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Educational policies, its tensions, agendas and developments: What can we learn from the international Experience?

Title of the paper

Educational policy-making in Africa union: Between internationalization and regionalization

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Abstract

The historical trajectory of public policies in sub-Saharan Africa is marked by three main moments: the centrality of the state in the planning process, the extroversion of public policy steering models, and the recent participation of the civil society in the co-production of public goods and services. The coming into play of the African Union (AU) in 2002 marks a major turning point because the “supranational” institution intends to build a common frame of reference for the development of African states around pan-African ideology. The failures of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the recurrent crises on the continent have long hidden the production of community policies through the many regional institutions. In the education sector, ten – year Education plans for Africa (1996-2006, 2006-2015) and the African Union continental strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025) are strategic action of the African union in this field. The present contribution attempts to analyses, through New discursive institutionalism and socio-history approach in public action, the complex processes of shaping references and common policies in education by Pan-African institution. This approach forces us to rely on two points. First, to analyse the real influence of international organizations and international conferences on the formulation of regional educational policies in the African Union. Then we will decrypt the different transfers of public policies between the regional sphere and the national territory of implementation, case will be taken here on Cameroon. In order to enrich analysis we opt for a transversal analysis of educational policies, from primary to elementary.

Keys Words: internationalization, regionalization, African Union, Educational policy, continental education strategy for Africa.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AU: African Union

AIDS: Acquired immune deficiency syndrome

ADEA : Association for the development for education in Africa

EFA : Education for All

CESA : Continental Education strategy for Africa

COMEDAF : Commission of Ministers of Education of Africa

ECCAS : Economic community of central African States

NEPAD : New Partnership for Africa's Development

OAU : Organization of African Unity

SADEC : Southern Africa development Community

SAP : Structural Adjustment Programmes

REC : Regional Economic Communities

WAEMU : West African Economic and Monetary Union

UNESCO : United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Introduction

During the 26th African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa from 21 to 31 January 2016, away from the multiple crises and conflicts on the continent, the African Union Heads of State and Government adopted the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25). The development and adoption of this common policy instrument (Pierre Lascoumes and Patrick le Galès, 2014) in the education sector marks to a certain extent the willingness of African politicians to move towards greater integration of the African continent. In this regard, it is fascinating to note that through the African Union, African States are part of a global dynamic group of States turning around political, economic or geopolitical interests.

In a global environment strongly marked by trade globalisation, it is obvious to notice that States are thus permanently organised according to their respective regional logics (Sabine Saurugger, 2009). In the same vein, Issaka Souaré points out that "*regional integration has hitherto been a strategy of fashionable States aimed at consolidating their dominant status in a deeply rooted global capitalist system in globalisation*" (Issaka Souaré, 2007). In view of the challenges facing the African continent, regional integration is more of a necessity than a mere option.

In line with this, the African Union's formulation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa meets one of the major objectives of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which is to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and between the peoples of Africa¹. More specifically, this strategy is in line with the African Union's vision and project in the education sector: strengthening the cooperation between States "*... on education and training, coordinate and harmonise their policies in this field with a view to training people capable of promoting the changes needed for social progress and the development of the continent.*"². Thus

¹ Constitutive Act of the African Union, Article 3 (a)

² Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, Article 68, Education and culture, Abuja, Nigeria, 3 June 1991

presented, the profusion of education policies prior to this continental strategy should not be erased.

In fact, since 1961, several international and national initiatives have been undertaken with the aim of making more efficient the education systems on the African continent. Here are some of the major initiatives in favour of education in Africa, undertaken from 1961 to the dawn of independence: *the Conference of African States on the Development of Education held from 15 to 25 May in Addis Ababa*, *the Jomtien Conference on Education for All (1990)*, and *the Decennial Strategies for Education in Africa (1997 - 2007, 2007 - 2016)*. It is necessary to mention that the institutional and political history of education in Africa is compact and with the elaboration of this "regional" sectoral reference system in education, it is a new page that is written with the intervention of the African Union. It is therefore relevant to analyse the role of the African Union in this new dynamic of the formulation and implementation of common policies and especially of education policies. Our interest to study and better understand the role of the African Union in common education policy-making has been guided by two major factors: Internationalisation and Regionalisation.

