

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

EDUCATION



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Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho: A Radical Technocratic Recommendatory View in the Education Sector Development Policy (ESDP)

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an aid policy appraisal in the educational development system of Lesotho as a developing country, among other characteristics a usual development aid recipient. Foreign aid in development process is also one phenomenon with inherent limitations requiring integrated solutions in advance. The inbuilt precincts emanate from adopted development paradigms and/or set conditionalities or attached strings by the foreign donors or lending Bretton Woods's institutions. Such development approaches' confines in particular 'sector-wide' approaches over traditional development project approach including Lesotho educational system situation, are in an assessment manner through an analytic framework elaborated upon in this paper. Drastic measures as incorporable remedies for effective sector-wide approaches as a way out are suggested to Lesotho education policy formulators not excluding others in the developing world, the donors and development practitioners. The whole effort here by the government of Lesotho (GOL) through ESDP was to sustain economy by local labour market supply and skilled population able to lead decent lives.

INTRODUCTION

Assistance to developing countries by both the developed countries and international financial institutions has gone through many stages of development reflecting changing ideologies and debates around the development machine in the developing world. Traditionally, aid was provided in the form of projects funded and managed by their own sponsors.

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

In the 1990s, criticism began to be leveled at this approach and a new approach to development cooperation was adopted in the form of sector-wide approach (SWAPs). It was argued within the aid agencies that projects were failing to bring sustainable impact and that adoption of sectoral programmes can contribute to sustainable development. The aim of this paper is to assess this argument by looking at the merits and demerits of the sector-wide approaches to development cooperation when compared with the more traditional approach of projects, using the specific case of Lesotho which has used both approaches to educational development, depicted in two periods; 1966-1990 and 1991-present falling directly under development by projects and sector-wide approaches respectively. The structure of the paper is as follows; Firstly, the analytical framework is laid by looking at the debates about the distinctions between the sector-wide approaches – their characteristics and implications, support or criticism of the approaches. Secondly, the situation in the education system of Lesotho is analyzed within the analytical framework laid above. This assesses the situation's response to both of the approaches. Thirdly and lastly, based on the above assessment of whether the sector-wide approach has more advantages or disadvantages over the traditional approaches, make recommendations to the policy makers in Lesotho who are working on adopting a fully fledged sector-wide approach to educational development.

Analytical Framework

The period following the Second World War has been characterized by large development projects, first aimed at the reconstruction of war torn Europe and later as a tool for development cooperation between international financial institutions, developed countries and developing countries, a way of channeling resources from the North to the South. Projects were perceived as answers to the problems of traditional planning which was unrealistic in fixing development goals and in the estimation of resources and administrative capacities needed to achieve the goals. Projects were claimed to be much more manageable due to their nature of being limited in objectives, scope, duration and budgets. This led to international development assistance to developing world being composed of individual projects financed by different donors, each with a specific aim.¹ It was said to be donor driven, that is reflecting donor rather than aided country's priorities, leading to fragmentation and duplication of efforts by donors. It was realized that many individual projects backed by individual project conditionalities, implementation, monitoring and evaluation methods posed unrealistic demands on developing countries' limited financial and human resources. Projects were said to deplete national governments of talent and disregard the political priorities of national governments and undermined government legitimacy. The project approach was also blamed for lack of

coherence resulting from a large number of projects being elaborated without planning. Projects were also criticized for being inefficient and costly. In response to these criticisms, donors have aimed to change their operating strategies and emphasis has been placed on building national capacity, developing national planning capacities and moving to sector-wide policies.² Sector-wide approaches are claimed to be guided by the following principles: “being sector-wide; based on clear and coherent policy framework; local stakeholders are supposed to be fully in charge; all main donors must agree to it; implementation must be developed jointly ; and should depend on local capacity, not technical assistance....”³

