INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A CASE STUDY OF THE BASIC EDUCATION SECTOR IN GHANA

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, and will not be, in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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SUMMARY

Since the advent of international assistance, the aid paradigm has changed continually and the choice of mechanisms for providing assistance has evolved in order to try and pursue better approaches. Along with the traditional project approach, the sector-wide approach involving budgetary support has emerged as a new aid modality since the mid-1990s. While many donors – e.g. the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank and the European Union (EU) – have embraced the new modality, some donors have kept their distance from this trend, relying mostly on project assistance – e.g. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). However, the extent to which aid resources are absorbed in the recipient government/sector under the different aid delivery mechanisms is not well known. This thesis provides insight into this question by exploring the process of absorbing foreign funds in the education sector.

Employing a phenomenological research approach, the process is examined from the point of view of local actors and beneficiaries of aid aimed at improving education quality. The context chosen is basic education (primary and junior secondary) in Ghana after the introduction of the national basic education reform, which was announced as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme in 1996. Two cases are chosen for comparison: the Whole School Development (WSD) programme financed by the DFID; and the Quality Improvements in Primary Schools (QUIPS) programme facilitated by USAID. The former constitutes a sector-wide type of assistance, which put Ghanaian officials in charge of DFID funds and the implementation of the programme; while the latter adopted a project type model, with implementation managed directly through a USAID-funded project office. The major part of the data is derived from interviews conducted in 2006 with significant educational personnel at three different levels: Ministry of Education (MoE) headquarters, the District Education Office (DEO), and the schools).

The analysis reveals a complex picture of aid absorption, which illuminates the pros and cons of the two approaches in relation to impact and sustainability. The study finds that the QUIPS project achieved tangible results in the pilot schools, while the WSD programme made little impact at the school level. The WSD programme, which used existing structures within the education system to deliver funds and resources to schools, showed evidence of high fungibility, but appears to have strengthened the Ministry's administrative capacity. On the other hand, the QUIPS approach, which had low fungibility, has been severely criticised by Ghanaian officials, who questioned its sustainability and contribution to system-wide change. The thesis concludes by stating its specific contribution to the literature on international aid assistance to developing countries and making recommendations for the Ghanaian context.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AfDB	African Development Bank
BED	Basic Education Division (Ghana Education Service)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPC	Community participation coordinator
CRDD	Curriculum, Research and Development Division (Ghana Education Service)
CSA	Community School Alliance (sub-project of QUIPS)
DA	District Assembly (formerly District Council)
DC	District Council (now District Assembly)
DEO	District Education Office (Ghana Education Service)
DEOC	District education oversight committee
DEPT	District education planning team
DEST	District education support team
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DMIT	District management implementation team
DTST	District teacher support team
EMIS	Education management information system
ESSP	Education Sector Support Programme (DFID)
EU	European Union
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GES	Ghana Education Service (implementing agency of the Ministry of Education)
GoG	Government of Ghana
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
ILP	Improving Learning through Partnerships (sub-project of QUIPS)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSS	Junior secondary school
MoE	Ministry of Education (now Ministry of Education, Science and Sports)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NPA	Non-project assistance
ODA	Official development assistance
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (United Kingdom, now DFID)
PA	Project assistance
PTA	Parent teacher association
QUIPS	Quality Improvements in Primary Schools (programme of USAID)
RO	Regional Office (Ghana Education Service)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMC	School management committee
SPIP	School performance improvement plan

TED   Teacher Education Division (Ghana Education Service)
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund
USAID   United States Agency for International Development
WSD   Whole School Development

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1   Introduction

This thesis is concerned with aid absorption – the process of absorbing international funding – in the education sector. The procedure is explored from the point of view of actors working in educational development, with particular reference to Ghana. The context chosen is the Ghanaian basic education sector (primary and junior secondary education) after the introduction of the national basic education reform act, announced as the free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme in 1996.

Two programmes were chosen for comparison: the Whole School Development (WSD) programme and the Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) programme. The former was financed by the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the latter was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

My interest in aid absorption developed through my work experience in Ghana, where I was posted by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the Ghanaian Ministry of Education from 2000 to 2002, to facilitate Japanese education programmes in association with the fCUBE programme.

On taking up my posting, JICA briefed me on the Ghanaian basic education sector, describing it as one of the rare examples of a successful state programme. However, the situation I encountered in the field turned out to be very different from that I had been led to believe. In reality, there were several donor-facilitated programmes being simultaneously implemented under the auspices of the FCUBE programme. The donors' initiatives were designed according to the FCUBE framework to a certain extent, yet their approaches seemed to be very different from one another.

This situation, in which different approaches coexisted with the aim of achieving the same educational objectives, led me to question which approach to educational development was actually most appropriate to Ghana. It seemed that discovering the approach that was most relevant to the Ghanaian context was vital in order to utilise limited resources most efficiently in future; yet, neither the ministry nor the donor agencies had the answer.

In fact, in the ministry, it was often heard how much was budgeted for activities; how much more the sector needed; and even what the resulting output or outcome was expected to be. Yet, we still didn't know much about how aid input complemented the ministry's development efforts, how the aid was absorbed in the process, or how it were transformed into effective development.

This process was something of a 'black box' in the education sector. Substantial foreign assistance was being channelled into basic education but we (the ministry and development partners) didn't have any accurate information about how this external funding enhanced the quality of education; and this made me feel uneasy.

By the time I left Ghana in 2002, it was apparent that the objectives of FCUBE were not going to be achieved as soon as planned. Considering the substantial amount of international assistance supporting FCUBE, I was dismayed at the realisation that seemingly judicious allocation of aid funding did not always facilitate development efficiently. At the very least, any progress the sector was making seemed to be disappointingly slow. I wondered why such substantial external funding had failed to bring about the expected outcomes as quickly as had been anticipated.

The objectives set for FCUBE might have been too ambitious; even so, I could not get rid of the feeling that any progress made in the sector was not commensurate with the level of funding. Indeed, I wondered exactly how much progress had resulted from the donors' substantial input; and if the approach taken significantly determined differences in how the funds were absorbed or in the final outcome.

Again, I returned to the same questions: 'How are external funds absorbed?' 'Which approach to the use of external funds is most efficient in improving the quality of education?' These were the kinds of questions that exercised my curiosity and interest over the years.

In this introductory chapter, the broad framework in which this study took place is laid out. It begins by clarifying the rationale for the study, followed by its focus. Lastly, the structure of the thesis is introduced.

1.2   Rationale for the Study

The significance of the topic

The literature on aid effectiveness has yielded unclear and ambiguous results. This is not surprising given the heterogeneity of aid motives; the current limitations of analysis and of its tools; and the complex causality chain linking external aid to final outcomes.

The causality chain has been largely ignored and, as a consequence, the relationship between aid and development has mainly been perceived as a kind of 'black box'. Indeed, project evaluation reports often fail to capture the whole and complex reality, especially that from the point of view of the recipient.

Voices on the side of the recipient have been largely ignored (King, 1986). If they are heard at all, at best, only those of high-ranking policy-makers and officers have been noticed. This thesis is an attempt to listen to and analyse the missing voices. It hopes to capture the 'reality' from the point of view of the recipient and make a contribution to filling the gap in the aid literature.

If more were known about the process of absorbing foreign funds in the black box, the risk of failure might be reduced and the most efficient way of linking input to development outcome could be pinned down in a specific context.

The importance of specific context in an exploration of aid absorption
While various common factors influence the processes of aid absorption in many developing countries, the unique historical, political and socio-economic factors in each ultimately determine the process. Therefore, there is a need to examine the kind of approach to educational development that is more appropriate than others in any given country context. This study seeks to explore two cases extensively in order to examine the rationale behind different approaches to educational development; to discover the factors that shape and determine whether approaches have the benefits that their advocates claim; and to identify possible ways of eliminating or at least reducing obstacles, thus improving the chances of success.

The selection of Ghana
I selected Ghana as the context for a case study because the country has received substantial international assistance to education over the last two decades (World Bank, 2004a pp.7-8), particularly since the initiation of the FCUBE programme in1996; and it is now a reasonable time to review aid approaches with the aim of identifying strategies for the ministry's future direction in educational development. In addition, due

to my previous attachment to the ministry, I have personal relationships with the staff there and thus assumed that this connection would facilitate my research.

The selection of USAID and DFID

A significant change is occurring in the modalities of aid delivery. Along with the traditional project approach, the programme approach – including sector-wide implementation and budgetary support – has emerged and become a major aid strategy. However, as the international aid community adapts to embrace this new modality, some agencies continue to use the project approach.

Nevertheless, little is known about whether the assumptions that advocates of each aid approach espouse have been brought to fruition. Therefore, useful insights may be gained if the two different approaches can be compared in the same context. USAID and DFID are the two biggest bilateral donor agencies operating in the Ghanaian education sector, both formulating their programmes under the FCUBE initiative, but each having opted a different approach.

For this reason, DFID's WSD programme and USAID's QUIPS programme were chosen for this study. The selection of case studies is discussed in further detail in chapter 3.

An exploration of the subjective views of Ghanaian actors

Research into aid absorption itself does not have a long history and is generally discussed within the context of aid effectiveness. Research into aid effectiveness tends to focus on monetary efficiency from the donor perspective (Cassen and Associates, 1994; Chenery and Strout, 1966; Nurkse, 1953; Riddell, 2007b). Even the literature on aid effectiveness in developing countries tends to focus on policies and economics at the macro level (Carlsson et al., 1997; World Bank, 1998). Thus, much of the detailed study on aid absorption focuses on the central level; the full picture of how external funds are absorbed at the various other levels from a recipient perspective is not well known.

Furthermore, there is little research focusing on the views of those involved in the programmes. There is not much captured from recipient countries in terms of what they think about donor-funded projects and how external funds are spent; let alone the views of officials in local education authorities and those actually in and around schools (e.g. head teachers, teachers, school management committees (SMCs), parent teacher

associations (PTAs) and communities). These voices are often left unheard (Leach, 1997).

The adoption of multilevel analysis

Donors tend to consider the recipient as a single entity, failing to appreciate its diversity. However, the recipient is composed of diverse individuals at various levels. Looking at one level can fail to capture the dynamics of the reality in which the recipient actors operate. For this reason, I adopted the method of multilevel analysis.

However, this is not to deny the importance to this study of macro level policy and systems. On the contrary, as Crossley and Vulliamy (1997) contend, micro level reality is affected by macro level environment, and not enough attention has been paid to linking the two levels in educational research in developing countries. Therefore, this study attempts to link the various levels, taking into consideration the voices of officials at the headquarters of the Ghana Ministry of Education (macro level); the interpretation of project policy and its implementation by district education officials (meso level); and what is actually delivered in school (micro level).

1.3   Focus of the Study

This study has attempted to explore perceptions of how external funds are absorbed in the recipient country. The uniqueness of the study is that these perceptions are examined from the viewpoint of those involved in donor-funded projects at various levels, especially those in charge of budgets.

In so doing, the study probes Ghanaian education actors' views on external assistance and its absorption in the sector; how they were involved in programmes; how they accounted for their own experiences; and what their concerns, expectations and recommendations were. The emphasis is placed on investigating the 'reality' experienced and comprehended by various actors at different levels, namely education officials at the national level, local district officials, and those in schools (head teachers, teachers and SMC members).

Donor agencies tend to blame recipients for project failure (Eade, 1997), whereas recipients tend to attribute delays in the implementation of educational activities or unexpected slowness of development to the lack of resources or to donor agencies' complex procedures for releasing funds.

This study attempts to find an explanation that goes beyond these clichés, and to explore what really happens to external funds in the recipient sector. This is especially important in the context of Ghana, which has embarked on a new round of reforms in 2007 (GoG 2007) and is attempting to collaborate with donors as they intensify their efforts to help developing countries meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including universal primary education.[1]

It is useful to review the approaches to the delivery of external resources and draw upon lessons learnt in order to inform the further development and management of the education sector. This study intends to explore this territory.

1.4   Thesis Organisation

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. The first part (chapters 2 to 4) is mainly concerned with the foundation of the study, i.e. its context, literature review and research design. The context of the study is described in chapter 2. First, an overview of donor assistance to the Ghanaian basic education sector is provided. This is followed by a description of the FCUBE programme and its implementation in relation to donor coordination and aid approaches. Third, USAID assistance and DFID assistance to the FCUBE programme – notably through the WSD and QUIPS initiatives – are portrayed.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on key issues to help explore aid absorption. Aid approaches (i.e. problem assistance, and project and programme assistance) and key related issues (i.e. project implementers and poachers) are reviewed. The literature on monetary fungibility, ownership and sustainability is explored. The review in this chapter provides the conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter 4 defines the research questions and the methodology utilised for inquiring into them. In order to understand subjective views on international assistance, the

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[1] Ghana was selected as 1 of 16 countries by Fast Track Initiative, which was to disburse GBP 500 million to these countries, beginning in 2006 (Taylor, 2005). The World Bank approved USD 14.2 million for Ghana Fast Track Initiative (World Bank, 2009). The UK is also providing GBP 105 million from 2006–2013 to help Ghana implement free high quality basic education to all of its children (DFID 2006; DFID 2009b).

study adopts a phenomenological orientation. Bearing this in mind, the nature of data collection and analysis strategies is clarified.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide the thick analytic description, the former addressing QUIPS and the latter WSD. Each chapter is laid out according to the three key issues that have emerged – fungibility, impact and sustainability – on the three levels: macro (national headquarters), meso (district) and micro (school).

Chapter 7 develops analytic insights into international assistance to educational development in Ghana by inquiring into the themes that are interwoven through the case studies of WSD and QUIPS. It also answers the research questions in the light of the literature on accountability, power, trust, ownership and sustainability the research questions.

The thesis concludes with chapter 8, which draws pertinent inferences from the findings. The chapter also looks at the implications for aid approaches to educational development in Ghana. In the final section, suggestions for further research are made.

