Improvement of teacher qualification and setting up of a system for the management of learning outcomes

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Guinea-Bissau, 2009 - 2015
I. Summary and Background

Guinea-Bissau’s education system has shown an improvement in school access at all levels of the system in recent years. Private, Madrasas and community education programs, particularly at primary level, have allowed for a noticeable growth of the system. Nonetheless, access to primary school is not universal and less than half of the students complete the primary education. In order to address these problems, the Government has set up a program for the development of the education sector (2009-2020). The main aim of this program was to achieve universal completion of primary education, promoting a holistic approach to achieve the overall improvement of the education system, including all levels of education, and addressing key educational issues, such as life skills and functional literacy, citizenship education, gender equality, and education system management.

One of the key obstacles to achieve these goals was a lack of qualified teachers. The large number of unqualified teachers in the basic education system in Guinea-Bissau often resulted from the interruption of the teacher’s training system during a long period of political instability, which led to the integration of many teachers without adequate teacher training in order to comply with national demand. Less than 40% of the teachers in primary education were trained (UIS, 2010).

To tackle this problem, UNESCO Office in Dakar initiated a project in 2009 to assist the Ministry of Education in the reconstruction of the education system in Guinea-Bissau aiming to develop effective in-service and pre-service training systems to sustain a homogenous body of highly qualified teachers capable of delivering quality education. This project was supported by the financial assistance of $1,603,450 from the Italian Funds-in-Trust (IFIT). The project was implemented in close coordination with the Ministry of Education and Instituto Nacional para Desenvolvimento da Educação (INDE - National Institute for Educational Development) with the collaboration of the National Commission for UNESCO and in synergy and consultation with key education partners including UNICEF, Associação de Ajuda ao Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPP-Humana People to People), Fundação Fé e Cooperação (FEC), Plan-Guinea Bissau and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The project contributed to rebuilding a sustainable and resilient education system by focusing on two major issues related to: (i) improvement of qualification of teachers, and (ii) the setting up of a national exam system as a monitoring and managing tool to ensure quality of learning. The project made significant achievements and contributed to the Ministry of Education’s efforts in strengthening the basic education system, through: a) national diagnosis of teacher training institutions and students; b) consultation with national partners on teacher training curricula and certification, resulting in a review of the existing framework and proposal of new ones; c) development of a bilingual education resource for pedagogical practice, and training of teachers to pilot the pedagogy in grades 1 & 2; d) teacher skills assessment in Portuguese and mathematics; e) training of teacher inspectors from 11 education districts; f) development of an in-service teachers training plan and actual training in 4 centers around the country; g) assessment of conditions to support the development of a national exam system, and a pilot national exam for grades 9 & 12.
A strong emphasis on reinforcing national capacities, which ensured a leading role of national institutions (National Institute for the Development of Education, pre-service training schools, and the Ministry of Education), was guaranteed throughout implementation.

II. Description of project implementation

The project aimed at supporting the reinforcement of the education system through first assessing and conducting diagnosis enabling an accurate insight of the pre-service and in-service teacher training as well as of the national examination systems. The findings were used to guide the implementation of the project activities. The following activities were undertaken under the 4 major goals of the project.

**Objective 1: The Ministry of Education is able to design its strategy on the teaching profession development while aligning towards achieving the MDGs**

UNESCO’s Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) methodological guide was used to serve as strategic guidance for the implementation of the project. The intention was to conduct diagnosis study on teacher issues according to the methodological guide of TISSA. It would provide orientations for teacher’s policy development in Guinea-Bissau with the involvement of concerned efforts by actors and partners available.

However, this objective was removed from the implementation of activities as the sector analysis conducted by Pôle de Dakar/UNESCO-IIEP includes teacher issues and thus duplication of efforts was avoided.
Objective 2: Improvement of qualifications of primary and secondary teachers (pre-service and in-service training)

2.1) Pre-service teacher training

National diagnosis of teacher training institutions (2010)

Following UNICEF’s diagnosis of pre-service teacher training institution for primary education (Escola 17 de Fevereiro), the project conducted: (1) institutional and pedagogical diagnosis of pre-service teacher training institution for lower secondary education (Escola Tchico Tê), (2) analysis of existing curricula in these institutions, and (3) evaluation of the level of achievement of students in their final year of training in these training institutions.

Key findings

- Teacher training institutions do not have the minimum requirements to function adequately (textbooks, sufficient teachers, insufficient classrooms, lack equipped libraries, etc.)
- Curricula are outdated and hardly used
- Curricula contents and teaching techniques must be reviewed/reformed to ensure relevance
- At the end of the teacher training program students mastered less than 50% of training received
- 25% of students in teacher training institutions are in-service teachers, enrolled in the programs to reinforce their capacities
- For Portuguese and mathematics, the level of student is low. Considering that the language of instruction in classrooms is Portuguese, this is quite worrisome
- Overall students perform better in natural sciences and social sciences.