The African Union, through its statutes and its pan-African ideology, intends to act as a catalyst for energies and federations of policies through a representative and competent "supranational institution". Although the Member States are primarily held accountable for education policy within the education sector, the AU, through its coordination and harmonisation of education policies, provides the strategic direction for the formulation of a common continental reference system. In this framework, the African Union is caught in a grip; it has to face external pressure (international influence of education donors), rooted from the history and internal tensions linked to the joint of sub-regional organisations (ECCAS, SADEC, WAEMU) which impose a multi-level governance.

The first tension rooted from the history of education in Africa is internationalisation. Rachel Solomon Tsehaye (2015) defines internationalisation as *a process of standardisation that takes place through the global convergence of models for the organisation of education and school curricula, but also the expansion of education systems*. Although in Africa the process of internationalisation of education from a perspective of influence is not a new concept because it dates back to colonisation era (Christian Depover, Phillipe Jonnert, 2014), it is necessary to mention that, it is thanks to the strong commitment of international actors in education policies such as the World Bank and UNESCO that the concept has been highly developed. Several research on the imposition of education standards in sub-Saharan Africa enabled us to understand this matter (Marie France-Lange, 2001, 2003, 2013; Vinokur 1987; Laval and Weber, 2002). It is a matter of understanding that internationalisation is a fundamental variable that enables to understand the situation of education in Africa. In addition to the phenomenon of internationalisation, the African Union should consider the sub-regional level comprising Regional Economic Communities made up of "sovereign" States.

First of all, this mission is clearly stated. The African Union is in charge to gather all the efforts and expectations of African States for greater effectiveness at the international level. Only African regionalism is peculiar for at least two reasons: first, it is organised around Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and secondly, it deals with inaccuracy on the long-term project (federalism or confederation). Even though the Pan-Africanism which is the African political project, remains widely shared, the requirements for its implementation are not obvious.

In view of all the above, the African Union's ambition to shape and implement a common regional reference system is built in a complex context. First, it must "describe its own education objectives in relation to the global education commitments defined by UNESCO and the World Bank"³ and secondly, it should appear coherent with the aspirations of the sub-regions made up

³ This African Union position to build its own strategy in the education sector can be found in the foreword of the CESA " *Taking into account the whole global environment, we want to define our own objectives vis-à-vis the future*

of States with various strategies. In order to better decipher the facts thus presented, our reflection will be concomitantly based on scientific postures combining discourse neo-institutionalism and socio-history of public action. The first theoretical approach will enable us to present and explain public policies (at the international level) through discursive interactions in institutional configurations (Vivien A. Schmidt, Amandine Crespy 2014). The second approach to the socio-history of public action will enable us to trace the shaping of public policies in Africa and to understand the role of some constant variables in the process of public policy formulation in Africa. In this regard, we will be guided by the Path Dependence Theory (Bruno Palier , 2014).

Finally, our analytical framework will be based on the work of Fred Eboko on the "matrix of public action in Africa" (Fred Eboko, 2015) because transnational public action of education in Africa which is the objective of our study, structures a relative standardisation that concerns the configuration of actors and institutions of the public policies. Thanks to this methodological tool, our research will be centred on two specific areas. In the first part, we will analyse the sociogenesis of public policies in Africa and discern whether or not we are facing a constant extraversion (I). In the second part, we will discuss the provisions and "discursive capacities" and (Vivien A. Schmidt, Amandine Crespy 2014) practices of the African Union in its aim to produce a "regional education order". (II)

and in so doing position ourselves against the global development agendas and goals ... Through CESA 2016-2025, henceforth CESA 16-25 for short, we would like to not only own the global sustainable development goals, but adapt and make them compatible with our own aspirations "

I - EDUCATION PUBLIC POLICIES IN AFRICA: A history of extraversion? (1961-2015)

In the aftermath of independence, policy-making in Africa was largely analysed under the paradigms of “importing the State” (Badie,1992), "rejection of the transplant" (Bayard,1996) "withdrawal" or even “collapse of the State”(William Zartman, 1995). These theories are centred on a thesis of a certain powerless State. In this configuration, the process of internationalisation seems self-evident, since neither the African States nor the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU) were the real public policy-makers. More detailed analysis shows that education in sub-Saharan Africa has improved as much under the leadership of the "African State" as the international partners (A). It remains to be seen whether the commitment of the international organisations marked by the establishment of a *new world education order* is in line with the education project in Africa (B).