Chapter 2 Context of Aid to Basic Education in Ghana

2.1   Introduction

Ghana is one of the highest recipients of education aid in sub-Saharan Africa (OECD 2010).[2] Foreign aid probably began to play a substantial role in educational development in Ghana in 1987, when reform was initiated as a component of the structural adjustment programme implemented by the World Bank. In the ensuing two decades, foreign assistance played a significant role in the implementation of educational reform in Ghana.

This chapter aims to illuminate the context in which aid agencies have been involved in educational development in Ghana. The history of education reform is reviewed in relation to the involvement of aid agencies since 1987. Such an account may be divided into two periods: pre free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) (up to 1996) and post FCUBE (after 1996). Two bilaterally funded projects implemented under the auspices of the FCUBE programme are discussed in this study, namely the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) programme and the British Department for International Development (DFID) funded Whole School Development (WSD) programme. This is followed by a brief consideration of the impact of FCUBE.

2.2   Pre FCUBE Reform

The Ghanaian education system was described as one of the best in Africa following its independence in 1957 (Foster, 1965). However, the country not only experienced an economic crisis in the early 1980s (Canagarajah and Mazumdar, 1997) but also a parallel crisis in education (Peil, 1995; Scadding, 1989). Government financing of education declined sharply from 6.4% to 1.4% of GDP between 1976 and1983, resulting in a decline in standards and quality of education (World Bank, 1996). By the early 1980s, the education system was facing severe administrative, performance and resource problems (Buchert, 2002; Sawyerr, 1997; Yeboah, 1990).

In 1987, with World Bank support, education reform was initiated with the objective of improving the quality of service. Prior to the 1987 education reform act, there had been

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[2] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/17/5037721.htm.

very little foreign assistance to education in Ghana. However the World Bank, having become "particularly influential among the development partners" (Buchert, 2002 p.73) was now in a position to mobilise the donor community in the assistance of the sector (van Donge et al., 2002 p.7). Subsequently, many international agencies – e.g. the UK's Overseas Development Administration (now DFID), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), African Development Bank (AfDB), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation(SDC), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), the European Union and USAID – followed the Bank's lead in cofunding reform and started to become involved in education development in Ghana.

Global official development assistance (ODA) and that allocated specifically to education was severely cut during the 1990s (Bennell and Furlong, 1998; Colclough et al., 2003); nonetheless, aid to the Ghanaian education sector does not seem to have been affected by this trend. Rather, it was substantially increased from the outset of the 1990s, with assistance to basic education receiving the greater share, particularly from 1996. Between 1989 and 2000, combined World Bank assistance and bilateral support to the non-wage education sector ranged from between 24.8% and 174.7% of government expenditure, with an average 74% per year over the period (World Bank, 2004a p.61). Indeed, it was observed that the "donor community has a massive presence in Ghana" (World Bank, 2004a pp.7-8).

Under the conditions prevailing in Ghana in the early 1990s, aid agencies worked in their own fashion, leading to an increase in costs borne by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Senior officials, including the minister, had to deal with individual funding agencies on an ad hoc basis. Consequently, Harry Sawyerr, the then Minister of Education (1993–97) expressed the urgent need for donor coordination (1997).

Regardless of the immense financial assistance from donors, education outcomes fell below expectations. There is evidence to indicate that despite the vast amounts of domestic and foreign resources that the Ghanaian education sector received from the mid–1980s to the mid–1990s, there were few effective improvements in the sector (Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008; World Bank, 2004a).

At the same time, primary education was globally reinforced as an education development goal in the world declaration on 'education for all' in 1990. Following this,

like many other countries that had developed national action programmes for the implementation of education for all (Verspoor, 1992), provision for basic education was embodied in the revised Ghanaian constitution in 1992.

Meanwhile, during the 1990s, a shift began in donor strategy for education development, away from a discrete project approach towards the influencing of national education policy reform (King, 1992, 1999). Within this context, largely due to encouragement from the World Bank (Heyneman, 2003), a sector-wide approach evolved for implementing proactive coordination. As a result, the Ghanaian government adopted this programme and the MoE reached an agreement with the donors working in the country. Thus, the FCUBE programme can be seen as the manifestation of an international agenda of education for all (Colclough, 2005) and the result of an internal need for sector coordination, as well as a modality change in foreign assistance implementation (this sector-wide approach is discussed in detail in chapter 3).

2.3   The FCUBE Programme

In September 1995, the government embarked on a new education reform strategy, the FCUBE programme (GoG 1995), which had three main objectives:

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning
- To enhance access and participation
- To improve management for efficiency

It was envisaged that these objectives would be achieved through a decentralised management policy (GoG 1995).

The FCUBE programme took on further characteristics of a sector-wide approach (Buchert, 2002), and the strategy and action plans for its execution were prepared in active cooperation with donors (Buchert, 2002; Gakiya, 1999). To implement FCUBE, the donors formulated individual projects or programmes[3] that fitted in with the new

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[3] The distinction between the terms, 'programme' and 'project' in international development is ambiguous as they are often used in the same way, although 'programme' is more likely to be applied to a more comprehensive plan. Nevertheless, DFID refers to its sector/system-wide assistance programme approach, whereas USAID utilises both the terms 'project' and 'programme' in connection with its project assistance approach. In this thesis, QUIPS is principally referred to as a programme, in accordance with its official name, other than in direct

concerns of the FCUBE framework (World Bank, 2004b). Thus, stipulated government priorities were seen to be observed.

In 1998, the implementation of the FCUBE programme was estimated to cost GBP 986 million. The World Bank intended its assistance to be part of a multi-donor support programme to FCUBE (World Bank, 2004b) and contributed USD 50 million through its Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme (World Bank, 1996). The British government provided GBP 50 million, which was 5.3% of the total cost, and USAID donated USD 53 million. Correspondingly, the total amount that the donors pledged for basic education from 1996 to 2000 was 2.4 times as much as that of the period 1991 to 1995 (calculation based on OECD online data[4]). The proportion allocated in grants increased considerably, surpassing that of loans, from 22% in 1990 to 71% in 1997, when DFID became the largest donor in the sector (calculation based on OECD online data).

One of the motives behind the launch of FCUBE was an increasing need for development coordination to reduce "project proliferation" (Morss, 1984). However, despite the original intention, donor support did not materialise in this form (World Bank, 2004b p.2). In fact, no donors explicitly cofunded the programme with the World Bank (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.57).

Instead, the principal donors (the US and the UK) "did not join the programme but financed their own basic education activities" (World Bank, 2004b p.ix). The result was that the Government of Ghana had three large donors (the World Bank, the US and the UK) "with remarkably similar projects under different management systems with an increase in transaction costs for government" (World Bank, 2004b p.11).

The Ghanaian state claimed ownership of them, but exerted little leadership in any (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.57). Likewise, other major donors,[5] also "largely went their own way with programmes to finance basic education" (World Bank, 2004a p.26), albeit with an ostensible alignment to FCUBE.

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quotations. However, in reference to the aid approach in general, including its application to QUIPS, the term 'project' is used.

[4] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/17/5037721.htm

[5] For example, JICA, UNICEF, GTZ, UNESCO, the EU and the French Embassy.

As a result, the World Bank stated that the original Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme "design and financing plan had to be restructured and the BESIP became a traditional stand-alone investment project after the mid-term review" (World Bank, 2003a p.4). Consequently, three similar programmes were being implemented and even clashed with each other, and other key donors remained on the sidelines.

The DFID 2003 evaluation report for the Education Sector Support Programme (1998–2003) noted the following:

> Considerable support is provided to the education sector. However… there has been extremely poor donor co-ordination. With few donors committed to support a sector wide approach, the typical project approach is cost inefficient and leads to duplication of efforts and systems. (GoG/DFID 2003 section 4.9).

It was also remarked that the fledgling structure for an education sector programme "appears to have foundered on donor competition" (World Bank, 2004a p.28). The Bank further argued that the spark that set in motion donor fragmentation in the education sector came from the UK's Overseas Development Administration (ODA, now DFID) in 1996:

> The crucial episode appears to have been a workshop in London [facilitated by the then ODA] to develop a sector strategy…despite the fact that a strategy already existed and that no other donors were invited to the meeting. From this time onward first DFID and then USAID went their own way with programmes to finance basic education (World Bank, 2004b pp.11-2).

Casely-Hayford et al. (2007 p.22) describe the way FCUBE developed in that "its design as a GoG- [Government of Ghana] led national strategy whose initial design encompassed coordinated DP [development partner] support, [was] followed by its implementation, which was anything but coordinated in practice." This resulted in confusion over exactly what the sector-wide approach was in relation to Ghanaian education policy (Sibbons and Seel, 2000 p.8).

Buchert (2002 p.78) comments that during the 1990s, "partnerships…deteriorated" rather than grew. In fact, I was at the MoE during this period and can confirm that the tension between the donors and the Ghanaian side was almost unbearable, as was the friction among the donors. The relationship between the ministry and the donors had

deteriorated to such an extent that it was no longer possible to have a productive dialogue at the monthly meetings or biannual consultative panel meetings.

Despite the fact that donor support to FCUBE was uncoordinated, they did at least design their individual projects and programmes to support the priority areas of FCUBE (Buchert, 2002), which suggests a degree of coherence. In so far as sectoral requirements were concerned with donor alignment of support to national agendas, this was at least implemented between the donors and FCUBE in the mid-1990s. However, Buchert (2002) goes on to comment that:

> There seemed to be common agreement that the agencies fully supported the framework for the government FCUBE programme, although… the framework was so generally defined that any agency could pursue its own objectives and still be seen to work within the framework (p.81).

Among many donor-related interventions under the auspices of the FCUBE programme, two key programme/projects significant to this study are described in the following sections.

2.4   Quality Improvement in Primary Schools

USAID has been on the scene in the basic education sector in Ghana – with particular emphasis on primary education – since 1990, its intention being to assist the country to increase the effectiveness of its primary education system (USAID/Ghana, 2005a).

USAID aimed to accomplish its objective through the establishment of 'model schools', which were "designed to develop, demonstrate and replicate the conditions and processes that are required for improving school standards and ultimately, pupil learning throughout the education system" (USAID/Ghana, 1995 p.7).

In promoting effective teaching, USAID has assisted the government to train teachers to use pupil-centred instructional methodology and assessment techniques, and to improve school supervision by both circuit supervisors and head teachers (USAID/Ghana, 1995 p.9).

In conjunction with this strategy, USAID designed the QUIPS programme (1997–05) to support the FCUBE initiative (USAID/Ghana, 2005a). QUIPS has subsequently

combined project support and non-project (e.g. budgetary) assistance to the extent of USD 57.9 million of funding in total.

QUIPS was designed to demonstrate the conditions necessary for effective and sustainable primary education in model 'partnership schools' across Ghana. The QUIPS model simultaneously dealt with policy reform, and with school and community development, emphasising the following objectives:

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning
- To build capacity for decentralised school management
- To increase community involvement in schools
- To improve the physical learning environment

The final amount of USD 51.8 million of project assistance provided extensive technical support and training for teaching staff and community members in 367 selected model school communities (QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005). The QUIPS programme was largely composed of two sub-projects: Improving Learning through Partnerships (ILP) and Community School Alliances (CSA). The QUIPS programme was administrated by education non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from the United States, its implementation being subcontracted through seven local NGOs (USAID/Ghana, 2005a).

The administrators of the QUIPS programme noted great improvement in school performance among the selected schools during each two-year intervention cycle in comparison with neighbouring schools; and the community participation component has been regarded as being particularly successful (QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005). However, the programme has also been criticised for being comparatively isolated from the education sector as a whole (van Donge et al., 2002).

2.5   Whole School Development

Meanwhile, DFID saw management as the major focus for support, its main reasoning being that by this means, more funding would reach the grassroots and be well spent there (Riddell, 2007a p.14). The WSD programme was developed to delegate the responsibility for planning and budgeting to schools and districts. This was first piloted with support from DFID, and is the MoE's preferred implementation strategy for the

achievement of FCUBE throughout Ghana (Akyeampong, 2004b; Akyeampong and Furlong, 2000).

DFID's Education Sector Support Programme (1998–2005) provided flexible budget support of GBP 50 million for the ministry's WSD programme and, as such, focused on district and school-level interventions. This implies not only a large component of technical assistance but also direct support for the districts; and the allocation was in fact GBP 40 million through budget support and GBP 10 million through technical cooperation. Thus, the WSD programme was implemented through the existing fabric of the Ghana Education Service[6] (GES) (GES 2001b).

WSD was an implementation programme of decentralisation, resourcing and the provision of support to districts and schools for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and learning. It aimed to do this by promoting:

> Child-centred primary practice in literacy, numeracy and problem solving with the view to improve the quality of teaching and learning in basic schools, encouraging community participation in education delivery, and promoting the competencies of teaching and learning through school-based in-service training (MoE 1999a p.2).

WSD was adopted as the Government of Ghana's strategy for achieving the FCUBE objectives (Akyeampong, 2004b; GES 2004b). In other words, WSD was a process of continuous provision of support to basic school head teachers and their staff.

At the centre of the WSD programme were the 'whole' schools, where it was hoped that high quality teaching provided by well-trained teachers would result in effective learning. In order for this to be achieved, the school required competent teachers and sufficient resources, as well as a head teacher with the capacity to manage the school efficiently (GES 1999).

Moreover, there were to be continuous efforts to upgrade the skills of serving teachers. The cascade model of training and development was an important strategy used by WSD to promote education decentralisation in school improvement. Thus, under WSD, teachers themselves were responsible for identifying areas that needed improvement through school-based and cluster-based training.

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[6] An implementing agency of the MoE responsible for pre-tertiary education.

WSD also attempted to improve partnerships in schools and enhance the participation and involvement of all key partners in planning and decision-making in school management. This has been described as a "process of effecting positive change in the classroom, to be owned by head teachers, teachers and the community" (GES 1999 p.4).