The following have been put forward as the distinctions between the project and sector-wide approaches. In terms of goals, sector-wide approaches are said to have long-term, generic and integrated aims while projects have immediate, tightly defined and fragmented aims. In terms of focus, sector-wide approaches are claimed to have a broad-based focus whereas projects are narrowly focused. In sector-wide approaches, the role of government is said to be to define the core strategy while in projects the role of government is outside or additional to the core strategy. In terms of the implementation mechanism the sector-wide approaches use the line Ministries while projects use project implementation units (PIUs). In addition, in sector-wide approaches collaboration is said to be possible and desirable between donors while it is not a priority in the projects approach. As far as the impact on recipient country are concerned, sector-wide approaches are claimed to be likely to build ministerial and government capacity while projects risk depleting the capacity of the partner government. Furthermore, sector-wide approaches are said to have high risks for the donors while projects have low risks for the donors.⁴

The above distinctions clearly point to the fact that sector-wide approaches are said to be well defined strategies, comprehensive expenditure programmes, foster government ownership and coordination and improve the quality of dialogue between donor and government, are cost-effective and reduce transaction costs for the recipient country by limiting the conditionalities. Thus, they have comparative advantage over traditional approaches. However, despite these seemingly advantages of sector-wide approaches over projects, sector-wide approaches have been criticized for the fact that in practice, they do not lead to the theoretical belief that all the donor agencies cooperate with each other and the government and the leadership is by local stakeholders who come up with a joint sector plan and cooperate to achieve the agreed effective policies, more efficient

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

management and large scale impact through pooling together the required resources. Klees [2001:2], argues that the forced SWAPs consensus makes donors stronger and unitedly impenetrable, making it difficult for governments of recipient countries to pursue their own agendas like taking advantages of different agendas of donors. Power gets concentrated in the hands of donors and there is also unequal power within the donor community, which leads to domination of agendas by powerful partners. SWAPs are also criticised for putting the large burden of governance capacity on developing countries, which are weak in terms of institutional frameworks and require technical and managerial skills [Ireland Aid, 2000:8]. For a SWAP to be successful there must exist strong macro-economic environment; sound financial budgeting and managerial skills, inter-ministerial collaboration, especially between the line Ministries and the Ministry of Finance, there should also be sound institutional skills for data collection and policy analysis to feed the correct inputs into the SWAP. All these are either weak or non-existent in developing countries therefore, emphasis should be placed on building them. There is need to get a wide political endorsement for the sector policy, which becomes difficult in weak democracies. There is also limited participation of the beneficiaries as donors prefer to work with national government bureaucracies. This refutes the arguments of participatory, bottom-up logic of the SWAPs. Case studies have shown that there is low level of participation inside the governments and even lesser participation outside [Ireland Aid, 2000,16]. There also still exist some degree of mistrust of partner governments by donors which leads to limitation of ownership. It has also been argued that even in the SWAPs there is no commitment leading to agreement on common goals and policy frameworks and a shift away from projects, reliance on conditionalities and the earmarking of funds. Since donor funding is backed by political and national priorities, some donors still maintain conditionalities, monitoring and evaluation system which give them room to be able to account to their constituencies. This minimises the degree of local ownership. Lastly, SWAPs are said to result in shortfalls and uncertainties, for instance, in budgeting.

CASE STUDY

The Situation of the Education System in Lesotho

The Structure of Education System

Lesotho's education system comprises pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels with a separate technical and vocational education organization structure. There are three years of pre-primary followed by seven years of primary school and five years of secondary school (three years in Junior Secondary and two years in Senior Secondary/High School). After completion of Junior Secondary, students can proceed either to Senior

Secondary or technical and vocational institutions. Completion of Senior Secondary leads to admission to technical and vocational education or with good qualifications to the teacher training college or university. The National University of Lesotho provides university degrees and diplomas. The Lesotho Agricultural College provides training in agriculture and Lesotho College of Education provides training for primary and secondary school teachers as well as Distant Teacher Education (in-service).