A- Local discursive trajectories on education policies in Africa.

In analysing the discourses and practices of the different actors in the field of education in Africa since 1960, it seems impossible to only present education systems under the logic of extraversion. In fact, after independence, there was a "local discourse" on the stakes and challenges of education in Africa. Between 1961 and 1980, the post-colonial State was at the heart of the process of formulating and implementing education policies with the OAU acting in a halftone (1).

The post-colonial State and education policies in sub-Saharan Africa: Case study of Cameroon

Upon colonisation, the African State had a relative leeway in public policy programming (Fred Eboko, 2015). The newly independent States wanted to prove their worth and commit themselves in formulating policies linked with "africanisation of executives" and "formal construction of

States". In this dynamic, education was considered as a lever of development which could accelerate the economic development of the young independent States. From 1960 to 1980, there was a rapid development and improvement of African education systems. As a result, school enrolment highly increased thanks to two phenomena: the will of the States to develop mass schooling, because it could eventually take the lead in building the national unity and serve as a privileged instrument of economic development (Marie France-Lange 1990). In this vein, during the Addis Ababa Conference in 1961, universal primary education was defined as a priority by African countries. With regard to the participation of international actors in this conference, there would be a tendency to question the influence of the African State on education policies. Following Cameroon's example, we can observe that public institutions have taken responsibility for the direction and organisation of the education system.

In fact, in Cameroon, between 1960 and 1976, democratisation and reform were two major facts that characterised education. The democratisation of education in Cameroon was characterised by: a massive enrolment, a high density in schools, and a greater complexity of administrative structures and bodies (Hamidou Komidor, 2010).

With regard to reform, it was a matter of skipping the vestiges of colonisation which have distorted education systems. At this level, the policy intends to define education on the basis of two specific elements: to strengthen unity and social cohesion; and to build the education system based on realities of the ground. To this end, the Cameroon legislature required schools to contribute to the achievement or consolidation of independence and national unity, the promotion of economic and social development and the advent of a personality and of a national culture (Hamidou Komidor, 2010). Contrary to what we might think by observing the education crises in Africa, the African States and especially Cameroon developed at the beginning, an autonomous system. This can be noticed in the below extract of the remarks by the first Cameroonian Head of State «*The objective to achieve through education in our country, is to make each Cameroonian a well-trained citizen,*

able to participate more effectively in the management of the State»⁴ in a more strategic sense, he states that:

"Every revolution becomes imaginary and degrades in hollow dreams, if not in cultural alienation, when instead of recognising its own sphere of belonging, namely the realities of the soil of the fatherland that must be transformed, it is satisfied with empty and self-serving claims, claims for rights unrelated to real and concrete duties " (Hamidou Komidor, 2010)

. Therefore, education should be tasked with civic training, nurturing of skilled workforce and training of economically profitable men. Here it therefore means a school for nurturing education, a utility school which differs from the one that provides education and teachings just for pleasure. These guidelines for education policies lean on substantial financial support. At that time, both formal and informal education represented a significant part of the national budget. Thus, from 1971 to 1976, education related expenses were amounted to reach an annual growth rate of 25.5%. They increased from CFAF 9,742 million in 1971-72 to CFAF 21,925 million in 1975-76.

In the end, we can note that after independence, a national political discourse was independently built from outside to determine education policies in Africa in general and especially in Cameroon. With the economic crisis of the African States in the late 1980s, the social sectors were affected by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund). The philosophy underlying this policy of international financial institutions is liberalism, "less State" in social sectors. This phase marked the entry of foreign partners into the education system in Africa.

⁴ Speech at Higher Education Council of AHIDJO AHMADOU , first President of republic of Cameroon. (Hamidou Komidor, 2010)

B-Internationalisation of Education in Africa: Between "World Education Order" and "Regional Education Disorder".