The performance of WSD has been varied. There is evidence that teachers and their pupils have benefited from the programme, and that literacy and numeracy are improving (Akyeampong, 2004b; GoG/DFID 2003). However, some of its greatest weaknesses have arisen from problems with central and district fiscal management, which was always likely to affect the smooth operation of the programme in both districts and schools (GoG/DFID 2003).

2.6   Post FCUBE

In spite of the lack of sectoral coordination, the FCUBE programme has had some positive impact on education outcomes. Several assessments of education reform in relation to FCUBE have been conducted by the Ghanaian government, the World Bank, other donors and researchers (Akyeampong, 2009; Akyeampong et al., 2007; MoE 2002; GoG/DFID 2003; QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005; Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008; World Bank, 2004a). They reveal that the education reform process has achieved some of its objectives in relation to enrolment and overall expansion of the public education sector, but has failed to make significant impact in terms of improving quality and learning outcomes for children.

A 2004 evaluation of World Bank support to basic education in Ghana (1998–2003) notes that the effectiveness of development support to Ghana's education sector in the early 2000s had a long way to go: "Official development to assistance in education is substantial, but its transaction costs are high; it is poorly coordinated, rarely leads to genuine stakeholder-owned interventions, and has only a marginal impact on the sector" (World Bank, 2004a p.7).

Finally, considering the sum total of financial resources that were sunk into the education sector during the FCUBE programme, any progress made is regarded as being disappointingly slow (Akyeampong, 2009; Thompson and Casely-Hayford, 2008; van Donge et al., 2002).

2.7   Conclusion

The FCUBE programme was originally designed to be implemented as a sector-wide approach. However, although the donors shared FCUBE aspirations and designed their programmes within the parameters of its framework, they failed to coordinate or harmonise their approaches to the delivery of aid.

The programmes that this thesis is concerned with were both designed to achieve FCUBE objectives, but adopted very different approaches to their achievement. The QUIPS programme concentrated on school level – particularly 367 partnership schools – while the WSD programme concentrated on district and school levels, aiming to improve the sector as a whole. Thus, a comparison of these two programmes can provide useful insight into which approach or what kinds of approaches might be the most effective in international assistance to educational development in Ghana.

In this chapter, the context in which the WSD and QUIPS programmes were implemented was described. The next chapter reviews the associated literature in order to provide a conceptual framework. The philosophy and assumptions underlying the aid approaches that USAID and DFID adopted for the WSD and QUIPS programmes respectively are also examined.

Chapter 3 The Link between Aid Input and Development Outcomes

3.1   Introduction

Simply inputting external funds into the recipient country or sector alone does not always lead to the expected outcomes, let alone self-sustainable development. Figure 3-1 depicts the flow of aid into the recipient government or sector. It illustrates the fact that the process in which aid resources are converted into activities on the ground, leading to development outcomes, takes place in a 'black box', a phenomenon that has not been fully examined.

Figure 3-1 Link between external funds and development outcomes
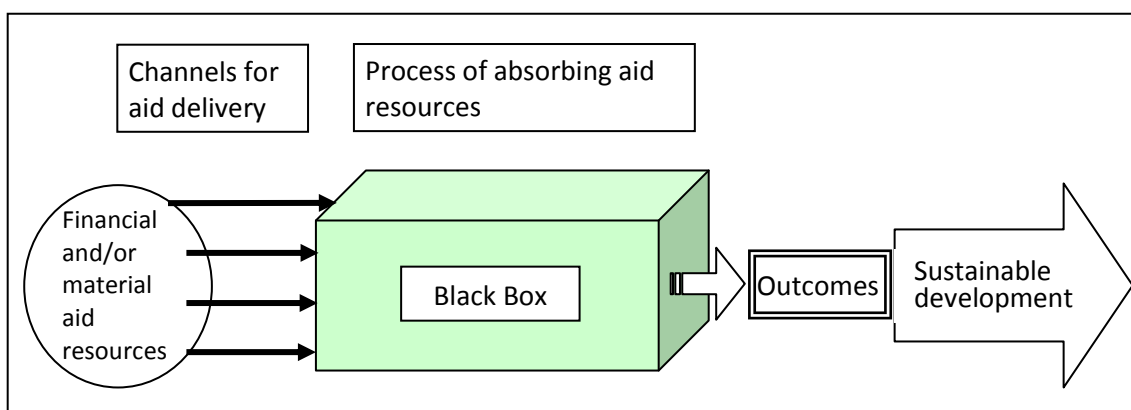
Source: the author.

In examining the perceptions of Ghanaian actors at various levels, this study aims to explore how external funds are absorbed in this black box. Donors tend to think of the recipient government or sector as a single unified beneficiary, failing to appreciate its diversity.

However, Ghanaian actors' perceptions formed through the experience of working on the free compulsory basic education (FCUBE) programme were shaped by differing convictions. Without capturing such views at the various levels, we miss the whole picture inside the black box.

Donor agencies helped Ghana endeavour to achieve shared FCUBE objectives by adopting different approaches based on their aid policies and assumptions. Differences in aid delivery channels may have different influences on aid absorption and,

consequently, may lead to different outcomes. This thesis attempts to corroborate such a hypothesis from the viewpoint of Ghanaian actors in the particular setting of the basic education reform programme.

Given this focus, the chapter first traces different aid approaches in order to attempt to comprehend the philosophy behind changes and continuity in aid modalities. This is followed by a more extensive examination of the aid approaches that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) employ, with special reference to the advantages and challenges of each strategy.

Next, several issues are reviewed that help explore the nature of aid absorption. These encompass the questions of who implements projects and why; and include assessments of types of USAID contractors and the practice of poaching when government officials are contracted to aid projects.

The literature on monetary fungibility is then reviewed in order to reach an understanding of how aid funds are absorbed once they reach the recipient government. This is followed by a review of themes related to aid funding mechanisms, namely those of power and ownership. Finally, due to the importance of development gains being maintained and consolidated by recipient countries once development projects or programmes are completed, the literature on sustainability of development programmes is reviewed.

3.2   Strategies for Delivering International Assistance

Since the commencement of international assistance in the 1950s, the aid paradigm or theory has changed continuously in order to try and pursue better approaches (Collier, 2007; Easterly, 2006; Sachs, 2008; Stiglitz, 2006). It is, however, economics considerations that retains pre-eminence in development thinking, not least because of its continued dominance of the World Bank (King and McGrath, 2004; McGrath, 2010b). This paradigm shift has inevitably brought about changes in the nature of foreign aid to education and its practice, and vice versa (King, 1999; McGrath, 2010a).

Different funding mechanisms have emerged over the years from various theories about development and the role of national governments and civil society in

channelling development funds (Bermingham et al., 2009). However, the choice of which mechanism to adopt needs to be grounded in a pragmatic consideration of what is most likely to yield the expected development outcomes (Riddell, 2007b). In other words, the choice of mechanism for providing assistance has evolved in response to changing perceptions of what constitutes effective development (Berg, 1993; Burnside and Dollar, 1997; Cassen and Associates, 1994; Easterly, 2006; Hyden, 1983; Muscat, 1986; Peter, 2005; Riddell, 1987, 2007b; Roodman, 2007; Takahashi, 2002b; van de Walle, 1998; van de Walle and Johnston, 1996; World Bank, 1998).

The importance of improving aid efficacy was recently enshrined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Paris Declaration 2005), and also reflected in the Accra Action Agenda (AAA 2008). The driving force that led to the Paris Declaration is an interpretation of aid effectiveness in which the assumption is that aid can achieve important development outcomes, but only if it is used efficiently (Rogerson, 2005).

In pursuit of aid effectiveness, many mechanisms for granting financial assistance have evolved over the years. In their study of US aid, Chapman and Dykstra (2006) divide these mechanisms into three principal phases: problem-focused, project-focused and programme-focused (ibid p.28). The following three sections review aid approaches according to these categories.

3.2.1   Problem Focused Assistance

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the conventional approach to international assistance was to identify and locate a development problem (e.g. insufficient trained teachers; inadequate materials distribution to schools; or a shortage of electricity in a particular area), and a potential solution was designed in the form of a targeted project (e.g. the construction of a number of universities and teacher training colleges; the provision of textbooks; or the carrying out of labour market supply and demand studies). Arguably, this first phase of international assistance aimed to transfer technology and expertise through technical assistance and technical cooperation.

Naturally, many of these efforts were input-oriented (Nurkse, 1953). Thus, the criteria for effectiveness were generally quite clear providing the inputs were delivered in the manner and time frame that had been promised (World Bank, 1998).

However, while often successful in the short term, these projects often failed to have the anticipated long-term impact (World Bank, 1998). Many of these initiatives operated as relatively discrete activities, only to disappear when the external funding ended.

Moreover, in attempting to solve the target problem, other equally serious problems were often created, for example, excess of aid inflow, the complication of aid procedure, and the incompatibility of various equipment (Nurkse, 1953). Such failure did not necessarily arise because funding was poorly targeted or activities were badly implemented, but because planners failed to recognise the sector-wide implications of their interventions (Hyden, 1983).

3.2.2   Project Assistance

From the late 1970s, the emphasis shifted away from funding individual activities towards sector-wide planning and project-oriented funding (King, 1992; Verspoor, 1993). Projects were designed to simultaneously address several key issues within a single sector, tackling multiple problems in a coordinated way, thereby improving the prospects for project success and sustainability.

One consequence of such an approach, however, was that aid projects became more complicated, as attention was focused on the wider array of factors that needed to be taken into consideration in order to strengthen and expand education systems. Projects were typically highly prescriptive, specifying in considerable detail the activities for which donor money would be used, the schedule for the expenditure of these funds, and the role of donor representatives in overseeing the work.

Projects often included technical assistance. Local staff and expatriate advisors worked closely together on very specific tasks, for example, curriculum development; distribution of teaching materials; and planning, budgeting and delivery of in-service training. While such projects arguably did much to build local capacity at the grassroots level (Smith, 2005) and were effective in getting the job done, they have been severely criticised for being far less effective in developing institutions or strengthening national capacity (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002).

Furthermore, until recently, most projects have concentrated heavily on input (DeStefano et al., 1995). The focus has been on ensuring that activities are undertaken on schedule and in the prescribed manner. However, results have been inconsistent or

difficult to evaluate, and often could not be fully documented (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006). While the project approach has for the most part been effective in ensuring that resources are programmed and distributed as planned, it has not always been equally effective in ensuring the outcome of these efforts (Rahman and Knack, 2004; World Bank, 1998).

The complexity of these sector development projects has often militated against the achievement of the very goals they seek to achieve (Muscat, 1986). All too often, neither the activities themselves nor the schedule for budget execution has matched the technical or absorptive capacity of personnel at local or national level (DeStefano et al., 1995).

One of the means donors sometimes employ for securing the success of a project is to provide support for recurrent costs and staff engagement for virtually the entire duration of the initiative. This is intended to maximise the effectiveness of their input by providing aid-absorbing resources to the recipient (Takahashi, 2002b; 2002c). In this case, the project is outwardly artificially maintained, but cannot be sustained without aid. This is probably one of the typical failures of international aid: 'flourishing' projects seemingly "islands of success in a sea of failure" (Harrold and Associates, 1995 p.iv) or "islands of excellence" (Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999 p.32).

Moreover, project design and implementation have often been donor-driven rather than responsive to local wishes or sensitivities. Governments lack control over certain aspects of their own state systems; complain about the heavy-handedness and overbearing behaviour of donors; and often resent the persistent expatriate presence (Muscat, 1986).

When the flow of aid to Africa increased rapidly until reaching historically high levels in the early 1990s (World Bank, 2007), "aid bombardment" began to appear (Takahashi, 2002b). This phenomenon occurs when foreign assistance is intensively parachuted into a particular recipient country that does not possess sufficient domestic resources to absorb the rapidly increasing resources, for example, recurrent budget implementation and the engagement of competent personnel, which results in the failure to make full use of the aid.

Indeed, the median number of official donors to each recipient country in 2000 was 23 (Acharya et al., 2003). In the typical African state, aid is provided by "some thirty official

donors in addition to several dozen international NGOs...through over a thousand distinct projects and several hundred resident foreign experts" (van de Walle, 2001 p.58). Thousands of quarterly project reports are submitted to multiple overseeing agencies. Hundreds of missions monitor and evaluate these projects and programmes annually, and each mission expects to meet with key government officials and obtain comments on its reports (van de Walle and Johnston, 1996).

The poor administrative capacity of recipient governments makes it impossible to coordinate multiple aid activities. Injecting too many innovations into the government system leads to a phenomenon commonly known as "innovation overload" (Hopkins et al., 1994 p.12) or "project proliferation" (Cassen and Associates, 1994; Morss, 1984), which leads to subsequent "donor fragmentation" (Knack and Rahman, 2004; Rahman and Knack, 2004), whereby too many isolated projects overlap one another in the recipient government or sector.

It is widely and plausibly believed that this significantly reduces the value of aid by increasing direct and indirect transaction costs (Acharya et al., 2003; Acharya et al., 2006). As several case studies note, this lack of coordination "can lead to severe waste of resources," while also "complicating the aid management function of government" (Saasa and Carlsson, 1996 p.127).

Donors engage in the practice of increasing the visibility of their efforts and the short-term appearance of success for their individual projects at the expense of coherent policy-making and capacity building in the recipient country's public sector (Takahashi, 2003; World Bank, 1998). It is also well-known that however successful a project appears to be on its own terms, it will have little or no sustained impact in an environment that lacks effective sectoral policy, and where it is not integrated into other donor-funded or government projects (Easterly, 2003; Kanbur and Sandler, 1999).

As a result, when projects are 'successfully' concluded and handed over for operation to the local authorities they frequently lack the necessary commitment, competence and resources to continue (World Bank, 1998). This is what causes project to be unsustainable after the donors have withdrawn.