Education Policy

The education policy of Lesotho which is encapsulated in the Education Act of 1995, has developed within the context of broader national development policy and poverty reduction, which is considered to be the background to the actual education policy. It is based on the recognition that investment in human resources is vital for poverty reduction in the sense that it increases labour productivity through provision of skills that are key to economic growth and social progress. The broad objective of the education sector is therefore the production of a better qualified population, with increased opportunities to participate effectively in the socio-economic development of the country. Given this, even though the whole system needs change, priority has been given to; 1) basic (pre-primary to lower secondary) education, 2) non-formal education and 3) technical and vocational education as immediate areas in the sector. The aim of the policy is to increase access and equity, and also improve the quality of primary and secondary education as well as develop policy options and build capacity in the priority areas.⁵

Education Management Framework

The churches in Lesotho have always been the main providers of education, owning more than ninety (90) percent of the schools. The churches were initially responsible for building and staffing schools but with time, collaboration with government led to the latter taking over payment of teachers through provision of grants. Increased government involvement through provision of instructional materials, infrastructural development and other services complicated the relationships and pressure for a coherent policy and management structures of schools arose. The Education Act 1995, came as a result of protracted negotiations. It would lay foundations for greater participation of parents and give government a room for implementing the policy. School management committees comprising of parents' representatives, local communities, teacher and church representatives would be responsible for day to day running of the schools including setting of fees and employment of teachers while ownership would remain with owners and the government would provide legal and financial

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

frameworks and academic control of the system. In this regard, the government through its various departments is responsible for training, appointment, payment and conditions of service teachers, administration of the examinations system, curriculum development, supervision and inspection of schools and registration of new schools.⁶ Thus, education is perceived to be a partnership between government, churches and communities.

From Projects to Sector-wide approaches to Educational Development

In the colonial era education was meant to produce qualified staff for colonial administration while in the post colonial era investment has been based on achieving self-reliance through education. Education has always been provided by local churches in Lesotho. Christian missionaries played a central role in the provision of education in colonial and post colonial Lesotho. However, in the post colonial era it was realized that the resources the churches had were limited to meet the ever changing situations and this led to collaboration with the government. The government, also with limited resources had to rely more on external funding for additional resources to fund the education system. This sector has since been financed by many donors. These include among others; the World Bank, Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI), the World Food Programme, UNICEF, African Development Bank, GTZ, DFID, Skills Share, Denmark, USAID, the EU, UNFPA and JICA. Most of the resources were channeled through development projects staffed by donor recruited personnel, which were placed within various departments of the Ministry of Education.

The disadvantages of this approach were that donors used to define priorities for the government rather than allowing the government to determine its priorities. Thus, the Ministry of Education remained a passive recipient. This led to inappropriate projects which could not benefit the country. One such example is the radio programme which was financed by USAID to teach English to grade 1-3 pupils which has not helped anyhow since it was not tied to teacher training. Also, the Ministry of Education lost the loyalty and accountability of the projects implementing staff which were broken up between donor agencies. In addition, the Ministry of Education had difficulty of losing track of implementation status since the project managers knew more than senior staff and could manipulate them. Furthermore, the use of different implementation methods based on donor requirements compounded by low quality information flow, projects fragmented the education sector rather than unify it. For example, teacher training uncoordinated with curriculum development has always led to instructional materials being useless for schools. Least but not last, projects had no accountability and transparency regarding the use of funds. This made it difficult for the

Ministry of Education to keep track of the flow of resources to the sector and to assess impact on the system at large. Again, participation by other organizations in the field of education has worked to frustrate the plans of the government. An example is the mushrooming of private schools, not registered, using their own curricula inconsistent with government policy. This has raised a lot of tensions when government tried to close these schools. Projects also led to uneven development of human resources through the sub-sectors as they directed resources to the development of those within and closed them inside, barring the dissemination of skills. Also, the use of expatriates in the projects pulled out more resources that would be used to develop local capacities and provide facilities.

Realizing the above problems, an attempt to put together education development activities was done in 1991 when the government launched the first Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP I) following the 1990 World Conference on Education for All. This was to be a five year programme addressing the entire education system. The main focus was on investing in the development of human resources in collaboration with other sub-sectors through investment in basic education and technical training to ensure that the country would be able to sustain the economy by supplying both the local labour market and the population with the necessary skills for a decent living.