With the financial crisis of the early 1980s and the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes, social sectors in Africa were largely affected. In the education sector, there were detrimental effects on the development of schooling. Several children had to interrupt their studies (Marie France-lange, 2003). In addition to this, the projects entitled to modernise education systems were suspended because the State had no longer the means to finance such projects. It is noted that from that period there was an increased donor intervention through increased financial support for education. It should also be noted, however, that at that time, with its capacity to mobilise funds, the World Bank was the main international institution to play a decisive role in the education sector. In 1990, the World Bank introduced a triumphant liberal ideology in the education field, calling for the withdrawal of the State and the generalisation of the market economy. The presence of civil society organisations and donors in the policy-making process was therefore legitimised. Apart from the pecuniary aspect, the influence of the World Bank lay at the very level of the reforms. Some of these reforms were: the priority given to primary education (we shall come back later on it), girls' education and lifelong learning. The main actors of this initiative were the World Bank and UNESCO. The latter was instead, part of a register of technical assistance and a universal education orientation. In a UNESCO report published in 2015 entitled "Rethinking Education. Towards a global common good", a humanistic and universal vision of education is clearly presented

"A humanistic vision reaffirms a set of universal ethical principles that should be the foundation for an integrated approach to the purpose and organisation of education for all. A humanistic approach takes the debate on education beyond its utilitarian role in economic development" (UNESCO, 2015)

Without questioning the fact that education can lead to a better understanding between peoples, this humanistic vision of education defended by UNESCO and extended to Africa seems to reduce

the strength of education especially its related policy. The latter is an ultimate field of confrontation, opposition, imposition of a dominant command from sovereign political or economic actors. In this case, we will take an example of the Europe's strategic objective in education. This objective underscored that it should be compelling "... to make the European Union the most dynamic and competitive area in the world, an area based on innovation and knowledge ...» These strategic objectives are the result of an autonomous reflection of "the European Union" committed to act in an international political game of balance of power, that does not leave behind education. Michael Hill said:

"Any discussion of the public policy process needs to be grounded in an extensive consideration of the nature of the power in the state. Any consideration of how the process works will tend to involve propositions about who dominates" (Michael Hill, Frederic Varone, 2017). This remark allows us to better understand the use of the expressions "political order" or "political disorder" in our work.

Indeed, the public policy-making process of whatever sector it may be, remains first a political activity. In this sense it is built in an antinomy dialectic between "political order and disorder". (Philippe Zittoun, 2013). Therefore, despite its universal modalities, the "world education order" backed up by international partners (UNESCO, World Bank) excludes the African continent. Could the imposition of these norms result in a "regional education disorder" within the African Union, because it does not always respond to a pan-African dynamic (global reference system) to set up a major player on the international free sphere of external influence? Besides this question, we also wonder about another "regional education disorder" this time linked with the foreign aid that comes from the education sector. Speaking of extraversion in Africa, Jean François Bayart argues that *"the dominant actors of sub-Saharan societies resorted to extraversion strategies to compensate for their difficulties in empowering themselves and intensifying the exploitation of their dependants by using deliberately extraversion strategies, mobilising resources provided by their relationship, likely*

unequal to the external environment”(Bayart 1999). In these configurations, the representatives of African States on the international scene would become the main actors of the "education disorder" at the regional level by adopting the "world education order".

II- THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE PROMOTION OF A "REGIONAL EDUCATION ORDER"

In the Executive Summary of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016-2025), it is stated that this common strategy aims to create a "qualitative system of education and training whose objective is to provide the African continent with efficient human resources adapted to African core values "(CESA 2015). With the build-up of such a "common" reference system, it seems important to understand the essence of this educational policy (A) and then to better analyse the institutional arrangements that contribute to the implementation of this strategy. (B)

A- Symbolic Formulation of Regional Education Public Action driven by the Pan-African Ideology

The reference system in the analysis of public policies corresponds to a certain conception of the place and the role of the domain concerned in the society. It consists of a set of prescriptions which defines a public action programme by determining the choice criteria and the methods used to set its objectives. (Pierre Muller, 2015). Upon analysis, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) has emerged as the "regional" sectoral reference system for education in Africa. This reference system finds its meaning and essence in the Pan-Africanism, which is the unifying element of the African Union.

Pan-Africanism is an idea, a political ideology of solidarity and unity of Africans, for a project of economic and social development aiming at winning back the African resources and capacities, for the well-being of the Africans. (Michel Kounou, 2007). Pan-Africanism is a vital necessity for both Africans living in Africa and the African diaspora. The survival of present and future African generations depends on the immediate beginning of a process of political unification. Pan-Africanism is therefore the global reference system around which the education and training sector in Africa draws its essence. In order to get a better idea of the link between the global reference system (Pan-Africanism) and the sectoral reference system (continental education and training strategy), we will highlight the four levels of perceptions (Pierre Muller, 2014): values, standards, algorithms and images related to the CESA.

