design and implement projects. The message of the Mozambican interviewees, however, would seem to be that the limitations of PA are primarily structural (i.e. conditioned by the basic parameters of the current aid relationships), rather than procedural or attitudinal.

Origin of and motivation to adopt the SWA

The application of the SWA in the education sector was uniformly and strongly perceived by our Mozambican interviewees to be a process initiated and controlled by MINED. From their point of view, the impetus to change from Project Assistance to the SWA came out of a combination of the limitations of PA and MINED's awareness of its own capacity limitations. Until 1994, MINED was painfully aware of the dire need to reconstruct and develop the education sector, but lacked a comprehensive framework that could guide such development. At least in part, the absence of a framework was due to the country's inadequate capacity to set a long-term vision for the development of the education sector and to operationalize that vision (this in spite of the tradition of centralized planning of all sectors in Mozambique since 1975, and related technical assistance from socialist countries to MINED and the Ministry of Planning). Inadequacies in national capacities were compounded by the poor state of the information base on which such a framework could be built.

Mozambique's international partners shared with MINED the concern of developing the education sector. The agencies, however, could not obtain supportive direction on how they should channel their assistance. MINED's efforts to provide such information often fell short of the agencies' requirements for clarity and accuracy. One such example was MINED's request to an agency to fund a school rehabilitation project. The Mozambicans knew they needed funds for this undertaking, but could not estimate how much was needed to accomplish what targets, within what period of time and with what expertise.

As could be expected, this lack of clarity did not instil confidence among potential international partners that MINED was in a position to appropriately absorb and utilize their assistance. Hence, agencies that wished to assist Mozambique often set out to identify problems in the education sector and prepare interventions to address them. In some cases, the issues and interventions defined by agencies did not coincide with the priority concerns of MINED. However, as MINED could not articulate its own priorities for use of external assistance, those identified by the international partners often held. On the Mozambican side, there were also experiences of some agencies being more assertive than others in the above respect.

Well aware of its capacity limitations, MINED then first sought to build its own capacity for developing and articulating its long-term vision, in order to provide a

framework within which agencies could locate their assistance. This was done through diverse means, prominent among which was to send senior staff to the IIEP for training. Graduates of the IIEP programme came back to lead the national efforts to formulate a long-term vision for the education sector, which materialized in the education policy document and subsequently was transformed into the ESSP. This plan then provided the broad parameters within which MINED and agencies could construe a new form of partnership, responding to the needs and priorities of the education sector as perceived by Mozambicans. Owing to the professional leadership capacity-development effort, Mozambique was for a period of several years in a rare position where its Minister, the Deputy Minister, the Permanent Secretary and the Director of Planning were all professionally trained planners.

In contrast to the perception of the Mozambican interviewees, the agency representatives that we interviewed typically saw the impetus for change as having come from outside Mozambique and, more specifically, from the World Bank. They linked the introduction of the SWA to the decision by the World Bank to serve as the 'donor of last resort'. The SWA is preferred because it allows for a holistic mapping of agency involvement in the education sector and makes apparent the gaps that need to be filled in by the Bank. The Policy Framework Papers prepared by GOM, together with IMF and the World Bank, for the meetings of the Consultative Group of Donors to Mozambique, have played a role in promoting the SWA concept in education and other sectors, and use of this concept is also encouraged in the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy.

Although seen as originating from the World Bank, other agencies embraced the SWA because of its appeal of holism. More specifically, the SWA was believed to be capable of redressing much of the limitations of the PA outlined above. The perceived advantages of the SWA are therefore the opposite of the disadvantages of PA. While the developments in the health and agriculture sectors towards the SWA have had little influence on MINED's thinking about the ESSP, in the agencies these processes are seen as akin to each other to the extent that procedural and management issues are discussed. There are also indications that progress made and problems encountered in the health and agriculture sectors are being compared by agency staff to the situation prevailing in education, the former thus constituting signals of either encouragement or warning.