This would be done by bringing together all the projects under one implementation unit, coordinated by the senior management of the Ministry. In 1999, the Second Education Sector Development Project (ESDP II) was formulated with the aim of creating an education system that produces more and better educated population which will then be actively employed locally and regionally and participate in leadership roles, running over the period of twelve years. The main focus of this programme is on the four main priority areas that have been earmarked by the Government of Lesotho namely; early childhood development (ECD), primary and secondary education, technical and vocational training (TVET) and non-formal education (NFE) with the main objective of increasing access and equity at primary schools level so as to lay the foundation for achieving universal primary education and on improving the quality of primary and secondary education and also to develop the policy and frameworks for the other three priority areas. The Strategic Plan was made to guide the Ministry. The aim of the plan was to: "...establish the crucial linkages between the provision of early childhood care and development and primary education, primary education and secondary, technical and vocational education and training, and higher education as well as cross-sectoral linkages; and ...incorporate all...activities which constitute existing projects...the Plan...also consolidate all education

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

activities within the context of the national policy and commitments that GOL has made to both international and regional forums.”⁷

1

2This is intended to benefit the nation by enabling people to graduate with skills that allow them to meet the requirements of the labour market.⁸ The above mentioned donors continue to support the education sector. However, despite this support to the sector, it is widely acknowledged that collaboration among the donors and between them and the Ministry of Education has been marginal and unstructured. Although Education Sector Development Programme has far more than ten years brought together more than twelve donors and tried to subscribe to a sector-wide approach, the mode of operation cannot be described as a SWAP. During ESDP I, the donors contributed as follows:

Pre-primary and primary USAID, IDA, EU, UNICEF, WFP
Secondary ADF, DfID, IDA, EU
Technical and Vocational Irish Aid, IDA, GTZ, EU, UNDP
Tertiary IDA
During ESDP II donors contributed as follows:
Pre-primary and primary IDA, UNICEF, WFP, ADF, Irish Aid, JICA
Secondary ADF, IDA, Technical and Vocational Irish Aid, IDA, Capacity Building DfID, Ireland Aid, ADF

These are the problems existing within the sector which have hindered the adoption of a fully fledged SWAP: A number of donors that provided ESDP parallel funding appear to have not been enabled to fully participate in the preparation of the 1999-2011 education sector programme, it was done by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO. This can be explained by the absence of leadership among the donors in the education sector that could coordinate donor positions on a number of issues of common interest which is a result of unstructured dialogue mechanism. Moreover, there is hardly any formalized forum where donors in the sector meet amongst themselves or between them and the Government. Consequently, the dialogue mechanism in the education sector in Lesotho has generally assumed a bilateral character between a development partner and the Ministry of Education. For the purpose of this analysis, a SWAP is defined as an effort to bring donor support to a sector within a common management and planning framework for implementing agreed sector strategy. Its most important feature is that it brings the sector budget back to the center of policy-making and unifies expenditure management in pursuit of agreed sector objectives.

SWAP's aim is to strengthen government ownership and coordination of projects, facilitate realistic budgeting, integrate capital investment budgets in overall country budgets, and support policies and efforts to build domestic capacity. SWAPs also aim to reduce the procedural diversity of multiple donors which the average developing country finds to be both burdensome

and costly. An increasingly common feature of SWAPs is the pooling of donor and government funds for disbursement through jointly agreed channels instead of the use of special-purpose accounts for individual donor funds. This arrangement enables developing countries to institute a single procurement, financial management, and disbursement system, thus reducing the transaction costs of parallel systems; enhances the governments' own fiduciary system, thus strengthening ownership, internal capacity, and program sustainability; encourages harmonization of the developing country and donor fiduciary systems; and extends donor confidence over the proper use of funds to the whole sector programme rather than just to the ring-fenced projects each donor has financed. The alignment of donor support with the education sector priorities is an important aspect under SWAP. This implies the need for a close link between sectoral plans and the national budget cycle. However, in Lesotho, though they claim to support the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and work toward achieving the set goals, donors still maintain their conditionalities, use of own mechanism for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These have become very cumbersome for the ill-equipped Tender Board, the Ministry of Economic Planning which is supposed to monitor and the low capacitated senior officers of the Ministry of Education who do not have experience working with the donors.