Consultation with national partners on teacher training certification (2015)

The issue of certification in pre-service teacher training has complex ramifications at the sector and inter-sector level. The project played a key role on this issue, fuelling discussion and reflections on teacher training certification and curricula content of teacher training institutions. Reflective sessions were held with national education partners to analyse key documents, legislations, and existing guidelines on pre-service teacher training for basic education. Three scenarios for the improvement of curricula and programs, including educational practices and new proposals for primary school teacher training, taking into account the current situation of the national education system and the needs of teachers were proposed:

- Scenario A: Pre-service Teacher Training for 4 years with possibility to acquire a bachelor’s degree. A complementary training on Early Childhood Education/Pre-School is also a possibility within this proposal in order to promote vocational education.
- Scenario B: Pre-service Teacher Training for 2 years for (i) in-service teachers with training (or bachelor’s degree) in other areas; (ii) teachers who have not completed three years of teaching; and (iii) teachers entering the system for the first time.
• Scenario C: Integrated training that meets the needs of in-service teachers with more than 5 years of service, with professional experience and with training courses not certified. This option is to enhance previous trainings, and/or strengthen training in a particular subject (mathematics, science, French, etc.)

National review of the curriculum of teacher training institutions (2015)

Moreover, the review of curricula plans for pre-service teacher training for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education (primary & lower secondary levels) was completed:

• A national workshop was held to restructure teacher training programs for the 1st and 2nd cycles of basic education (grades 1-6) in light of the current on-going education reform. Consequently the following were revised:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Program content revised</th>
<th>Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transversal contents</td>
<td>Citizenship Education</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Professional Practice</td>
<td>Professional ethics and deontology</td>
<td>1st, 2nd &amp; 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>Creole and Comparable Grammar</td>
<td>3rd Cycle, 4th semester</td>
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• Specifically experts (i) gathered all existing manuals and materials for teacher training in the above-mentioned 4 subjects for analysis, (ii) selected curriculum content which needed revision, (iii) finalized program and curriculum plan for the subject selected, and (iv) bibliography organization.

• Recommendations for the improvement of the curricula and programs on pre-service teacher training, pedagogical practices taking into account the current gaps in the education system, as well as the needs of teachers, were made and submitted to the Ministry of Education for validation and future action (appropriation).
2.2) In-service teacher training

National in-service teachers’ assessment (2010-2011)

A national assessment of teachers from basic education was conducted under the project in order to suggest elements of an in-service teacher’s training system adapted to real teacher’s needs. Academic and teaching skills in Portuguese and mathematics of more than 90% of basic education teachers were assessed and enabled the definition of three teachers’ profiles based on their level: insufficient (profile 1), average (profile 2) and satisfactory (profile 3).

Key findings:

• A significant number of teachers do not master basic skills in mathematics and Portuguese (average score is 46% and 71% respectively at the primary level)
• Although possessing a minimum level of basic skills, some teachers still do not have the necessary pedagogical skills to teach
• Teachers with pre-service teacher training are more likely to receive continuous training
• Most teachers have outdated pedagogical approaches/practices.

Development of an in-service teachers training plan (2011)

Considering teacher’s profiles identified in the national diagnosis conducted under this project and following the definition of training needs, a national strategy was drafted and proposed taking into consideration the actual levels of teachers. This draft strategy:

• distinguishes between teachers who have received initial training and those who have not benefited from it. The latter is the majority (3/4 of basic education teachers) and considered as a priority
• offers in-service training in 4 steps tailored to teacher needs:
  • urgent training of contractual teachers (civil servant) in the 1st cycle (grades 1-4), while developing a strategy to gradually meet other following needs;
  • training of teachers in the 2nd and 3rd cycles (grades 5-6 and 7 to 9);
  • training of contractual teachers starting with the less competent ones
  • training of remaining contractual teachers, including temporary and community, and of all stakeholders engaged in the Guinea-Bissau education system (trainers, directors, inspectors, etc.) updating their academic and pedagogical knowledge.
Reinforcing in-service teachers skills in competence based approach in 5 subjects (2014-2015)

The Competence-Based Approach was adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2009 to be gradually implemented in the education system. Considering the need identified from the teachers’ assessment to reinforce pedagogical skills of teachers, modules and guides on Competence-Based Approach [Rogiers, s/d] for in-service teacher training were developed for grades 1-6. Five experts from the Ministry of Education developed these orienting documents for the subjects of pedagogy, Portuguese, mathematics, integrated science and expression. Each module is accompanied by its guide and both have been structured with teaching situations (suggestions for application and exploration activities), problem solving, and evaluation criteria. These modules and guides are orienting tools for trainers and/or teachers proposing exercises by themes, which can be used to strengthen and develop student and/or teacher’s competencies/training, respectively. UNESCO offered 3,000 modules and guides to the Ministry of Education, completing the implementation of this project component.