In terms of project success, where there are numerous donors, any one of them will gain only a small share of the total benefits from their efforts to improve administrative

capacity in the country, which in effect erodes the success of other donors' projects (Takahashi, 2005).

Mosley argues that "the whole is less than the sum of its parts: the actions of many individuals each taking rational decisions in isolation may lead to an outcome which each was anxious to avoid" (1987 p.100). For example, in Ghana in the early 1990s, the widespread construction of primary schools for the improvement of access was under way in cooperation with many donors. However, JICA subsequently began a university construction project. If the total recurrent expenditure and staffing requirements of both primary education project and tertiary education project had substantially exceeded the existing human and non-renewable resources of the sector, it might have led to competition for scarce ministry resources between the two projects, each impeding the other.

It appears that one of the most serious problems caused by aid bombardment is an incoherent development strategy among the donors. Providing assistance according to unilateral procedures and policies makes the input of aid and the management of domestic resources less effective.

Throughout the 1990s, donors became increasingly frustrated by the lack of co-ordination and ownership of ostensibly cooperative projects (NORAD, 1999a). Accordingly, the need for greater coordination of aid and a coherent development strategy in the education sector was widely recognised (Carlsson et al., 1997).

3.2.3   Programme Assistance

Over the last 20 years, large multilateral (e.g. the World Bank) and some bilateral assistance agencies have slowly moved away from the project-driven mode of development and made increasing use of programme assistance strategies (King, 1992, 1999).

Programme assistance is where funds are allocated to a government to spend in whatever way it chooses within a sector, as long as expenditure is aimed at achieving a set of policy goals agreed upon at the beginning of the funding cycle, and it lies within the framework agreement established with the donor. One effect of programme assistance is to disconnect the external funding from specific activities. It also tends to

shift responsibility for implementation more directly to the state and away from the specially created project teams that are often dominated by expatriates.

Along with the policy of programme funding, since the mid-1990s, sector-wide approaches have emerged out of dissatisfaction with both top down and bottom up approaches to development assistance. Concerns about the probability of programme funding reaching the poor have led to a thrust for aid to move from the national level to the sectoral level, with its focus on the social sectors, for example, education and health. This has resulted in the urgency for a more coherent sectoral approach to donor assistance.

Sector-wide approaches have brought with them many key concepts and terms (e.g. partnership, sector support agreement, ownership, aid coordination, aid coherence and harmonisation) (King, 1999). While McGinn (2000) questions whether many of the terms associated with the new modality are really original concepts, and whether they are necessarily engaged in the best interests of national governments, there is no doubt that there has been an increasing emphasis on development coordination geared towards the enhancement of aid effectiveness (Brown et al., 2001; Buchert, 2000a; Cassels, 1997; Freedman, 1994; King, 1999; Mosley and Eeckhout, 2000; Rudner, 1996; Samoff, 2004; Wolfensohn, 1995); which led to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action in 2008 (Bermingham et al., 2009).

Although the term is frequently used, there is no common definition of 'sector approach', and many different terms are used to communicate the concept.[7] The nature of sector coordination may alter according to period or context; and it varies from author to author and from organisation to organisation (Buchert, 1999; Cassels, 1997; Harrold and Associates, 1995; Jones, 1997; Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999; Sack, 1995; Stephen and Williams, 2002; World Bank, 2001). Thus, it is difficult to pin down with a definition.

Nevertheless, there is general consensus that a sector programme is one in which: (i) the majority of stakeholders is comprised of members of the relevant government

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[7] For example, the World Bank's sector investment programme; USAID and DFID's sector-wide approach; the Netherlands' sector approach; SIDA and DANIDA's sector programme support (Sweden and Denmark respectively); CIDA's sector-wide approach and sector approach (Canada); and the European Union's sector coordination and sector development programme.

authorities of the recipient country and the major donors; (ii) there is close alignment with national development policies, strategies and budgets; (iii) a consistent sector development policy is shared between all stakeholders; (iv) donors work together in the interests of coherent activities and resource inputs; and (v) local stakeholders drive the initiative (adapted from based on Harrold and Associates, 1995).

Clearly, such a strategy indicates a holistic (sector-wide) approach, emphasising government ownership, partnership and outcomes rather than inputs (Foster and Naschold, 2000). It aims to establish a single policy and expenditure programme for a given sector under government leadership, eventually moving to an arrangement in which government systems and procedures are used for accounting for all funds and their disbursement.

Having reviewed the three main approaches to the distribution of aid, the following sections consider the approaches adopted by USAID and DFID, and their strengths and challenges respectively.

3.2.4   USAID Approach to Education Development Assistance

While many donors have embraced the sector-wide approach, USAID has maintained its distance from this trend[8] and relied mostly on project assistance (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006). At the same time, USAID experimented with programme assistance (budgetary support) during the 1990s (DeStefano et al., 1995), a practice referred to as non-project assistance (NPA).[9]

The QUIPS programme was originally composed of both project assistance and NPA. However, as the 1990s drew to a close, NPA came in for a good deal of criticism particularly from US politicians, who pointed to the lack of accountability; the difficulty in

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[8] Germany, France and Japan are also particularly adamant that the project will continue to form the core of their aid programmes. Canada's policy is that the majority of its aid will be provided through project support, at least in the short to medium term. While making the transition to programme support, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Norway will continue project support in certain areas.

[9] NPA funding to African programmes is always directed at sector level reform; and is disbursed after sector level policy, and institutional and management reforms have taken place (Blumel, 2004). It is generally deployed in conjunction with other types of aid, especially technical assistance; and is often equated with budget support, balance of payments support, programme assistance, or cash transfers. See the USAID policy paper *Program Assistance* (1996) for the distinction between NPA and other forms of assistance.

seeing results; the problems in linking aid to eventual changes in the education system; and the dilemma it tended to create of whether to satisfy oneself with fully meeting some of the goals or only partly meeting all of the goals (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006). In 1998, concerned about the lack of accountability of funds that were not directly tied to particular activities, the US Congress banned the continued funding of non-project assistance (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006).

While the choice of mechanism is based on multiple considerations, most USAID funding is still allocated to sector-oriented projects. The QUIPS programme in Ghana is an example of this. The following is a discussion of the strengths and weakness of the project approach with special reference to USAID assistance.

Potential Strengths

Firstly, the emphasis on project funding has given USAID a relatively high level of control over the way in which its money is used by recipient countries.

Secondly, the tracking of funds is thus relatively easy, ensuring greater accountability. In this regard, USAID often establishes semi-independent project implementation units, which enables it to maintain control over how the funds are spent.

Thirdly, delegating responsibility to dedicated units ensures that projects are managed more effectively and thus deliver outputs in a timely matter. Controversially, such project implementation is often regarded as more efficient, as bureaucratic recipient institutions are not involved, and tangible and unhindered outcomes are more probable.

Thus, project support is highly visible to both donor and the host countries. It is therefore easier to evaluate the impact of specific projects than other ODA[10] modalities.

Fourthly, contracted USAID facilitators work at the project sites; thus, it is argued that such projects do much to build local capacity, especially at school and community level (Smith, 2005).

Fifthly, as a separate management structure is used, if host governments do not have sufficient capacity to manage programme support, project support can be used for capacity building (Yamada, 2002 7f).

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[10] Official development assistance.

Sixthly, project support can allow USAID to act as innovators in development approaches through specific interventions. With its greater resources and ability to take risks, it can support pilot projects, which, if successful, can be used on a large scale.

Seventhly, the cost of USAID's withdrawal of projects is smaller for the recipient governments. National development plans are not largely influenced by project support and the effects of support withdrawals are therefore not as serious as the withdrawal of programme support (Bandstein and Dietrichson, 2004). Thus, this can be also less intrusive than the other aid modalities, for example, budgetary support (Foster, 2004a; 2004b).

Weakness and challenges
There is also criticism of the project approach. Firstly, USAID's level of control over the funds might ensure their efficient use, but the crucial point is whether donors and recipient fully share the project objectives with.

If there is disagreement, as Morss (1984) argues, greater donor control does not necessarily mean that funds will be spent in a way that is more beneficial from the standpoint of the recipient's development prospects. In other words, what USAID perceives to be 'effective' implementation is not automatically what the recipient considers to be effective implementation.

A high level of control also highlights the challenge of how USAID is to ensure that project-oriented funding is converted into culturally appropriate, effective activities that yield the desired development outcomes (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006 p.30).

Secondly, giving management responsibility to the implementing project office has its merits – e.g. greater accountability and timely service delivery by bypassing what were regarded as incompetent, bureaucratic, uncooperative government – but this approach can create obstacles to achieving greater ownership and sustainability. This point is forcibly made in the literature (Acharya et al., 2004; Mosley and Eeckhout, 2000; Takahashi, 2002b; van de Walle and Johnston, 1996; World Bank, 1998). For example, project implementation units effectively undermined the government departments they displaced and impeded capacity building in those institutions (Samoff, 2004 p.410). Al-Samarrai et al. (2002 p.48) warn that problems are likely to increase in severity when

the project is subsequently absorbed into the wider public system if they are not tackled earlier on.

Thirdly, and closely associated with accountability, attention is inevitably paid to input. Although sector-wide approaches urge donors to be content with system-wide monitoring and evaluation, USAID is more concerned with tracking project outputs – generally, merely the results of system inputs – (e.g. production of textbooks, teacher training, the data management system) than documenting system outputs (e.g. pupil learning and retention) (Chapman and Quijada, 2009).

One apparent reason for this concentration on input is that converting project funds into educational inputs is most directly under the control of project staff (DeStefano et al., 1995). Naturally, measuring investment is somewhat easier than assessing demonstrated effects. The focus on system inputs rather than on system outputs or outcomes is, in part, a response to USAID reporting requirements.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, the sustainability of project funding has been severely questioned.

Chapman and Quijada (2009) reviewed 236 documents drawn from 33 basic education projects sponsored by USAID from 1990 to 2005. According to their findings, the objectives of nearly all USAID projects were (1) to improve quality of education; (2) to increase access, retention and graduation rates; (3) to improve equity; and (4) to implement all these activities in a sustainable way. This is what QUIPS pursued as well.

Their findings further indicate that USAID projects made important contributions to improving pupil access, retention and learning. Yet, they suggest that relatively few projects actually assessed the extent to which their activities led to the desired pupil learning outcomes, and fewer still were able to demonstrate success in increasing pupil learning (Chapman and Quijada, 2009).

With regard to the question of whether an intervention is sustainable, the authors find it difficult to come to a substantive conclusion. This is because greater attention was given to tracking the extent to which system-level inputs were delivered than to assessing project accomplishments against documented objectives. Moreover, USAID project designs and evaluations have generally failed to either define or measure

sustainability (Chapman and Quijada, 2009).[11] Consequently, the issue is left unexplored, although they find that across numerous projects, implementing personnel expressed strong doubts about the prospects for sustainability without continued external donor funding.

3.2.5   DFID Approach to Education Development Assistance

There was a significant turning point in the UK's aid programme when the new Labour government came to power in May 1997 (UK DFID, 2010a), changes to British aid policy being among the first measures it implemented (Morrissey, 2002). DFID was set up as a separate government department, making fighting world poverty its top priority; and its budget has subsequently grown significantly (UK DFID, 1997).[12] To achieve its goal, DFID has explicitly aimed at meeting universal primary education (Millennium Development Goal 2) (UK DFID, 2010b; UK DFID and HM Treasury, 2006).

Since 1997, British aid interventions have shifted from project assistance towards provision of broad financial aid to the sector as a whole. Indeed, DFID's commitment to the sector approach has expanded rapidly, to the extent that it is now the preferred mode of assistance to the social sector, and the UK has become a strong proponent of sector programmes and general budget support (Flint et al., 2002; Morrissey, 2002).

This shift reflects DFID's dissatisfaction with the impact, ownership and sustainability of the traditional project approach (Morrissey, 2002). This dissatisfaction of aid impact was noted by the then Secretary of State for International Development, who was reported as saying that, "advances have not been uniform and poverty remains pervasive. We have gone forward and backward over the past 50 years" (Short cited in Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999 p.4).

It also signals the recognition that sector approach programmes can quickly absorb relatively large amounts of financial resources (Cassen and Associates, 1994 p.125; Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999 p.32),[13] and can provide effective support to policy reform

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[11] Likewise, sustainability is not defined in the QUIPS final evaluation report.

[12] DFID published its first white paper with a focus on eliminating world poverty in the autumn of 1997. Three subsequent white papers (issued in 2000, 2006 and 2009 respectively) have reinforced the first document's message.

[13] This is regarded as a particularly significant albeit variable factor. For McNeill (1981 p.10), "a major criterion of success of an aid agency is simply its ability to get money spent." Thus, when

(ODI 1998). DFID's preference for sectoral funding and budget support is clearly expressed in statements such as the following:

> Direct Budget Support (DBS), either as support to the budget as a whole or as part of a SWAp [sector-wide approach], is potentially the most effective financial aid instrument in supporting the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) principles. (UK DFID, 2000 p.1)

The UK has supported the Ghanaian education sector since the mid-1980s.[14] However, this support appears to have had limited success. It has been suggested that its impact on educational outcomes has been constrained because free-standing projects resulted in significant increases in recurrent costs, leading to unsustainability when DFID withdraws (MOE/DFID 1998).

This experience, coupled with the international shift in approach to aid at the sectoral level, has led DFID to focus more upon the achievement of broad policy objectives than on the details of the project itself (Morrissey, 2002). This has tended to change the nature of negotiations between DFID and the recipient, which have turned towards policy dialogue on matters that affect the sector as a whole rather than the details of the project environment alone. One of the aid programmes implemented under the new UK aid initiative was Ghana's Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP).