Constraints to Adoption of a Full SWAP

The Context

There are structural, political, social and macro-economic constraints to the adoption of a SWAP in education in Lesotho. Politically, there is no endorsement for the sector policy. Provision of education facilities has been highly used for political reasons by the government and this has induced resentment from opposition parties which leads to obstruction of some activities by those sympathetic to opposition parties. An example of this is the problems encountered by the officers of the Ministry of Education when trying to secure sites for the construction of schools where some District Officers and Local Authorities refuse and sometimes go to extents of stopping the activities in progress. There is also lack of cooperation between government Ministries. This is particularly so with the Ministry of Finance which often hinders the activities of the Ministry of Education, through the Planning and Procurement units. Also, within the Ministry itself, there are people who are not willing to relinquish the powers they had under projects. There is also no clear line of responsibilities among the members of Senior Management who are responsible for coordination of the projects.

Also pooling of resources for donors becomes problematic when Lesotho has a weak macro-economic management framework. There are no clear legal frameworks for procurement, the national treasury is inefficient and corrupt.

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

Procurement under government funds is interlaced with controversies, lack of transparency, fraud and arbitrariness. Even projects funded by donors have been wrecked by disputes when government officials purposely intended to deviate from set procedures and guidelines. This has had a bad impact on the implementation progress.

The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) on its part has a weak public expenditure management system that requires strengthening. Presently, MOET lacks a well-organized public expenditure management that is an important prerequisite to an effective and efficient SWAP. A synoptic look at MOET's budget execution indicated that there is a large gulf between what is budgeted for and what is ultimately expended, a phenomenon that has to be addressed urgently to establish the cause for this and how it can be addressed. This is essential as the Ministry moves towards SWAPs whose success is significantly dependent on a well-functioning financial management system, particularly if donors are to be asked to mingle their external assistance in a government-managed common basket. The initial implementation experience of ESDP II is worth noting to illustrate the magnitude of the challenge. The implementation of ESDP II was delayed by at least a year and, as Table 1 shows, project expenditures for the eighteen months from credit effectiveness (end-September, 1999 to 31 March 2001) was only 25.7 percent of the amount budgeted for that period and less than 13 percent of the entire ESDP II amount. This revealed a very serious disbursement lag.

Table 1: ESDP II: Budgeted and actual expenditure for the 18 months ending March 2001.

Component	Budget	Actual	Budget/Actual Percentage
Early Childhood	1.8	0.3	16.3
Primary field Services	34.7	5.0	14.5
NCDC	1.9	0.56	29.3
ECOL	4.5	0.31	6.9
Secondary	0.5	0.03	7.5
SSU	1.4	0.4	28.0
NTTC	16.7	4.1	24.5
TVET	3.1	0.46	14.7
NFE	1.8	0.48	27.5
MOE	2.6	0.54	20.9
Planning Unit	24.8	8.8	35.6
TOTAL	93.8	24.1	25.7

Source: World Bank, 2001, Lesotho Second Education Sector Development Project (ESDP II), Supervision Mission Aide Memoire, Maseru, April.

The World Bank supervision Mission of the ESDP II concluded that "... most of the delayed operations got held up in the procurement stage" and reported as follows:

The mission found firstly that the procurement of many inputs in this project has not been initiated by the programs and secondly, that once initiated it got held up by various activities in the process...Bottleneck of procurement can be further attributed to organizational capacity factors, including inadequate division of labor among and within all units involved; unclear assignment of each "operation" within the project to accountable managers, lack of detailed planning of each "operation" by accountable managers; inadequate work practices; and lack of monitoring.⁹

There is also absence of timely and reliable national accounts and social data which has seriously compromised the Ministry's reporting and monitoring capacity. Without reliable data, neither Ministry nor donors can monitor and assess the implementation progress of the sector's Strategic Plan or identify better strategies.

Challenges of Stakeholder Participation

SWAPs are claimed to foster participation of all stakeholders and that participation is necessary for the success of SWAPs. However, in the case of Lesotho there are factors that limit participation of legitimate stakeholders. There is tendency of some partners to take over the roles of other stakeholders – the field staff of donors often dominates the officers of the Ministry of Education, central government vs. district level administration.¹⁰ In the case of Lesotho, the Ministry of Education began implementing its decentralization building District Resource Centres and legalizing School Advisory Committees. However, Primary and Central Inspectorates, which are central, continue to take most decisions concerning the operations of the District Resource Centres. This is due to the unclear demarcation of the roles and responsibilities of central officers versus field officers, in which case the former, because of power relations, decide to dominate the districts. Also, despite government's attempt to involve parents in school management committees through the Education Act of 1995 which established School Advisory and Management for primary and secondary schools, parents' voices still continue to be low due to marginalization by school owners, especially in church owned schools where most of the decisions are still reached without their consent.¹¹ This is due to the lack of knowledge of the new roles on the part of the committees. The field staff of some donors also take over the roles of the Ministry of Education. This is true of donors such as the World Bank whose review process sometimes goes beyond limits to do the actual work.