The elaboration process of the 5 modules and guides involved several revisions at different level of project implementation including post training sessions which ensured that the following aspects were fully considered:

- Adequacy of the content and pictures in regard to the socio-cultural context of the country
- Compliance with on-going curricular reform
- Consideration of gender appropriation
- Guides should match the respective modules and provide clear and detailed guidance to teachers allowing them to better conduct the teaching and learning processes

Nevertheless, these materials are not considered final versions. Further improvement is encouraged particularly after testing the exercises in the classroom or in teacher training session.

Trainers and in-service teacher trainings (2014-2015)

The project contributed to developing a pool of national trainers/inspectors capable of training teachers in their regions disseminating further the teaching in the modules and guides on competence-based approached:

- 95 national trainers/inspectors (91% of the total number of national trainers/inspectors in the national education system) from the 11 education administrative regions in Guinea-Bissau were trained by the national experts on the 5 modules & guides
- as a recommendation from the first training session, the capacities of 55 trainers/inspectors (representing all 11 educative regions) out of the original 95 were further reinforced while putting into practice in classroom situations
- among these 55 trained, 11 were selected for the training of 298 in-service teachers (grades 1-6) on competence-based approach in 4 different centres around the country (Bissau, Bula, Buba, and Gabu). Teachers were selected from the 11 educative regions and were all provided with a kit containing 5 modules and 5 guides (for each subject) as teaching support materials.
Key findings

- Preparatory steps are crucial for large scale decentralized teacher trainings
- A team of adequately trained trainers on the competence-based approach should be nominated
- Appropriate selection of trainees (training beneficiaries) based on their skills level and experience is crucial
- Realistic and coherent training plan including practical exercises shall be elaborated and followed by all trainers
- Logistical preparation is key factor for a successful training
- Appropriate training period should consider rainy season and harvest period
- Coordinated training supervision is required in the different training centres
- Teacher tests shall be designed and conducted to assess training efficiency


In Guinea-Bissau bilingual education proves to be pertinent as national in-service teacher’s assessment conducted under this project revealed that a large number of in-service teachers have insufficient level of Portuguese language, particularly in rural communities. Bilingual education was piloted (2014-2015) under this project in the following areas:

- the development of modules and training materials, along with a strategy for introduction of bilingual education in Creole and Portuguese in selected public schools;
- a national workshop and validation of the modules and didactic materials on bilingual education by the Ministry of Education and education partners, along with experts;
- training of 10 teachers from selected public schools to pilot bilingual education in grades 1 and 2.
Objective 3: Improvement of management of quality of learning through putting in place a national examination system

The development of practices such as national examinations to evaluate learning outcomes is a major contribution to sustainable education. The project conducted a first exam session with the support of the Ministry of Education staff.

National exam system (2010-2011)

National examination has been a lost practice in Guinea-Bissau despite the Minister of Education’s strong political leadership in this issue. This project intended to support the development of a new system of evaluation and measurement of learning outcomes through national examinations. The implementation of this project was done through:

- analysis of the existing national students assessment system
- constitution and training of a national technical team to integrate future structure in charge of National Exams:
  - Training of this team for the development and correction of national exams by topic
  - Development of distribution procedures and administration of national exams
  - Piloted in 2011 an examination session for students in grades 9 & 12 in the disciplines of Portuguese and mathematics
- designing of tools for quality management and data processing to support the establishment of a national examination system

Key findings

- It was observed that in general exam scores of students in urban and/or private schools are higher. For example, in Portuguese scores of 9 graders was notably better in Bissau.
- 12th grade Portuguese exams performance was low (3.2/20) and much lower than those obtained in the test of 9th grade students.
- The situation is more alarming in Math exams presenting results of 3.4/20 for 9th graders and 1.1/20 for 12th graders, respectively.