The main ideas and values that structure Pan-African ideology are based on two elements: the emancipation of African States and the affirmation of a cultural unity of the African peoples (Cheick Anta Diop, 1974). The concept of emancipation here means a total independence of the African States from the former colonial powers. In 1960, many States have acquired "legal independence", analysts suggest that more insidious neo-colonisation with these informal networks should lead African States towards political and strategic emancipation (Alain Fogue, 2008). It is therefore a matter of emerging from this complex domination which deprives the African continent of enjoying all its wealth. Pan-Africanism is also based on another pillar, namely the affirmation of a cultural unity of the African peoples. This thesis has been defended by Cheick Anta Diop, the committed researcher who asserted that African people came from the Great Lakes region. According to him, during the prehistoric period, these people would have migrated to the Nile Valley, where they lived for millennia, forging the first Egyptian and Sudanese Nilotic civilisations (Kounou, 2007). All these remarks are fundamental because they will decisively guide the common policies of the African Union. We can take an example that we will develop in the second part;

in fact, in comparison with the European Union's education sector, the African Union has opted for a harmonisation of education policies, which implies greater cohesion than mere cooperation.

Referring to the norms that structure the education and training policy of the African Union means to highlight the discrepancies between the real perceived and the real desired. This is the scope of the definition of Programmes of Action. Especially in primary and secondary education, there are still several gaps in access to education, retention of students in secondary schools, poor quality of teaching and of infrastructure. To this end, the common education policy suggests, inter alia:

- The revitalisation of the teaching profession, in order to ensure quality and relevance at all levels.
- The construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of school infrastructure; the development of policies that ensure a safe and conducive learning environment for all.
- Strengthen science and mathematics programmes and disseminate scientific knowledge and culture in African society.

These are some concrete normative elements that guide education policy. The algorithms or causal relationships that materialise these devices are very evocative. One of the most evocative algorithms is not included in this continental strategy; *Educating or Perishing* "(Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 1990) is a sufficient testimony to the urgent need in Africa to build a solid education to ensure the bright future of Africa.

Thus presented, one can well understand a logic between the overall political ideology of the African Union and the formulation of the overall education strategy. However, it is important to note that for some authors in practice it is an unrealistic step (Louis-Marc Ropivia, 1994), because the African continent is very large and, for example, amongst the education systems that must coexist, we have: the Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone and Arab-Muslim systems). It can also

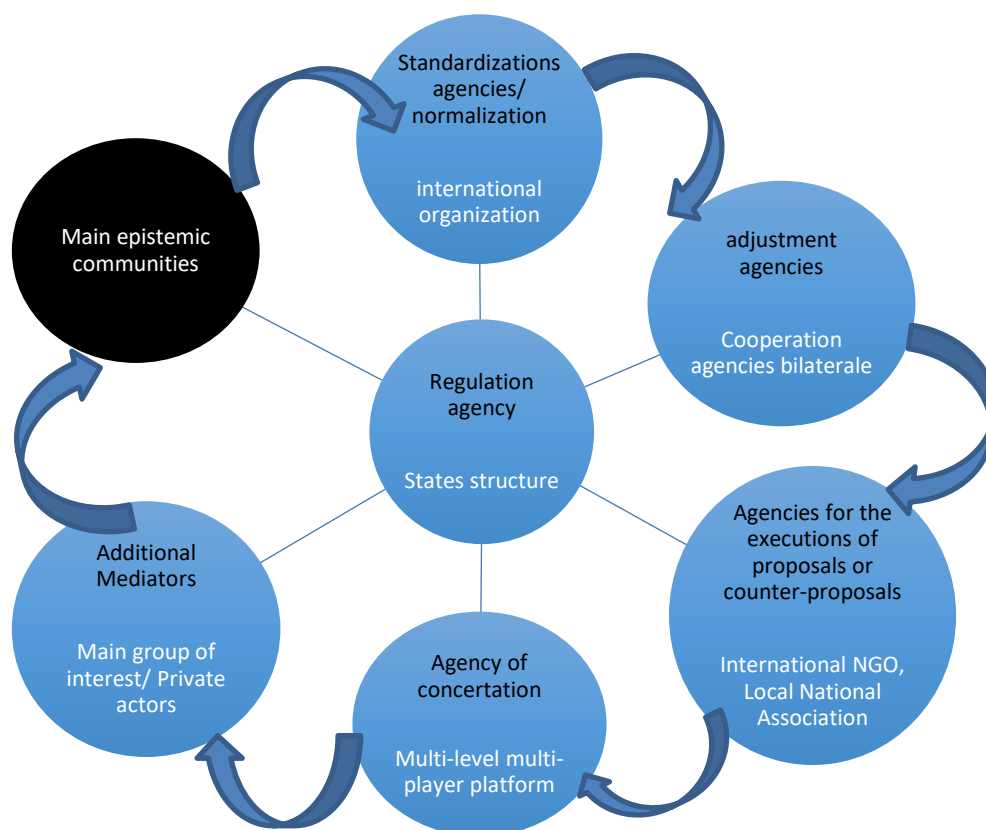
be noticed that, these difficulties consequently form a multi-institutional mechanism which is organised to ensure the implementation of this education policy.