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

There is lack of capacity at various levels in planning skills, accountability and transparency, drawing realistic work plans.¹² In Lesotho the Planning Units (PUs) are located within the line Ministries and no attempts have been made to decentralize the planning functions. This affects the participation of the other departments in the Ministry, especially the lower levels of these departments. Also, the Planning Unit itself does not have enough capacity due to high turnover which results in loss of qualified and experienced staff. The effect of this is that it puts a huge stress on the Education Facilities Unit (the projects' implementing unit of the Ministry of Education), which has to operate on emergency basis in the procurement of civil works and goods and services and in turn affects the rate of implementation of all the projects. No project has been completed as scheduled in the agreements. There is always need for extension. Hence the applicability of the words "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Impatience is sometimes expressed when implementation is slow at various levels leading to some stakeholders taking up the roles of others. For example, the Projects Support and Coordination Unit, due to pressure from donors often take the planning role and side-steps the Planning Unit. This also happens within the departments where upper offices make decisions for the lower levels. Within the Ministry of Education there is also lack of capacity in areas such as planning, monitoring and evaluation which lead to contracting out work and hiring consultants. This unnecessarily prolongs capacity building since learning by doing is not practiced. There is also a problem of internalization of the process by all the stakeholders, either due to resistance to another barrier to full participation of some stakeholders is the mistrust that some partners lack sufficient skills and the will to implement agreed programmes. Klees (2001) argues that the real consequence of SWAPs is that the forced consensus on a sector programme gives donors more power and more solid control. The recipient countries become less able to find space to follow their own agendas which are possible under projects such as playing off one donor against the other by taking advantage of the different agendas of different donors. Again, there is asymmetry of power within the donor community in which case coordination becomes control of both the weaker agencies and recipient countries by the strong agencies. The World Bank, because of its position as the largest external source of funds for the Education Sector in Lesotho has dominated the development agenda of the Sector and encouraged other donors to contribute to its priority activities. This has adversely affected the performance of the implementing agencies on projects funded by other donors, which are not priorities according to the World Bank. For example, because now the focus of the World Bank is "Education for All" which puts more attention on primary and junior secondary education, the projects funded by other donors who are not closely linked to this have been poorly implemented by the Ministry of Education Projects Support and Coordination

Unit. Good examples of this are the capacity building under Development Cooperation Ireland and the African Development Bank.

Real participation of stakeholders has been minimal, rushed, superficial and half hearted. For instance, the adoption of the Free Primary Education by the government has shown that there was no dialogue and clear understanding between the government and the churches which are the main stakeholders in the provision of primary education in the country as to what the implementation of the programme would mean for the churches. This has had a terrible impact on the whole programme.

CONCLUSIONS

Having said the above, one can conclude that sector-wide approaches have more advantages over projects if applied in the right context and can therefore bring more benefits than projects in the sense that they support a government-owned policy and strategy, promote coherence between policy, budgeting and actual results and reducing transaction costs. For the education sector in Lesotho, the trial to move towards a sector-wide approach has yielded more results than the projects' period. With good management and mutual trust, sector-wide approaches can work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. MOET should provide the needed national leadership and champion the SWAP reform agenda, with support from its external cooperating partners, sector specialists, community groups and the Ministry of Finance.
2. Donors should formally adopt the education sector Strategic Plan as the primary guide to their interventions over the 2005-2015 period. In this regard, all donors should make a formal statement regarding their will to subscribe to the Strategic Plan's policies, objectives and strategies and use them when formulating country agreements/donor strategies.
3. Harmonization among donors and between donors and MOE calls for agreement on a general policy framework as well as sector and sub-sector policies. This requires moving towards "like-mindedness" not only among the donors themselves but also "like-mindedness" with MOET in terms of (a) the overall goals/objective of the partnership and (b) with respect to the Strategic Plan's planned activities.
4. There is need to agree between MOET and its cooperating partners on a general framework and procedure for cooperation. This requires specific framework agreements with accompanying project/programme preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation procedures. Such an agreement