Objective 4: Capacities and resource management by the Ministry of Education improvement


Given the fragile context of Guinea-Bissau, the project approach on sustainability assured a strong collaboration with the Ministry of National Education. Such strong engagement and leadership of the Ministry of Education and national institutions (INDE, pre-service training institutions, the Ministry of Education) in their respective roles guaranteed that the project implementation would align with national priorities, strengthen national
technical teams and experts, and maximize the utilization of resources and synergy between the stakeholders in order to avoid duplication of interventions:

- Engaging the Ministry of Education in the design and implementation of all activities to ensure full appropriation
- Establishing national technical teams who worked in close collaboration with international experts
- Ensuring leadership and capacity building of 5 national technical experts from the National Ministry of Education through the revision/harmonization process of in-service teacher training modules for grades 1-6, training of trainers, as well as teacher training preparation and organization
- Contributing technical backstopping throughout project implementation by national and international experts
- Equipping INDE and pre-service teacher training institution, 17 of February, with computers, scanner, photocopy machine and printer

III. Sustainability

This project contributed to further develop the educative system in Guinea-Bissau by developing a pool of teacher trainers, from all 11 education regions. These trainers can disseminate further the training received on Competence Based Approach to in-service teacher, in addition to distributing the 3,000 modules and guides produced for Portuguese, mathematics, integrated science, expression, and pedagogy.

Through the bilingual program, the project capacitated 10 teachers whom can continue to pilot this pedagogy in the academic years to come. Similarly, they can carry on with previous students (grade 1) in the following academic years (grade 2) to allow a continuous learning improvement effort.
Education partners should make use of these training modules, guides, and didactic materials developed to support their teacher strengthening activities, and/or improvement of the materials.

Pre-service teacher training curriculum programs were revised and updated under this project. A program proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Education for validation and appropriation, alongside a matrix of certification.

**IV. Challenges and Lessons Learnt**

Throughout project implementation various challenges were encountered. However, they served as orienting lessons to best implement activities. The political instability caused several change of cabinets obstructing the appropriate flow of project implementation. Furthermore, national diagnosis and assessments provided insightful indicators resulting in a structured roadmap for adequate project delivery. Using national experts, national project officer, and national consultants allowed for contextualized and realistic activities serving in the best way possible the beneficiaries. Stronger synergy among partners was pertinent, in order to avoid duplication of activities.

**V. Recommendations**

**Pre-service Teacher Training**

- Improvement of Guinea-Bissau Escola Superior de Educação/School of Higher Education (ESE) and its faculty to ensure continuity, development and implementation of teacher training activities, including the monitoring and supervision of the Pedagogical Practice activities for ESE students in basic education schools
- Preparation and approval of the evaluation system for course completion certification
- Setting standards and implementing procedures to ensure smooth transition to a new institutional framework, considering its many dimensions
- Determine an authority which is capable of certifying teacher qualification that will serve as a regulatory body.
Portuguese/Creole Bilingual Education

- Promote further development of Creole and curricula materials, teacher training, advocacy with community and decision makers, and financial support backed by relevant education policy

In-Service Teacher’s capacity building

- Take into account the priorities of lifelong learning: strengthen teachers from profile 1 (with low academic skills) in key academic/pedagogical areas, then improve the capacity of profile 2 teachers and finally those of profile 3
- Ensure certification and recognition of trainings in order to allow professional development in the teaching career in addition to recognizing years of services.
- Organize training taking into account teacher profiles, the socio-economic and geographical contexts, as well as outside of school hours and ensure all teachers receive full training materials
- Develop a strategic teacher training plan taking into account the current reform. This should be done by a network of national actors (formal, non-formal, community, and civil society) in order to articulate and integrate all their activities under continuous in-service teacher training
- Such articulation implies the specification of minimum requirements for training: tailored to teachers’ needs and profiles, training duration, organization and content, thus enhancing all existing offers and those which may be developed, avoiding fragmentation and dispersion of education partners/actors’ efforts
• INDE would take the responsibility of monitoring the use of modules developed under this project in all in-service and continuous teacher training activities

National Exams System

• Operationalize the Secretariat of National Exams (SEN) and the Advisory Committee of National Examinations (NEAC) created by the Ministry of Education with adequate resources to bring forth a National Examination System measurable of learning outcomes

Overall Recommendations:

• Education project planning and implementation should involve the national authorities, technical-financial partners, and stakeholders to avoid activity duplication through as well as to ensure implementation and supervision by national institutions for full ownership
Improvement of teacher qualification and setting up of a system for the management of learning outcomes
Guinea-Bissau 2009-2015
“Quality teachers are increasingly recognized as the most important factor in children’s learning – and thus, in improving educational attainment levels, increasing the ability of young people to participate in society and today’s knowledge economies, boosting productivity and prosperity. Especially in poor communities and countries affected by conflict, quality teaching can literally change a child’s life – helping children overcome enormous challenges and preparing them for better lives and brighter futures.”


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