An alternative perspective, which among our interviewees was a solitary view, on the origin of the SWA in the education sector in Mozambique focuses on the country's extremely high degree of dependence on aid, brought about by the civil war and the parallel decline of the socialist experiment of the FRELIMO Government.[3] With the downfall of socialism in Eastern Europe, the government had according to this view little choice but to accept the dominant neo-liberal paradigm of development. This was introduced in 1987 through the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme. The new way of thinking gradually subsumed the previous differences among the external funding agencies as partners to GOM, the more so as the SWA was advocated by the government itself towards the donor community and held the promise of improved allocation of external resources and decreased administrative cost of aid to GOM.

3. While Mozambique was in quantitative terms less dependent on aid during the period of 1975-1990, it did receive a considerable amount of support, i.e. to the education sector, from the socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

The notion of GOM ownership in adopting the SWA in the education sector is obviously in contradiction of the above interpretation, which emphasizes the element of imposition from the outside. The contradiction is perhaps somewhat mitigated if imposition is not taken to mean 'by force', but is regarded as having a less absolute form.[4] Nevertheless, the conclusion from the interviews remains that there are clearly divergent perspectives on the introduction of the SWA into the education sector in Mozambique.

4. Cf. the following interpretation, given by Hall and Young (1997: 198), on the origin of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Mozambique:
The programme "was largely sponsored by the IMF and the World Bank, and indeed much like SAPs imposed elsewhere on African states ...
FRELIMO's claims that the Programme was a national effort were intended partly to sustain its own prestige and partly followed from IMF/World Bank requirements that SAPs be presented as wholly 'voluntary'".

Chapter 4 Critical issues

Perceived progress towards workable partnerships

The process of preparing the ESSP has visibly contributed to capacity-building at MINED. For the first time, there now exists a comprehensive framework for the internal discussions between the different Directorates and Sections of the Ministry, accompanied by an ethos of teamwork and information-sharing. Whatever the conceptualization of partnership and its level of sophistication, the strengthened capacity has enabled MINED to articulate its priorities more clearly and to conduct technical analysis on more equal terms with the agencies than has previously been the case.

The general view among our interviewees was that Mozambicans no longer had to play the role of listeners, with the donors doing the talking. There is now better mutual negotiation, with donors accepting that Mozambicans have something important to say and letting the MINED technocrats decide more in the issues of aid allocation and of implementation. Donors are also trying to 'speak the same language' as the Mozambicans, and that language is couched in the National Education Policy and the ESSP. That said, our interviewees also noted that Mozambicans were still far from defining the terms of partnership and gaining what would be regarded as ideal control of the decision-making processes in the education sector, a situation particularly evident at the appraisals carried out by agencies.

During the ESSP process, agencies are generally not seen as having been intrusive in the formulation of policy, beyond presenting options drawn from technical analysis and international experience in educational development. Policy dialogue of this kind has been quite intensive on the issues of teacher education, textbook provision and vocational education. The ways in which agencies can communicate their views include studies commissioned by the agencies, or commissioned by MINED with funding from an agency and carried out by international consultants, and recommendations presented to MINED by the joint pre-appraisal and appraisal missions. In MINED's perspective, the sector or sub-sector studies have also been a way of communicating MINED's positions and views to the agencies – particularly to the non-educationist decision-makers. Another factor that was mentioned as facilitating the partnership is that there is opportunity for genuine and candid discussion among the agencies and with MINED before the issues are brought to decision-making forums. Also lauded were the amount and depth of substantive preparations that precede any serious decision.

In one interpretation of the SWA, the agencies should not even express their views on policy issues, but ought to concentrate on the design and fine-tuning of management procedures. It is debatable whether such a situation would constitute a partnership relationship. At the same time, the framing of educational policy through macroeconomic and fiscal conditionalities agreed on between GOM and IMF/ the World Bank may go unnoticed among the education specialists of other agencies working with the ESSP. Within the education sector, the modus operandi of the World Bank credit preparations also provides a forum for bilateral policy discussions and agreements between the Bank and MINED and MPF, which other agencies apparently are either unaware of, or may regard as contravening the spirit of partnership.