Sector-Wide Approaches to Educational Development in Lesotho

should spell out the formats and content of reporting, frequency of reviews, procedures for procurement, technical assistance arrangements, scope and frequency of audits, etc. There is also need to formalize these processes as quickly as possible in order to secure an effective process that facilitates the transition from a loose agreement (such as the envisaged Statement of Intent that was to be signed in late September 2004) to common development agendas, tighter operational instruments and consensus building (through country-level discussions, Government-funding agency Consultative Group Meetings, and the use of instruments such as memorandum of agreement/understanding (MoUs), Collaborative Work Programme, and Code of Conduct).

5. MOET is supposed to facilitate the development of joint agreements on interim and long-term arrangements for strengthening financial management systems, paying particular attention to the strengthening of policy-relevant management information systems; the enhancement of SWAp financial/budget planning systems, including the setting up of SWAP within reviews (MTEF) and carefully linking the targets in the Strategic Plan to budget plans.

6. MOET should ensure that the links between its Strategic Plan and the overall public expenditure management system are made clear. In this respect, the calendar for the Strategic Plan monitoring and review should be linked to the Ministry's overall financial calendar to ensure that, in the spirit of SWAP, external resources are fed, in a timely manner, into MOET's planning and budgeting processes.

7. As part of the decentralization deepening process, MOET should commission a study that looks at how best to decentralize its education and training responsibilities to the lower levels.

8. When adequately conceived, a coordination framework enables better alignment between the Ministry's Strategic Plan priorities and donor assistance, and would facilitate the synchronization of the disbursement of donor funds with MOET's planning and budget cycles. In this regard, the Government/MOET needs to facilitate the establishment of mechanisms/systems that would allow for effective dialogue between MOET and its cooperating partners. A three-tier structure is needed involving (a) the Government's internal consultative and decision-making process; (b) Donors' consultative process amongst themselves; and (c) a joint Government-Donors consultative system.

9. In choosing the appropriate funding modality, MOE ought to be guided by the need to reduce inefficiencies and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of development assistance rather than unduly pushing one external assistance modality over another. In the transitional period when the requisite capacities in financial management reporting, monitoring and accounting are yet to be developed. MOET needs to remain open to the different modes of

assistance, including projects, programmes, and sector-targeted budget support while preparing ground for a more coordinated resource pooling approaches, including direct budget support.

10. There should be greater predictability of donor resource flow into the education sector, guided by the Strategic Plan priorities. This would best be realised through agreeing on financial commitments over a multi-year timeframe, accompanied by multi-year funding commitments to enable MOET better plan its medium term macroeconomic and fiscal projections in the context of MTEF. This would also reduce transaction costs; allow allocative efficiency in public spending; increase predictability of aid flows to the sector; enhance the effectiveness of MOET financial management; improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation; and strengthen domestic accountability.

11. MOET should provide the needed national leadership and champion the SWAP reform agenda, with support from its external cooperating partners, sector specialists, community groups and the Ministry of Finance.

12. Donors need to formally adopt the education sector Strategic Plan as the primary guide to their interventions over the 2005-2015 period. In this regard, all donors need to make a formal statement regarding their will to subscribe to the Strategic Plan's policies, objectives and strategies and use them when formulating country agreements/donor strategies.

13. Harmonization among donors and between donors and MOET calls for agreement on a general policy framework as well as sector and sub-sector policies. This requires moving towards "like-mindedness" not only among the donors themselves but also "like-mindedness" with MOET in terms of (a) the overall goals/objective of the partnership and (b) with respect to the Strategic Plan's planned activities.

14. Generally, if SWAP is to be successful there must exist strong macro-economic environment; sound financial budgeting and managerial skills, inter-ministerial collaboration, especially between the line Ministries and the Ministry of Finance, there is also a need for sound institutional skills for data collection and policy analysis to feed the correct inputs into the SWAP, as already indicated.

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