Potential Strengths

The sector-wide approach has emerged in order to address the limitations of project assistance. The growing literature on the subject highlights the potential strengths of this approach (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002; Brown, 2001; Forss et al., 2000; Foster, 2000a; Foster, 2000b; Harrold and Associates, 1995; Ostrom et al., 2002a; Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999; Riddell, 2002; Riddell, 2007b; Virture, 2003; World Bank, 1998, 2001). The views of these authors can be summarised as follows:

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aid agencies find it difficult to spend their budgets, this may result in inappropriate projects. Conversely, for Mosley (1987 p.52), aid administrators and implementers have a common desire to expand their budgets, "since the larger the overall aid budget, the larger are the scale and importance of their own operations."

[14] Until the Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme element of FUCBE implemented in 1996, UK assistance had not focused on this sector. Some its previous interventions were projects in the areas of science, mathematics and English; JSSs; non-formal education; adult literacy; and support to teacher training.

Firstly, it is argued that this approach leads to a much greater level of government ownership, as an instrument through which broader participation in the achievement of sector objectives and strategies can be realised.

Secondly, the use of government systems is potently more cost-effective and inherently leads to greater capacity building than the financing of numerous project management and implementation visits.

Thirdly, as a result of using government systems, the approach is also seen to lead to a reduction in transaction costs for both donor and recipient. It is no longer necessary for donors to devote resources to project management, and the recipient is no longer required to negotiate and deal bilaterally with the donors. Financial management costs are also minimised because recipient government systems are used for procurement, reporting and auditing, thus removing the need to account separately for each donor's input.

Moreover, focus on the sector makes monitoring and evaluation potentially easier and reduces the cost of these activities. Furthermore, performance against targets set out as part of a sector-wide approach can be judged against readily available data.

Finally, the sector-wide approach focuses on output auditing rather than input accounting, whereby flexible, high volume budgetary support can be balanced with the achievement of agreed milestones and targets.

Performance and Challenges
Having listed the potential strengths of the sector-wide approach, the extent to which these alleged advantages with respect to the education sector are being realised is still difficult to assess (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.58) and depends on a case by case evaluation. However, the key issues with respect to sector-wide type initiatives in education development can be summarised. The following discussion is structured around each of the main potential benefits of the approach.

Firstly, with regard to project ownership by the recipient government and to donor coordination, it is reported that ownership of the education programme has been relatively high in India, Ethiopia and Uganda (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.60; Brown et al., 2001; Buchert and Epskamp, 2000; Virture, 2003). In contrast, DFID and the World Bank have reportedly undertaken too much of a leadership role (at least initially) in

Ghana (GoG 2003; Sibbons and Seal, 2000; DFID 2001a). Donors have also led the process in Tanzania (Brown et al., 2001; Clarke-Okha, 2003; Cramer et al., 2006) and Bangladesh (Banham, 2001; Buchert, 2000a; 2000b; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006)

Donors have been criticised for still wishing to maintain control and retain power themselves: "SWAPS [sector-wide approaches] processes have tended to be top down in character with little participation" (Brown et al., 2001 p.36). Additionally, partnerships are often one-sided, with recipient governments unable to exert sufficient leverage over donors (Clarke-Okha, 2003). Somewhat ironically, it is commented that, "the increased emphasis on ownership comes at a time when the role of the development agencies in shaping the international development agenda is more dominant than ever" (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.60).

Associated to this point, the sector-wide approach tended to be dominated by the largest or strongest funding agencies (in each setting), while smaller agencies and other education sector organisations are largely excluded (Samoff, 2004 p.42).

Secondly, the focus on developing well-designed strategies is undoubtedly a major advantage of the education sector-wide approach. Yet, they often concentrate more on input than output (Murphy, 2005). The development of an action plan with a set of clearly focused programmes of implementation is essential. However, in the case of Ghana, the translation of strategy into action plan has been particularly problematic in DFID's ESSP (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.61).

Moreover, many education sector programmes focus on the primary/basic education subsector, limiting overall coherence with respect to objectives and funding for the sector as a whole (Hayman, 2007; King, 2007), for example, the ESSP. Furthermore, there is frequently lack of agreement about realistic and achievable performance targets (Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999 pp.35-7), with the result that the already overburdened capacity of the ministry is stretched still further.

The sector-wide approach places tremendous responsibility on the capacity of recipient government systems and, therefore, whilst the potential benefits of the approach are greater than those accruing from conventional project-based support, the associated risks may also be greater.

Brown (2001) reviews the transition to a sector-wide approach in the health sectors of Zambia, Ghana and Bangladesh, and argues that there is the potential risk of reducing the impact of previously successful vertical health projects.[15]

Moreover, weak national institutions may be unadvisedly induced to deliver technical and financial programmes through both central and decentralised government systems. In a review of absorption capacity in the education sector, Rose (2006) illustrates well the difficulty of making effective use of aid through sector-wide approaches and DBS due to implementation constraints. Institutional strengthening, therefore, should be designed as a key objective of any programme.

Thirdly, with regard to transaction costs, the direct management of donor-supported interventions is expected to reduce the financial burden. Yet, lack of confidence in government and ministry financial management capacity and concern about accountability have deterred some funding agencies – including DFID – from full blanket (non-specific) funding of the education sector (Ratcliffe and Macrae, 1999 p.35). In fact, whether employing the government system actually has a positive systemic effect and reduces transaction costs is as yet unknown (Killick, 2004).

Al-Samarrai et al. (2002 p.61) argue that numbers of expatriate personnel have been appreciably reduced, since just one field manager is expected to monitor DFID support to the education sector in each country. However, a more sceptical view is also possible; for example, donors at a meeting in Oslo (NORAD, 1999b) voiced their concerns about an increase in expatriate staff under the sector-wide approach (NORAD, 1999b).

Johanson (1999) quotes World Bank evidence that supervision costs to the Bank are 50% higher in sector-wide approach programmes than projects. It thus seems feasible that staff are spending their time attempting to arrange as many meetings with the same government officer to discuss sector-wide programmes as they previously did to discuss projects (Brown et al., 2001).

Indeed, another World Bank study concluded that more (donor) staff time was involved in monitoring and participating in sector-wide programmes; and a study of the

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[15] Vertical projects focus linearly on specific issues or themes in a given sector, for example addressing malaria, in contrast to the 'horizontal' sector-wide approach or countrywide model of aid.

Namibian education sector-wide approach concluded that the workload of the ministry was higher than before the programme commenced (West, 2003).

Likewise, the Joint Evaluation of External Support to Basic Education in Developing Countries (Freeman and Faure, 2003) reveals that in some countries, the move towards a programme approach has either failed to lead to a reduction in administrative burdens for the host government or has even led to an increase.

With a sector-wide approach, transaction costs may rise until new arrangements fully replace the old. It is not yet clear whether they actually fall once the sector-wide approach is under way, though a study shows that health officials in Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania seemed confident that they would (Brown et al., 2001)[16]

Brown et al. (2001) argue that even if transaction costs are unchanged, there should be a net benefit in so far as an increased proportion of ministry–donor contracts are now aimed at supporting the effectiveness of government systems rather than parallel project ones. It seems that this remains true even though one factor that keeps transaction costs high in most countries is the continuation of project support together with donor supported sector-wide programmes offering budget assistance. Consequently, in at least some instances, parallel reporting is required if projects are to continue.

Fourthly, concentration on the sector as a whole can make some monitoring and evaluation easier, and joint review meetings may prompt a more coordinated and detailed monitoring and evaluation exercise. However, this presents a new challenge to the donors; that is, the task of identifying the impact of the contribution of an individual donor becomes almost impossible (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002).

Therefore, theoretically, donors must content themselves with system-wide monitoring and evaluation. Yet, Marshall and Ofei-Aboagye (2004 p.48) found that some donors working in Ghana remained concerned about their ability to track the impact of 'their' money, despite progress made on monitoring and harmonisation agreements.[17]

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[16] High level African delegates at a workshop sponsored by the Danish organisation DANIDA in Harare in October 1998 felt that transaction costs had already fallen, at least for the recipient government (DANIDA, 1998b).

[17] The issue is often not so much related to the donors as the parliamentarians at home, including those in the UK. In respect of this point, see also the UK Parliamentary International

Associated with monitoring and evaluation is concern about the quality of outcomes (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002). The trouble is that with the sector-wide approach, the purely quantitative and measurable factors – e.g. how many trainers and teachers are trained according to the cascade model – are insufficient to indicate whether the input has led to an improvement in the quality of education at classroom level.

Furthermore, as a characteristic of the approach, the reliance on high levels of institutional capacity and commitment may involve building existing capacity at many different levels. Although this is intended to make funding more efficient and strengthen local ownership, it can stretch limited capacity (Smith, 2005). This focus on the system as a whole may have the effect of delaying benefits to recipients (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002).

3.3   Implementing Agents

Having discussed the aid approaches employed by DFID and USAID for delivering assistance, this section examines the question of selecting local implementing agents for donor-funded programmes in order that foreign funding may be converted into on-the-ground development activities. Whether funds lead to substantial or insignificant benefit depends heavily on the way such funds are spent and the people and organisations doing the spending.

Figure 3-2 illustrates channels of bilateral international assistance to education. It shows the mechanisms for allocating funds and the selection of implementing agents, according to the three funding approaches (problem, project and programme) reviewed in the previous sections. The mechanism utilised in UK assistance to Ghana's FCUBE initiative was programme-focused funding, which channelled WSD funds through the GES under the MoE. The US mechanism was the project-focused channelling of QUIPS funds though US based international contractors, which subcontracted a commercial Ghanaian firm and local NGOs as field implementers.

Development Committee website (http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/international-development/ind0708an58/, accessed on 29/08/10).

Figure 3-2 Channelling bilateral international assistance to education

Approach to awarding aid	Mechanism for allocating funds	Implementing agent

- Problem-focused
- Project-focused

→ • Conventional contract
  • Cooperative agreement

→ • Government agency
  • International contractor
  • National contractor
  • Multinational organisation

- Programme-focused

→ • Direct budget transfer
  • Budget support to education ministries
  • Sector wide approach

→ • Government
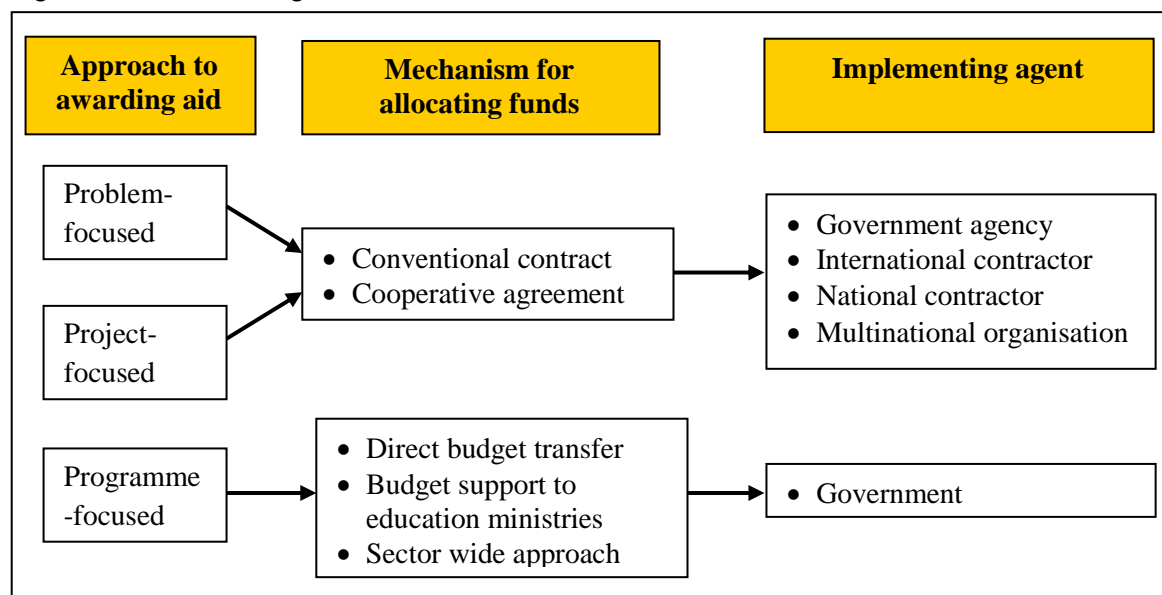
Source: adapted from Chapman (2006 p.31).

The next section briefly discusses the merits and demerits of USAID project implementing agents, i.e. international contractors, national contractors, international NGOs (INGOs) and national NGOs. This is followed by a review of the literature on the 'poaching' of development experts, in order to shed some light on the issues that arise when government officials are contracted to work for donor-funded projects.

3.3.1   Project Implementing Agents

3.3.1.1   *International Contractors*

There are multiple benefits to be gained by outsourcing the implementation of education projects to international contractors. By doing so, USAID is able to secure the necessary technical expertise on an ad hoc basis without subjecting itself to the high overheads of maintaining a large team of specialists amongst its own staff.

Secondly, contractors easily fulfil reporting requirements and comply with financial accounting procedures.

Thirdly, they tend to have a good working relationship with USAID.

Fourthly, the practice is politically required by Congress. USAID often hands over the funds to the American contractor and makes it responsible for further allocating them to

other sub-contractors (USAID, 2004).[18] This centralises the responsibility for oversight of project funds without burdening USAID staff with the task.

As noted earlier, the biggest argument against this contractual style is the uncertainty of long-term sustainability. Moreover, its cost-effectiveness is also questionable, especially with regard to highly paid foreign specialists. Despite their technical expertise, it is sometimes argued that expatriates may not have sufficient understanding of local culture and decision-making processes, and that their very presence can lead to resentment on the recipient side (Leach, 1991, 1997).

3.3.1.2   *National Contractors*

Local personnel often have a better understanding of the strategies that are likely to be culturally appropriate and may be more effective in undertaking implementation activities than 'outsiders'. At the same time, using local contractors is one way of building local capacity and fostering local experience, and one that promotes sustainability. Some also argue that awarding national contracts promotes private sector development in the recipient country.