The dissenting view among our interviewees maintains that agencies have had a significant influence both on the conceptualization of policy issues (e.g. notions about the proper role of the state in the education sector, about decentralization, etc.), and on the practical formulation of the government's education policy framework and its strategic choices within that framework. But again, concrete evidence of such influence is not detectable in the discourses which form the substance of our interviews.

Differentiation in the MINED-agency relationships

Beyond verbal commitments to the SWA, the agencies have been able to agree on their representation on the ESSP Steering Committee and on conducting annual reviews jointly with MINED. (As explained above in **Chapter 2**, progress has recently also been made in the establishment of an arrangement for pooling of external funds for the education sector). The persons interviewed in 1999 stated that there were definitely more frequent contacts and a better flow of information between the agencies than prior to the ESSP. Nevertheless, a clear differentiation was seen to exist both between the agencies and within them in preparedness to even discuss concrete steps towards operationalizing the SWA ideal at the procedural level – a task that was brought into the ESSP process only as part of the Joint Appraisal of 1998. Between the agencies, there are underlying tensions between a 'pioneering' group and a more reserved group, and managing these tensions is a delicate task both in the encounters between MINED and the agencies and inside the agency group. For the time being, the joint meetings and reviews run parallel to bilateral reviews and negotiations concerning projects that continue to take place between each agency and MINED. This is obviously not conducive for sector-wide programming and budgeting, and may lead to imbalances in implementing the different components of the ESSP.

Among the agencies that have demonstrated a positive attitude in principle towards provision of direct budget support to the sector, Sida, the Netherlands and Ireland have come forward as a distinct front-runner group, with a sympathetic reaction from the World Bank. The agencies' differential pace towards realization of the SWA in practice is partly explained by differences in the individual agencies' assessment of the capacities of MINED and MPF vis-à-vis the agencies' requirements for provision of budget support, and partly by differences in the capacities of the agencies themselves, in terms of undertaking/commissioning analytical work and assessing its results and practical implications. It remains to be seen whether agencies that in the near future remain strongly reserved with regard to moving from the project mode of management to sectoral budget support, will continue to participate in the joint ESSP meetings with a voice equal to the members of the 'progressive' group, or whether there will be more visible differentiation between a core group of 'real partners' and a more peripheral group.

Tension seems to arise among agencies as they negotiate their space, and perhaps even influence, on the terms and procedures of partnership. There are frictions induced by tacit demands for partiality that agencies communicate to MINED. Agencies may subtly claim that they deserve preferential treatment on grounds such as longevity in MINED, agency co-operation, amount of funds disbursed by the agency, ideological inclinations especially around what constitutes appropriate international aid relationships (e.g. the political and moral-ethical dimensions of partnership, mentioned in **Chapter 3**), etc.

On the other hand, tension also arises among agencies regarding processes followed and roles played in striving towards harmonization of procedures. This problem is partially related to the expertise imbalances among fielded international staff or consultants. In general, field staff in bilateral agencies are not well prepared to handle the level of sophistication on the basis of which procedures are negotiated and defined. There are perceptions on the Mozambican side that the multilaterals, particularly the World Bank, field seasoned experts with whom the representatives of the bilaterals cannot genuinely negotiate. As a consequence, the latter often stall the process as they repeatedly need to consult their respective headquarters. In the process, they may misconstrue MINED's eagerness to proceed as preferential treatment for the World Bank, or as manifestation of some subtle blackmail that the Bank uses to straitjacket the process to meet its own disbursement schedules.