B- Institutional Formulation of Education Public Action: Reality Check of Multi-level Governance.

Having formulated the Continental Education Strategy in a clear and precise way, it is important for the African Union to think about its implementation. In practice, the African Union does not have any territory to impose its policy, it deals with sovereign States, and it does not have all the technical and financial resources necessary to effectively implement policies. This multi-actor configuration is not unique to the African Union as the pioneer of a transnational public policy. African States are also part of this complexity in the formulation and implementation of public action.

In his effort to understand this concept, Fred Eboko has endeavoured to develop a theory of this multi-level governance by what he called the "Matrix of Public Action" in Africa (Fred Eboko, 2015). Based on a transnational public action against AIDS, this author has standardised the configurations of actors and the policy processes that make up this matrix. All actors are represented, from the international to the national level. As actors, we therefore have: one or more multilateral or international organisations, one or more Western bilateral cooperation agencies, a platform for the coordination of national and international actors, a State body officially in charge of the implementation of the Public Action, African National Enforcement Associations, a multilateral donor and private donors, and networks of public and private international experts (Fred Eboko, 2015).

Figure 3 Matrix of the public action in Africa ,



Source : Fred Eboko (2015), *Repenser l'action publique en Afrique. Du sida à l'analyse de la globalisation des politiques publiques*, Paris, Karthala

For us, this matrix remains valid in our analysis if we include the "supranational" actor, which is the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). We will therefore group this multi-level governance into three areas: At the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

The regional level consists of the African Union and the Commission of Ministers of Education of Africa (COMEDAF), they are at the strategic level and they set the course for the policies to be carried out. At the sub-regional level, Regional Economic Communities have a responsibility to

integrate with the AU's work and serve as its building blocks. If we take the example of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The Article 61 of the Treaty establishing the Economic Community of Central African States stipulates that:

"Member States shall prepare a common educational policy including education models more closely tailored to the economic and socio-cultural realities of the sub-region in order to train people who are rooted in their environment and able to promote the changes necessary for social progress and development."

At the national level, the States in collaboration with the private sector and civil society organisations have the responsibility to integrate this community reference system in the national strategy. In short, we are dealing with a multi-level governance system characterised by "a diversified set of arrangements, a panoply of coordination and negotiation systems between officially independent but functionally interdependent entities that maintain complex and constantly redefined relationships".

Board 1 : Multi-level actors and responsibilities in Sectoral Education Strategy for Africa (CESA)

Sectoral Education Strategy for Africa			
Governance Scale	Institutional actors	Responsibilities	Foreign partners and other stakeholders
Continental level	African Union COMEDAF	<p>Continental orientation and sharing of best practices</p> <p>Collaboration with NEPAD to facilitate activities and provide support to the RECs.</p> <p>Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for assessment.</p>	World Bank, UNESCO ADEA
Regional level	Regional Economic Communities	<p>Effectiveness of regional coordination in implementation</p> <p>Integrate the CESA into regional programmes.</p> <p>Provide support to Member States in developing strategies at the national level.</p>	World Bank, UNESCO ADEA
National level	Member States	<p>Integrate the implementation of the CESA into national policies and strategies.</p> <p>Strengthening the dialogue between national stakeholders</p> <p>Identify a national body to promote sub-sector coordination.</p>	Private Sector Civil Society Organisations.

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