The downside is that national contractors are less likely to be familiar with USAID accounting and reporting requirements. Additionally, the contracting of local agents has been criticised for not encouraging long-term sustainability.

3.3.1.3   *INGOs*

NGOs have long played an important role in delivering development assistance (Edwards, 1997, 1999). Their increased popularity as a mechanism for distributing development assistance originates from the early 1990s, largely for the following five reasons:

Firstly, working through INGOs is a way of reaching the local population whilst at the same time circumventing state bureaucracy to a certain extent (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002).

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[18] USAID ties its aid securely to the utilisation of American companies. Of the top 100 firms used as consultants by USAID in 2000, more than 80 were from the US, accounting for 87% of the contract value; and the remainder were nearly all multinationals with offices in the US (USAID, 2004).

Secondly, channelling development money through INGOs is a means of bypassing regimes that have a record of misappropriating international assistance funds.

Thirdly, INGOs are believed to be more in touch with the real needs of ordinary people, and better structured to deliver services at the grassroots level (Edwards, 1997, 1999). Moreover, INGOs are often able to use new funding to build on activities and structures already in place. This is attractive to donors who are keen to avoid the high costs of establishing new management structures for project implementation, yet also want a clear chain of financial accountability (Chapman, 2001).

The argument against the use of INGOs is similar to criticism of international contractors – sustainability and expatriates who may not be familiar with local contexts – although this is less of an issue with INGOs than with international contractors.

3.3.1.4   *National NGOs*

National NGOs enjoy many of the same advantages as INGOs. They typically have a local presence in the geographical area in which USAID wants to work; local knowledge and a local network they can draw upon to implement their activities; and staff with a commitment to local development that extends even beyond the provisions of external funding.

As with national contractors, operating through national NGOs is often seen as a means of building local capacity, promoting local ownership and sustainability of ideas and activities. Moreover, working with local NGOs is often substantially more cost-effective than working with their international counterparts (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002).

Nevertheless, the increased reliance on national and international NGOs is not without controversy (Edwards, 1997, 1999). For all their advantages, channelling development assistance funds through NGOs carries some risks. While NGOs and governments are not natural enemies, neither are they necessarily the best of friends (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002). Governments have frequently viewed NGOs as competitors for international development funds that would otherwise flow through their ministries. However, while this attitude may be self-serving on the part of the state, working outside official channels can result in a lack of coordination with the implementation of government policy.

NGO activities are often somewhat loosely (and sometimes not at all) connected to established government structures, putting sustainability of NGO initiated activities at risk (World Bank, 2003b). The state often has little sense of ownership or commitment to NGO activities; thus, while often effective at the operational level, work undertaken through NGOs has little chance of influencing national level government policy. Therefore, in operating outside the national policy framework, NGO development initiatives have often blossomed and died (Chapman and Dykstra, 2006).

Another problem is that the rapid influx of development funds may overwhelm the NGO's absorptive capacity (World Bank, 2003b). Planning, supervision and accounting systems are sometimes unable to keep up with incoming funding, leading to a drop in the quality of service.

Project implementers contracted by USAID are screened, but whatever agency (or combination of agencies) takes charge, public sector recipient personnel inevitably become involved in project implementation. This is not only true with regard to the QUIPS programme but any donor-related project.

Unless assistance takes the form of the programme approach – in which government officials themselves take a leading role – the result is a kind of competition amongst skilled local staff in the recipient sector. The next section looks at this competition for scarce expertise, and what may happen to the recipient's bureaucratic system when specialist local officials are recruited for project implementation.

3.3.2   Poaching

Because donors need to demonstrate that they have obtained tangible results from their projects, they rely heavily on expatriates, especially long-term advisors. In that the donors must also work with counterparts in the local state bureaucracy, the same pressure commonly leads the former to pay salary supplements to specialist local staff. However, this practice induces civil servants to turn their attention away from their other responsibilities – even work with a potentially greater impact on development – towards the donor's project (Arndt, 2000).

It also creates the incentive for officials to protect and extend aid projects from which they benefit regardless of the merit of such initiatives, and helps to perpetuate the

practice of spending aid funds in the form of independent projects rather than in the form of coordinated, sector-wide programmes or budget support (Acharya et al., 2003).

The distinction between purely private consultation and semi-official engagement on donor projects is often blurred (Cohen and Wheeler, 1997b). Moreover:

> Control of salary and manpower policy is eroded as donors hire local staff for 'their' projects or contract with them to meet donor needs. Dual salary and incentive structures undermine morale and commitment among public sector employees who are left out of donor-distributed assignments... This neglect or subversion of existing structures creates organisational confusion and contributes to the withering of government capacity (Berg, 1997).[19]

Examples in the aid literature come primarily from sub-Saharan Africa:

> In Niger, for instance, the majority of NGOs appear to be operated by moonlighting civil servants and ex-ministers of cabinet. In several cases, high-level officials left government to create NGOs in order to receive donor support that had once gone to the official's ministry (van de Walle, 2001 p.165).

Van de Walle and Johnston (1996) found that Master's level staff in government earn a fifth of what they could earn working for the resident mission of a donor agency in Kenya. In Ghana, a salary of a secretary to a JICA expert working in the MoE was higher than that of a MoE director.[20]

Once engaged by project implementation units, generous salary packages for locally recruited staff are often supplemented with access to vehicles and foreign travel. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that many middle and high-level African managers have left the civil service to work directly for aid agencies, lured by salaries often five to ten times as much as they were earning in public service (Knack and Rahman, 2004).

Many graduates of donor-funded training programmes leave the public sector to work for aid agencies or NGOs; and the most talented, ambitious and best trained are the most likely to leave (Knack and Rahman, 2004). Cohen and Wheeler (1997a p.142) concluded in their study of Kenya that "elite external Master's degrees are, in effect, passports out of the public sector". Moreover, the high salaries paid by donors to locally

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[19] See Cohen and Wheeler (1997a) for a more detailed discussion on the damaging effects of the 'topping up' of officials' salaries by donors.

[20] Information obtained from a JICA then education specialist in the MoE (9 August 2005).

recruited staff are further accelerating the exodus of skills from the very state institutions they are trying to strengthen (Riddell, 2007b).

A World Bank report (1998) laments the fact that donors 'unwittingly' ransack the civil service for its best and brightest talent to run their projects. However, this and other donor practices with potentially damaging effects are widely condoned by the donor agencies themselves (UNDP, 2003; World Bank, 2000, 2003c). Nevertheless, Fallon and Pereira da Silva (1994 p.98) report that in Mozambique, one of the most aid-intensive countries:

> Donor-driven competition for skilled personnel is creating immense problems for government. The preoccupation of many donors with ensuring that their local administrations have a full complement of qualified staff and with securing, at all costs, the manpower required to implement their projects is depriving the government of the capacity to effectively manage its administration.

In deciding whether to poach the better qualified civil servants to run their own projects, donors treat government bureaucracy as a common resource pool. Where there are relatively few donors – each with a large share of projects adversely affected by deteriorating administrative capacity – the external cost of poaching may be sufficiently high such that an individual donor is able to influence the decision to do so. However, even in this case there may be principal-agent problems within a donor agency, as officials with primary responsibility for the success of a particular project may have an incentive to recruit the best possible local staff at the expense of the agency's broader country objectives.[21]

In principle, recipient governments could act to reduce the inefficiencies associated with competitive donor practices. They could always refuse some aid[22] in an attempt to reduce the donors active in the country, or, at least, those active in each sector (OECD, 2003). In practice, principal-agent problems within the recipient country – either between a government with limited time horizons and its citizens, or between line ministries and central ministries (van de Walle, 2001; Wuyts, 1996) – often reduce

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[21] A principal–agent problem operating in aid is a well-established critique of aid (Easterly, 2006; Ellerman, 2005). Examples of intra-agency aid coordination problems are given in Wuyts (1996 p.743); Mosley and Eeckhout (2000 p.141); and Calhoun and Whittington (1988 p.301). See also OECD (2003).

[22] Uganda's stated policy is to decline all offers of stand-alone projects (OECD, 2003 p.121).

state ability and interest in curtailing donor activities that have a destructive effect on the long-term development of the country as a whole.

Moreover, for political leaders without sufficiently far-reaching time horizons, the short-term personal benefits of corruption and patronage practices often outweigh the long-term costs of subverting administrative capacity (van de Walle, 2001).

Thus far, approaches to delivering international assistance – USAID and DFID approaches to aid in particular – have been reviewed, including programme implementers and issues related to poaching, in order to shed some light on the mechanisms utilised to convert aid funds into activities on the ground. The following four sections review the literature on fungibility, power, ownership and sustainability in the context of international assistance, which provide the framework for an analysis of aid absorption.

3.4   Fungibility

Increasing aid flow alone cannot achieve development. Rather, how funds are spent and absorbed in the recipient government/sector is more important. This prompts several questions. What happens to aid once it is flowing into the sector/government? Do targeted resources reach the intended users or is foreign aid fungible? If they do, then to what extent does the funding reach its target and deliver the required services? Under what circumstances is funding well utilised, and under what circumstances is funding not spent as well as planned?

This section reviews the literature on international assistance in the light of fungibility. Most research into fungibility takes the form of macroeconomic analysis. It is usually discussed from the point of view of how the recipient's public expenditure is affected by aid inflow. Although this thesis does not focus on public financial behaviour, a review of the implications of fungibility will enable us to gain an insight into what can happen to aid flow within the recipient government/sector.

Aid is said to be fungible (World Bank, 1998). In principle, the government can secure donor funding for a particular purpose by reducing its own expenditure for the same purpose (Foster, 2004a; Foster and Leavy, 2001). Similarly, fungibility describes the

degree to which resources ostensibly allocated for one purpose may free up resources for other purposes (Collier, 2002; DFID 2001b).

For example, donor funding earmarked for primary education will not result in any overall increase in expenditure on the sector if the government reduces its own spending on primary education and uses the funds thus released for some other purpose.[23] In other words, fungibility implies the diversion of aid to expenditure in areas that donors do not wish to support.

Research into the question of how fungible foreign aid is has resulted in various answers, depending on local context (Foster, 2004a; van de Walle and Cratty, 2007), but much analysis finds a significant degree of fungibility (World Bank, 1998).

Conventionally, it is held that fungibility is not desirable and the term is applied in the negative sense of encouragement of corruption and expenditure in undesirable areas beyond those to which the aid is limited.

However, Tsukahara (1988) makes a case in favour of fungibility by establishing the fact that recipient governments may identify projects whose rates of return are much higher than those targeted or designated by the donor.

Conventional treatments of fungibility (e.g. World Bank, 1998) tend to assume – implicitly if not explicitly – that recipients intentionally divert aid to uses other than those intended by the donor.

Such fungibility is easily explained if donors and recipients merely have different preferences regarding the allocation of public funds (Takahashi, 2002b; 2002c); in other words, malicious intent is not a given (McGillivray and Morrissey, 2000). Put simply, a person or country when given resources will logically reallocate their other expenditure (van de Walle and Cratty, 2007; World Bank, 1998).

Closely related to this point, several studies have found that government expenditure may rise by more than the inflow of aid without apparently causing a simultaneous

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[23] The share of actual recurrent expenditures on basic education was 67% in 1993, and then gradually decreased by 10% to 57% in 1999 (Ghana Ministry of Education, 1999b appendix 4.7). In contrast, teacher education and technical and vocational education as well as tertiary education showed the opposite trend.

increase in total government revenue (Feyzioglu et al., 1998; Khan and Hoshino, 1992; McGillivray, 2000; McGillivray and Ahmed, 1999; Pack and Pack, 1993; World Bank, 1998). This may also be the case with the expenditure categories favoured by donors.

McGillivray and Morrissey (2000; 2001) explain this by pointing out that there can be a communication breakdown between policy officers who set plans and allocate expenditure based on aid inflow on the one hand, and the officers implementing the plans on the other. The latter in particular suffer from so-called 'aid illusion', meaning that they may not appreciate budget constraints and misperceive the real or nominal value of the funds available to them.

This may lead to higher expenditure than planned by the policy officers. As a World Bank report (1998) points out, miscommunication within a bureaucracy leads to the unintentional diversion of aid flow rather than to its intentional diversion, which the fungibility literature seems to implicitly assume.

Fungibility does not only pertain to the macroeconomic level. Rather, it can occur in intermediate subsectors too (Larsen, 2003). In fact, one of the weaknesses identified in the traditional project approach is fungibility (World Bank, 1998); thus, sectoral approaches are expected to reduce this weakness.

It has therefore been argued that it does not generally make good economic sense to devise an education programme that only addresses a particular subsector (e.g. primary or secondary education) (Harrold and Associates, 1995). This would entail the risk of inter-sectoral fungibility if the programme led to increased government expenditure on tertiary education, this subsector typically not being a donor priority.

This example shows that fungibility cannot automatically be eliminated through the application of a sectoral approach. However, fungibility is linked to the question of ownership and objectives (Takahashi, 2002b). Thus, it is only a problem if the donor and recipient's objectives differ.

However, this situation has the potential to increase corruption associated with the management of aid funds (Collier, 2002) even if there is no malicious intent on the part of the recipient. There is even evidence to suggest that in cases of low government ownership of reform, aid significantly increases corruption (Knack, 2001). Collier (2002) points out that if a donor implements a project in which the government has little real

interest, public officials tend to devise means of diverting the resources; and that widespread accomplishment in these diversionary skills gradually leads to the problem of wholesale corruption.

Indeed, many studies find leakage of public expenditure in basic service delivery systems to be a result of corruption (Ades and Di Tella, 1997, 1999; Di Tella and Schargrodsky, 2000; Fisman and Svensson, 2000; Mauro, 1995; Svensson, 2000a; 2000b; Treisman, 2000).[24] However, form and extent differ from case to case, depending on national financial structures, the degree to which the state is able to exercise budgetary control (Campos and Pradhan, 1996), and the extent of donor involvement (Easterly, 2003; van de Walle, 2001; van de Walle and Johnston, 1996).