Its own notable capacity development notwithstanding, MINED does acknowledge the need for continued use of technical assistance. Here many of the Mozambican interviewees expressed high regard for the pool of expertise available from the World Bank, at short notice if necessary. By contrast, the expertise available from some bilateral agencies (their staff plus consultants) was deemed less useful and in some cases even deficient in terms of a working partnership. This argument probably reflects not only differences in capacity as such, but also in the degree of clarity (read also: inflexibility) of the agencies' present procedures for planning, appraising and managing their support. Hence, the World Bank has come to play an important and visible role in complementing MINED's current capacity to meet not only the specific requirements of the Bank itself (and is even being complimented for that), but also the broader requirements of donors as a group.

The principles defined in the Code of Conduct presumably also entail gradual untying of technical assistance from the sources of funding of the individual consultancies. As regards the division of roles among the agencies, the comparative advantage of the World Bank is obvious in economic and financial analysis, and in management development, whereas the other United Nations agencies and some of the bilaterals are seen as important sources of expertise in specific areas of educational development.

A typology of agencies as partners to MINED can now be construed on the basis of the above findings, by combining the dimensions of politically underpinned commitment of agencies towards the SWA, and their technical competence (including that of their consultants), as perceived by MINED:

		Technical competence	
		High	Low
Commitment to the SWA	High		
	Low		

Of the four possible combinations, obviously the high-high variant would be ideal in the perspective of MINED, and the low-low case the most undesirable one. In reality, MINED has also to deal both with agencies that have a strong commitment to

proceeding with the SWA, but may not be technically very competent to assist in that process, and with agencies that are high on technical competence, but only vaguely committed, or perhaps even adverse, to promoting the SWA at the operational level.

Challenges ahead

To the external funding agencies, the adoption of the SWA in practice inevitably means difficulty to attribute particular achievements to the efforts of specific agencies, and hence reduced visibility. In addition, under the current system of GOM finance management, there would be difficulties in accounting for the funds. These disadvantages are, of course, among the fundamental reasons why the project mode of assistance became predominant in the first place. A source of contention is the degree of transparency of the financial management procedures of MINED and indeed of the Ministry of Finance at central and provincial level. To the degree that agencies do not feel comfortable with the finance management systems, progress towards ideal budget support relying on GOM procedures will be painfully slow.

An indication of the slow pace of moving towards the SWA in practice is the fact that even the seemingly straightforward task of harmonizing agency requirements for reporting on project results and activities, and matching these with the GOM procedures, is far from being solved in the ESSP context. A possible interpretation would be that what is at stake for many of the agencies is not only the continued visibility of their specific contributions to the sector, but also the implication that, with such harmonization, reporting would cease to be predominantly the domain of expatriate project personnel, who in the existing set-up also have direct contacts with their respective agencies. On the other hand, there is the encouraging sign of collaboration at headquarters level among a group of bilateral agencies (the Nordic, Dutch, British and Irish agencies), with the aim of harmonizing procedures of aid management.

In the present version of the ESSP, the focus is mainly on the development of formal basic education. This is the part of the education sector where there exists a strong international consensus on the agenda of educational development (see Takala, 1998). More refined sub-sectoral strategies remain to be finalized in the more controversial areas of vocational education and training and higher education. It remains to be seen to what extent this work perhaps will be influenced by the particular agencies which are currently active in these areas through their individual projects and/or are willing to consider support to these sub-sectors in the future. An example of the slow process of policy formulation is that first a VET policy study was funded by DANIDA, which produced a 10-year Plan for the sub-sector, but this proposal was not deemed by MINED as sufficient for the purpose. Subsequently, the Islamic Development Bank, which has notably remained outside the ESSP process, funded another comprehensive study of the VET sub-sector, which then eventually did shape the respective strategy of MINED. As regards the higher education sub-sector, the SWA implies quite significant changes for the semi-autonomous universities that have been able to deal directly with agencies to negotiate and receive project-type funding.

In the early phases of developing the ESSP, the key players were the technical experts of MINED and their international partners. From within MINED, effort has also been made to involve the provincial and even the district level. In addition, MINED has initiated broad-based consultations with civil society on the ESSP as a whole, and also

on the more specific issues of teacher education policy, basic education curriculum reform and VET policy. The rationale is expressed in a MINED document as follows: "... it was premised that although the formulation of the (education) policy should be based on the government five-year plan, it should present a development vision which goes beyond the mandate of the current government. The underlying argument is that harmonious and continuous development of education as a system should not be prejudiced by specific agendas of governments which follow each other from one mandate to the other... this will only be possible if there is a national consensus of the policy to be adopted" (MINED, 1998b: 9).[5] Still, the risk remains that a constricted interpretation of the SWA may work towards strengthening the part of the sector directly controlled by government, at the expense of non-governmental provision and initiatives. An extreme view would maintain that adoption of the SWA implies directing all support to government budgets and hence would question future direct funding to NGOs in the context of a sector development programme.

In some of the agencies, there is clear awareness of the risk of focusing the SWA too much on governments (national elites) as partners, to the disadvantage of other stakeholder groups. The implication for such agencies is that close attention will be given to the degree of consultation between the partner government and civil society and that expressing the agency's own policy concerns remains as an essential part of the bilateral partnerships even in an SWA context. It is also acknowledged that a mutually satisfactory consensus will not be reached on all policy priorities, and that hence there will be cases where a partner government's sector programme does not fully represent the kind of education policy that would match the overarching objectives of a given agency. Examples of such possible discrepancies are special education, or non-formal education for particular disadvantaged groups, as priority areas of support, or the relative emphasis given to community initiatives in school construction *v.* programming of these activities from above. In such cases these agencies will acknowledge that NGOs may represent interests and priorities which are legitimate and compatible with the agency's development co-operation policy, and will continue channelling part of their support directly through NGOs. Such disbursements would still be reported also to GOM and could be included in a summary budget of the ESSP.

5. The mandate of the FRELIMO government was renewed, albeit by a fairly narrow margin, in the elections of December 1999.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

Although one should avoid the temptation to dub individual cases as 'success stories' in the midst of an evolving process, the experience of Mozambique described above definitely shows significant progress towards workable partnerships. This progress seems to be owed in large part to a strong and commonly shared sense of purpose and commitment to re-build the education system after the war. The resolution by both international development agencies and the government to forge ahead is a binding force stronger than the uncertainty about the understanding of the SWA, or the disagreements over harmonization of procedures. Unlike in other contexts where divergent agendas may derail progress, the case of Mozambique demonstrates an unusually high consensus on what the prime goal was, making conflicts more manageable than in contexts where there are multiple goals.

The meaning of 'partnership' seems to be shared between MINED and agency personnel, and across agencies, at least at the rhetorical level, denoting above all a wish to move towards discussing policy issues and conducting technical analysis on more equal terms than has been the case in the past. It is acknowledged that realization of the ideal of partnership is not only a question of attitudes and an atmosphere of mutual respect, but is dependent on the respective capacities of the partners, and that this process is a learning experience for all actors.

In hindsight, it also seems correct to say that unrealistic expectations have been raised (by default) with regard to the pace of proceeding towards the SWA ideal in practice, i.e. towards provision of unearmarked budget support to the sector and dismantling the separate structures and procedures that have been set up for managing projects. There is increasing acknowledgement among the actors that the process is slower and less smooth than was anticipated in the early honeymoon stage of the SWA partners. In the present situation, the ESSP does signify a break with the past in the sense of providing a government-owned and coherent policy framework, within which external funding and TA inputs are allocated in a more co-ordinated manner than was the case with education-sector projects prior to the ESSP. At the same time, MINED and MPF have taken a pragmatic position and accept continued reliance on the project mode of disbursement and reporting with the donors to the education sector. This is a way of keeping a maximum number of agency partners 'on board the ESSP'. To what extent the momentum to proceed towards a common system of aid management integrated into GOM structures can then be maintained, and how frustrations in this respect may affect the spirit of partnership in the future, remains to be seen.