Implications of Fungibility in the Education Sector
Considering the large proportions of state budgets spent on education and the amount of aid funding being pumped into the sector, there is no reason to suppose that the education sector is exempt from issues of fungibility.

A survey of public primary schools in Uganda assessed the degree of leakage of public funds in education (Reinikka and Svensson, 2001). The survey data reveal that from 1991 to 1995, on average schools received only 13% of central government's allocation of non-wage expenditure for the sector. The authors found that the bulk of the allocated funds had been used by public officials for administration or privately appropriated for other purposes unrelated to education.

While there are numerous examples of large-scale corruption within education ministries (e.g. Hallak and Poisson, 2005; Heyneman, 2004; U4 Anti Corruption Resource Centre, 2006). Chapman (2002) argues that the most serious consequences arise from the pervasive, petty corruption that permeates day-to-day transactions at district, school and even classroom level. Reinikka and Svensson (2001) show that many of the various instances of corruption at the local level can be explained in terms

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[24] For the effects of corruption on investment and growth, see Mauro (1995). On the determinants of corruption, see Ades and Di Tella (1997; 1999), Svensson (2000a), and Treisman (2000). A common theme in this literature is the use of subjective measures of corruption in a nationwide setting. Fisman and Svensson (2000), Svensson (2000b), and Di Tella and Schargrodsky (2000) are exceptions, utilising quantitative micro-level data on corruption.

of bargaining power over resources allocation and their utilisation among central government officers, and between local officials and end-users (schools).

A similar tracking survey of public expenditure flow from line ministries to basic service provision facilities – including primary and junior secondary schools – was conducted in Ghana (Xiao Ye and Canagarajah, 2002). However, the objective of this survey was modified due to an inconsistency in the recording system, the initial objective having been to quantify the financial flow from central government to district offices, and from district offices to basic education facilities.

Nevertheless, in the process, the authors learnt that an accurate estimate of public expenditure flow was impracticable in Ghana at that time. Rather, they needed to start from the distribution and recording systems that would allow accurate tracking. Although this survey tracked public expenditure and the results cannot be extrapolated to determine the nature of the use of external funds as a whole, the use of resources – external or domestic – would seem to be a somewhat opaque subject of investigation.

Higher levels of expenditure are only part of the story; and whether a larger budget translates into better performance in the sector under investment is perhaps a more important part of the story. In order to achieve the desired outcome, it is crucial to ensure that resources allocated to social services are distributed efficiently to public service provision facilities, and that these facilities reach the service users. Again, this process is indefinite in the context of the Ghanaian education sector.

3.5   Power

There is a power relationship between donor agencies and recipient countries (horizontal), as well power relationships between the macro, meso and micro levels within recipient countries (vertical). Aid is absorbed within the dynamics of these power relationships. Disentangling the dynamics between these power relationships, therefore, is essential to understanding how aid is absorbed.

The purpose of this section is not to review at length the tremendously wide-ranging literature on power, but to establish a working definition of the power relationship pertinent to this thesis. The ground is well covered (Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962; Hickson et al., 1971; Krackhardt, 1990; Levine and White, 1961; Pfeffer and Salancik,

1978). Here, I want to draw attention to the fact that a relationship between actor A and actor B is not equal in the context of international development. This can be most acutely observed in the imbalance of power between recipient and donor (Berg, 1993; Girgis, 2007; Hailey et al., 2005; Hyden, 2008).

The precise meaning of power is contentious. Some refer to it as the ability to get things done despite the will and resistance of others, or as a capacity to out-manoeuvre the opposition (Bierstadt, 1950; Emerson, 1962). Emerson (1962) referred to power as a function of dependence, whose basic premise was that as one actor becomes dependent upon the other, the social relationship between actors becomes unbalanced resulting in a situation where the dominant actor has power over the dependent actor.

When this sort of relationship exists, the more powerful actor will seek to maintain the dependence, whereas the less powerful actor will attempt to reduce the "cost" (Emerson, 1962 p.34) associated with the dependence and engage in behaviours such as withdrawal, extending the power network, coalition forming, and status emergence to attempt to balance the degree of depended in the relationship (Emerson, 1962).

Others (e.g. Kanter, 1979; Roberts, 1986) emphasise the positive nature of power, suggesting that it is the ability to mobilise resources to accomplish some end (without specific reference to organised opposition). Some refer to power as the ability to control premises of action, such that power becomes almost unobservable (Lukes, 1974).

Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) prefer to ignore these distinctions, noting that, while academics may quibble over the definition of power, those actually experiencing the effects of power in the real world seem to exhibit a consensus as to who has it.

The majority of research on issues of power has focused on different types or bases of power. French and Raven (1968) posited six bases of power: "reward, coercion, legitimate, expert, referent, and informational" (Raven, 1993 p.246).

Jones and George (2006 p.500) describe expert power as being "based on special knowledge, skills, and expertise". Referent power is identified as coming from "respect, admiration, and loyalty" (Jones and George, 2006 p.501), towards those often might have charisma (Bryman, 1992).

Raven (1993 p.235) identifies information power as being "based on the information or logical argument that the influencing agent could present to the target in order to implement change".

Keohane and Nye (1998 p.86) classify power into two main categories: behavioural power and resource power. They further sub-divide behavioural power into two types of power – hard power and soft power.

Behavioural power is defined as the ability of X to obtain outcomes that X wants. Hard power is characterised by X being able to get ABC to do what ABC would not wish to do (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), achieving this through threats of punishment or offers of reward. Soft power, on the other hand, is characterised by X being able to achieve its goals through what Keohane and Nye describe as attraction rather than coercion. X is able to do this by convincing ABC "to follow or getting them to agree to norms and institutions that produce the desired behaviour" (p. 86). A positive outcome would depend on the appeal and persuasiveness of X's suggestions.

Resource power refers to the base, means, scope and amount of power possessed by an actor that could be used to facilitate the exercise of either hard or soft power. Analysis of an actor's resource power with a particular situation thus identifies all important facilitating or constraining factors.

Keohane and Nye's definition is based on an assumption that the power relationship is asymmetrical and what X wants is different from what ABC want.

Lister (2000 p.230) describes the base of power as the resources that X can use to influence ABC's behaviour; the means of power as the specific actions by which X can make actual use of these resources; the scope of power as the set of specific actions that X – by using its means of power – can get ABC to perform; and the amount of power as the net increase in the probability that ABC will actually perform some specific action due to X using its means of power.

The recipient side is not a homogeneous monolithic entity. Organisations such as MoE/GES are composed of actors (organisational employees), and these actors are divided into functional subunits (Hickson et al., 1971). To varying degrees, subunits (e.g. various divisions of GES, DEO or schools) within an organisation are dependent on other subunits to execute their organisational function or purpose. Furthermore,

organisations are dependent upon these actors. Aid is absorbed in this myriad of power relationships.

As to the power relation between donor and recipient, one does not get a sense of any real power in the hands of recipient governments in the relationship that is shaped by the conditions that must be met before donors will provide (Cramer et al., 2006). In fact, recipient governments are rarely seen or heard to impose any serious conditions on the donors with regard to the aid they receive (Clarke-Okha, 2003).

The reason for this can partially be found in the assertion that recipients are free to choose as long as their choices turn out to be what the donors want or what the donors are urging them to do, implicitly or otherwise. Echoing this assertion is Michael Wolfers' (1974) *The Black Man's Burden Revisited*, in which he states that:

> A fundamental weakness of aid programmes is that aid is what the rich countries want to give rather than what the poor countries in their own best interest would choose... The grand notions of the givers may well accord with the grandiose notions of the recipients to nobody's positive advantage (p. 42).

> The recipient [institutions] are in the position of beggars grateful for what charity they receive. They are not in the strongest place to challenge the ideas of the donor government or agency (p. 47).

In her study of capacity building, which defines individual relationships can work as the basis for capacity building, Girgis (2007) defines three sources of power in working relationships between donors and their recipients : financial resources, knowledge and experience, and outsider status. Of these, financial resources emerge as the predominant factor. Indeed, the literature increasingly cites this power imbalance as contributing to the failure of capacity building (Hailey et al., 2005).

The individual or organisation with control of the project budget – usually an expatriate, national NGOs and/or a Western organisation – is perceived by themselves and by those with whom they work as holding the balance of power in decision-making. This reinforces a notion of 'us and them' – one party holding the money and the other without it – and the donor's position as an outsider.

In a very comprehensive and detailed analysis of three African countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mozambique), Buchert (2002) shows how all three adhere to the concepts of partnership, local ownership and support for a sector-wide approach to

educational issues. However, she points out that there can be no blueprint for all contexts, concluding that, "the level of rhetoric concerning mutual respect, transparency and genuine partnerships cannot eliminate underlying differences and structural relationships between aid providers and aid recipients" (p. 83).

Power asymmetry in donor–government relations is sometimes at the root of their dysfunctional nature, such that any talk of the recipient's ownership of its own development process becomes meaningless as it is often not in control of the agenda at hand (Clarke-Okha, 2003). Emotions run high when the issue of power asymmetry between donors and recipient countries and its implications are discussed. Elliot (quoted in Lister, 2000) contends that:

> This is a dialogue of the unequal, and however many claims are made for transparency of mutuality, the reality is – and is seen to be – that the donor can do to the recipient what the recipient cannot do to the donor. There is an asymmetry of power that no amount of well-intentioned dialogue can remove (p. 229).

3.6   Ownership

Closely related to the imbalance of power, in the first few decades of development assistance, the assumption was that the donors should take the lead in designing and implementing programmes and projects (Morss, 1984). However, by the early 1990s, it was realised that the heavy hand of the donor in the planning of development assistance was depriving recipients of ownership over programmes (Brunetti and Weder, 1990; Johnson and Wasty, 1993; OECD/DAC, 1992; van de Walle and Johnston, 1996; Wilson and Whitmore, 1995).

Despite widespread acknowledgement of recipient country ownership of development programmes as of critical importance to sustainable development (DAC 1996; OECD, 1996), debate continues as to whether ownership is shared with or transferred to recipients in reality or is just one of the current buzzwords in the vocabulary of development cooperation (Cassels, 1997; Foster, 2000b; Holmgren and Soludo, 2002; Schacter, 2001).

Critics argue that without such ownership, recipients are unlikely to make the kind of commitment necessary to ensure the realisation of the intended long-term results of donor assistance. Thus, if institutional growth for the expansion of ownership is lacking,

development is considered to be unsustainable (Ostrom et al., 2002a). Moreover, empirical studies have demonstrated the authenticity of this relationship (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999). Sustainability is discussed in further detail in section 3.7.

The current move away from project support to programme support in some donors may be seen as the epitome of international recognition of the importance of ownership (Brown, 2001; Brown et al., 2001). Underscoring the significance of this trend, national ownership has been recognised as the key to developmental success (UNDP, 2003).

National ownership requires strong leadership and political commitment, yet the concept is complex and encompasses issues connected with the way power and leadership are exercised (UNDP et al., 2003). However, key arguments in support of the sector programme are that it increases the efficiency of aid agency funding and shifts the responsibility for planning and prioritising to the aid-receiving government, thereby strengthening ownership (UK DFID Programme Delivery Guidance Team, 2003).

Thus, ownership has even been regarded as a means of achieving capacity building without direct external support:

> The process of taking responsibility for one's own development will lead to strengthening national capacities. The learning process is part of designing, planning and guiding the programme—tasks which the countries must assume. This…trend…enjoins countries to 'learn to build by building' (Ndoye, 2002 p.2).

It seems that there is general agreement that although ownership of development strategies should be emphasised, there remain questions about exactly what is subsumed under ownership. As Brautigma (2000 p.32) notes, the question of what ownership in development assistance means is not clearly answered, either by academia or the donor agencies.

Some donor agencies do not include themselves when speaking of ownership and owners. Others include all those involved in and affected by an aid activity (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999 p.77; Singh, 2001 p.29). Nevertheless, although the advantages of achieving recipient ownership are readily acknowledged, where or on what level ownership should be strengthened is less clear.

USAID cautions that concentration on national ownership (central government ownership) alone is to overemphasise the current aid trend (USAID Brief p.1 in Riddell, 2002 p.4; USAID, 1996 para 2.22). However, a broad view of ownership is widely advocated. For example, Baser (2001) emphasises that properly defined local ownership should include all stakeholders operating at various levels in the recipient country, not just its government. A DANIDA policy paper states:

> National ownership is central to the Sector Programme Support (SPS) approach. National ownership should not only be at the central government level, but also at other levels involved in SPS-related activities, e.g. the private sector and civil society (DANIDA, 1998a).

Furthermore, other donors outline their specific concerns of "ensuring that non-state stakeholders are consulted in developing a sector strategy and that their role as service delivery is recognised" (DFID Brief p.3 in Riddell 2002 P.5). A publication of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000) is even more explicit:

> Ownership does not lie exclusively with the recipient government. In addition to political will, sustainable public support is also required for policy implementation. Both policymaking and implementation must therefore involve civil society (e.g. civil-society organisations, business, politicians, experts, universities and research establishments). Ownership, therefore, lies with everyone involved in a given sector. A sectoral approach restricted exclusively to the capital city or national government would offer little prospect of yielding sustainable results (p.9).

The literature on ownership generally comes firmly down in favour of involving recipients in problem diagnosis and solution design if the likelihood of follow-through in implementation is to be assured, since "this principle reinforces the importance or resisting the tendency to determine solutions in advance and of allowing those with a role in the policy implementation process to develop a situation-specific approach to what needs to be done" (Brinkerhoff, 1996 pp.14-5). Thus, ownership in a donor–recipient relationship is the ability of the recipient to assume leadership and control of the local development agenda and process through strong commitment.