From the case of Mozambique, the lessons regarding factors or conditions that seem to facilitate partnership, include:

- An understanding of the complexity of the concept of partnership itself, and appreciation of how the different facets of partnership (political, ethical, substantive and procedural) interlink with and support each other.
- The concept of partnership needs to be seen in two perspectives. The first is the partnership among agencies, and the second is the partnership between agencies and MINED. Insecurities and mistrust among agencies affect the way they subsequently relate to and work with MINED. It would seem that before the agencies can relate to MINED in a genuinely open and collegial manner, still more

ground needs to be cleared for inter-agency partnership, not only through attitudinal and procedural change, but also through technical capacity development within the agencies (a recent analysis of this aspect is provided by Riddell, 2001).

- Effective partnerships rest on some minimum of capacities on the side of the African Ministries. Acknowledgement of capacity gaps in planning and relevant capacity development is therefore a prerequisite to building partnerships.
- A macro-level culture of planning is needed that supports the development of sectoral plans. The existing culture of planning could well be one of the reasons why the Mozambicans are clearly disposed to preparation of a plan like the ESSP. Contributing factors in the case of Mozambique also include the exceptional degree of continuity among the core MINED personnel and the training of senior management of the Ministry in the technical aspects of planning.

At the time of finalizing this text (January 2002), it is difficult to give a confident prediction of the pace at which the SWA process in Mozambique's education sector will move in the intended direction. As the SWA processes are commonly very complex and laden with tensions (see Martin *et al.*, 2000: 51-57), commentators may be tempted to a comparative reflection between the pros and cons of the sector-wide approach *v.* the project mode of assistance. However, from the devastating criticism of project assistance, summarized above in **Chapter 3**, it is clear that whatever the difficulties in realizing the sector-wide approach turn out to be in the case of Mozambique's education sector, there can be no justification for reverting back to the situation where the project mode was the order of the day. In other words: if in a given context, concerted and sustained effort cannot make the SWA work, it is difficult to conceive of an alternative way in which external support could have a significant and sustainable impact on educational development under such conditions. Seen in this perspective, the stakes in a SWA process are very high, and it is important that this is undertood by all actors in the process.

Persons interviewed in Mozambique in January/May 1999

MINED

Zeferino Martins, Vice-Minister
Adelino da Cruz, Secretary General
Virgilio Juvane, Director of Planning
Telmina Pereira, Director of Technical and Vocational Education
Paula Mendonca, Executive Secretary, Caixa escolar
Andre Tolentino, Adviser
Zefanias Muhate, Adviser
Anisio Matangala, Adviser

Related institutions and civil society organizations

Manuel Gomes Jr., Director of GEPE (Education Projects Implementation Unit)
Simao Mucavele, Director of National Institute of Educational Development
Carlos Machili, Rector of Pedagogical University
Mouzinho Mario, Professor, Eduardo Mondlane University
Eduardo Tome, Programme Director, VSO
Gabriel Machado, Director of CBE – Consultores Mozambique

Agency representatives in Maputo

Karin Andersson, Programme Officer, Sida
Muriel Visser, Programme Officer, Royal Netherlands Embassy
Peter Larsen, Counsellor, Royal Danish Embassy
Inacio Manecas, Education Programme Officer, the World Bank
Noel Nkulemeka, Education Programme Officer, the World Bank
Daphne Casey, Deputy Resident Reprentative, UNDP
Cooper Dawson, Chief of Education Section, UNICEF
Hubert Charles, Resident Representative, UNESCO
Maria Arendes, Programme Officer, UNESCO

Personnel at regional agency offices/headquarters

Wim Hoppers, Regional Education Specialist, Royal Dutch Embassy in Pretoria
Agneta Lind, Head of Education Division, Sida, Stockholm
Ingemar Gustafsson, Senior Adviser, Education Division, Sida, Stockholm
Poul-Erik Rasmussen, Education Adviser, DANIDA, Copenhagen
Heikki Kokkala, Education Adviser, Department of International Development Co-operation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (former FINNIDA), Helsinki

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