In an OECD report on methods in aid evaluation (1986), results are evaluated according to five criteria, i.e. their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. In order to achieve four of these criteria, recipient ownership is necessary. Only the required degree of efficiency might be met without the need for the recipient to acquire ownership.

For aid related activities to be relevant, they need to be in accordance with the strategies and priorities of the recipient country. Ownership is also a prerequisite. However, it is argued that by itself, it is not a sufficient precondition for the positive impact and sustainability for an aid initiative (Bandstein and Dietrichson, 2004; Molund, 2000; Ostrom et al., 2002a).

Four criteria established by Ostrom et al. (2002a) are useful in order to make the concept of ownership operational. They identify four functions of ownership in the development assistance context (p.15): (1) enunciating demand; (2) making a tangible contribution; (3) obtaining benefits; and (4) sharing responsibility for either the long-term continuation or the termination of a programme. They view ownership as incorporating the following processes:

1. Participation in *provision* by articulating what assets a programme requires, and deciding how resources should be mobilised to provide such needs.
2. Participation in *production* by making tangible contributions; time, effort and other resources contributing to production are consumption signals that beneficiaries expect to derive benefits from a project.
3. Participation in *consumption* of the benefits if the programme is successful, and in a share of responsibility if the project fails.
4. Participation in *decisions* related to the surrender of the rights to a programme (the decision to continue or discontinue a programme once it has been initiated) (emphasis in original 2002a p.15).

In some projects, ownership is enhanced by having beneficiaries more actively engage in both provision and production processes. By investing in these processes, beneficiaries are not simply consumers of someone else's largesse, but must articulate their own preferences and allocate their own resources. Projects that require beneficiary participation in provision and production activities usually involve considerably more time and effort on the part of the staff of the implementing agency.

If a donor is wiling to fully fund a project, it is easier and less time-consuming for the implementing agency to design it and arrange all aspects of production. However, once the implementing agency has gone to the trouble of designing and producing the project, it becomes more of an owner than the beneficiary (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999).

Ownership theory is concerned with rights and responsibilities in a legal and cultural sense that is more germane to the business world (Mackin, 1996). Management–employee relations best typify the theory of rights and responsibilities, and may result in perceived or actual ownership.

Mackin locates this dichotomy in two domains: the organisational life of a business that involves people issues on the one hand; and the economic life of the enterprise that deals with business and money issues on the other. Businesses are subject to and driven by competition, but as legal entitles also assume the characteristics of an individual in a psychological sense, and the power and the complexities of personality that go with them.

Mackin uses the management–employee split to illustrate the actual versus the perceived ownership dichotomy, which is concerned with issues of risk and reward, and the fact that with every right comes a responsibility. For example, employees value having a voice and exercising influence but need to balance this with their expertise; not only can they get, but they must also give. In other words, since the workplace exists in economic time, if employees expect a bonus or a share in the profits, they must be ready to earn it by innovating and investing.

Mackin calls this balancing of rights with responsibilities and rewards with risks "positive ownership," which is explained as follows:

> To illustrate, the rights-only and rewards-only folks are people who tend to look at ownership from an individualistic or egoistic perspective. They tend to ask, "What's in it for me?" On the other hand, the responsibilities-only or risk-only people tend to see ownership in a paternalistic way. Those with a balanced perspective on ownership however, look at ownership as a "membership" or "partnership" concept (op. cit. page n/a)

However, he notes that there are "ownership sceptics" who are outside these categories and do not declare themselves to be on one side or the other, but wait to see "genuine evidence of how leadership and management will treat this issue before they decide to get into the boat and begin to row" (op. cit. page n/a).

Mackin's analysis has some implications for donor–recipient relationships if we substitute management for donor and employee for recipient. In the light of this, his research indicates that:

> Management is generally negative about the rights of ownership but positive about responsibilities; they are positive about risks but negative about rewards. Their message to their workers can be characterised as the following: "Act like an owner, sit down and be quiet." Workers, on the other hand, are often positive about the rights of ownership but negative about the responsibilities; they are negative about risks but positive about rewards. Their message to management is: "Reward me like an owner but treat me like an employee (op. cit. page n/a).

Ownership as a rights issue in the context of international assistance pertains to the rights of aid recipients to make key decisions. These key decisions include the right to set the agenda, allocate resources from all sources including external avenues, and design and implement development programmes. The question is: who has these rights on the recipient side? Recipient ownership, properly defined, includes the various actors on a recipient side, not just its government (Baser and Morgan, 2001). Efforts are being made by donors and governments to move in this direction but the process is painfully slow (Brown et al., 2001; Buchert, 2000b; Development Assistance Committee, 1996; Samoff, 1999).

3.7   Sustainability

Lastly, this section examines the sustainability of aid interventions. The sustainability of donor assistance has been severely criticised, which has accelerated the shift from project funding to programme funding (Harrold and Associates, 1995). In other words, the emphasis on sustainability is, in part, an offshoot of its increased focus on outcome-based funding; for example, outcomes are of little value if they are merely transient (Boyd, 1999). In fact, the lack of sustainable impact is widely seen as a key threat to the continued flow of international development assistance (Nkansa and Chapman, 2006; Picard and Garrity, 1997).

The term is frequently applied but less often adequately explained. A criterion of success in many programmes is that the intervention should be sustainable. However, what is meant by sustainability in international assistance projects is often poorly defined (Chapman and Quijada, 2009; Nkansa and Chapman, 2006).

One of the challenges to defining and assessing sustainability is the diversity of views about what should be sustained. Thus, it is not clear whether the goal is (1) that specific organisational structures established by a project (e.g. a parent teacher

association) remain after the funding ends; (2) that the capacity of the participants is enhanced, regardless of the fate of particular structures; or (3) that the overall economic health of the country improves due to the aggregate impact of donor assistance (Center of Excellence for Sustainability, 2001; Dahl, 1995; Harris, 2003; Picard and Garrity, 1997). Needles to say, without a clear definition, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the donor project has actually been successful.

In the context of donor assistance, in its simplest terms, sustainability can be defined as "the continuation of benefits after major assistance from a donor has been completed" (Young and Hampshire, 2000 p.1).

In other words, as the broader literature indicates, sustainability is defined in terms of the extent to which specific activities and structures created during the lifetime of the project are likely to persist beyond the provision of funding (Nkansa and Chapman, 2006); or, likewise, it has also been defined as the ability to sustain the persistence of an activity or system (Dempster, 1998).

In this sense, the most persuasive assessment of sustainability would emerge from longitudinal or retrospective analyses of what actually endured after external funding ended.

On a cautionary note, Berman and McLaughlin (1978) emphasise that the "meaning of continuation" can be misleading. For example, a district may officially decide to continue a project, but teachers may not implement it. Or a district may decide to discontinue the programme, but many of the teachers may have already been integrated into it. In other words, the programme may leave its mark on the district in ways that have been overlooked.

A project might have a 'successful' outcome but no lasting effect. Alternatively, the World Bank (1998 p.91) notes that a project could be deemed to have failed, but its efforts still lead to substantial institutional development. The Bank emphasises that the innovative approach may not work, but if it is systematically evaluated and the knowledge is fed into a broader reform programme, the project helps to improve the management of the sector:

> Innovations may fail, but development assistance is strengthening the underlying institutions by assisting in the design and evaluation of new approaches and generation of knowledge (World Bank, 1998 p.91).

Berman and McLaughlin (1978) find that projects that have not been implemented effectively are not sustained (as would be expected), but they also find that only a minority of those that are well implemented continue beyond the period of funding. Moreover, the reasons for termination are basically the same ones that influence implementation, except that their role becomes more sharply defined (Fullan, 2007 pp.88-90).

Such factors may comprise any or all of the following: effective leadership; interest; funds (or fundraising ability); the development of and support for staff and teachers (Fullan, 2007); management capacity; a sense of ownership (Chapman and Quijada, 2009); consistency with local values; and compatibility with local needs and resources (Rogers, 2003).

Huberman and Miles (1984) stress that the continuation or institutionalisation of innovations depends on whether or not the changes become built into the structure (through policy, budget, timetable, etc.).

Yin et al. (1977 p.16) caution that district assistance from external agencies may be helpful for initial implementation; but when it comes to institutionalisation, the larger the external resource support, the less likely the effort will be continued after external funds are withdrawn, because the recipient will not be able to afford to incorporate the costs into its regular budget. Their point implies that assistance to district (local) level may not be sustained in the future unless central government takes over and continues to make efforts to institutionalise innovations.

Sustainability is a continual process in implementation. The maintenance of support to administrative staff and teachers is crucial. In fact, one of the most powerful factors known to adversely affect sustainability is staff and administrative turnover (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; Huberman and Miles, 1984). Nevertheless, very few programmes plan for the orientation of and in-service support for new members who arrive after the programme commences (Fullan, 2007). This factor should be taken into consideration from the beginning and continually revised.

3.8   Conclusion

ODA for education usually starts as money which is intended to support education activities and institutions. But money by itself does not improve education. To be useful, these funds have to be converted into activities and materials, for example, textbooks, learning aids, in-service training, data systems, etc. Thus, an important role of donor agencies and recipient governments is to convert the inputs purchased through funding into educational processes and products that can lead to the intended outcomes. However, the different possible aid delivery mechanisms mean both donors and recipient governments are faced with a dilemma: which implementation mechanisms can best transform funds into the desired development outcomes, and eventually lead to sustainable development?

This study is concerned with an investigation into the manner in which external funds are absorbed into the recipient sector to determine whether the claims made by each aid approach (i.e. project assistance and programme assistance) were realised.

Figure 3-3 depicts the conceptual framework of the study. The literature review on the concepts and issues of implementers, fungibility, power and ownership shows that aid funds are absorbed within the dynamic context of the recipient government/sector where myriad factors affect how funds are absorbed. These factors are interwoven and intricate and link to the fundamental question concerning international assistance: how can development efforts be sustained? Programme assistance delivers external funds to a government agency while project assistance delivers funds to the targeted end users via a contracted implementing agency. The various factors affecting how aid funds are absorbed under the different aid mechanisms and how this leads to the sustainability of development efforts were investigated.

Figure 3-3 Conceptual framework
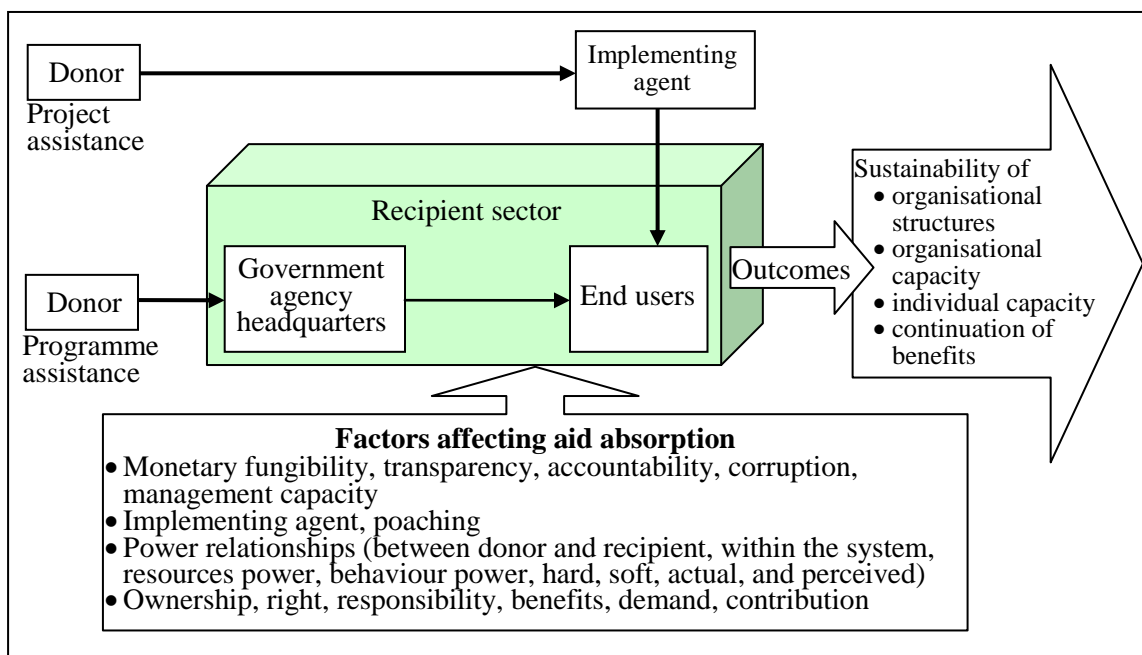
Source: the author.

Although there seems to be a trend in a number of related fields regarding the socio-cultural and economic contexts of international assistance, donors and writers on the subject of aid have remained at best slightly – and sometimes, signally – ignorant of what happens to external funds once they are transferred to the recipient country's government or a specific sector, like health, or in this case, education. It is amazing that in spite of the billions of dollars spent annually on programmes, so little research has been carried out into what actually goes on during the fund absorption process.

Evaluations of donor-related projects usually reveal a one-sided view. This is invariably the official one put forward to the evaluation team primarily by resident expatriate personnel and senior national government officials, both of whom have a vested interest in portraying the project in a rosy light so as to assure further funding.

The voices of the local staff (as opposed to senior government officials) who are largely responsible for implementing the project are rarely heard, let alone the voices of those actually working in schools. Such an analysis may, therefore, deal with only part of the complex chain of input to outcome, and not necessarily with the most important part of this chain.

This is especially important because different approaches are advocated and adopted by different aid agencies without them having adequately explored or paid sufficient

attention to how aid funds are absorbed. There still seems to be limited literature that addresses the ways in which aid approach processes work or how aid support are perceived by local educational actors. Again, this is an area that has not been adequately explored in Ghana.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates my research methodology in terms of its orientation (interpretive), approach (phenomenological), strategy (case study), data collection methods (interviews and documents), and the process of data analysis. Designing a study involves the amalgamation of theoretical paradigms with strategies of inquiry, and translating the latter into specific approaches and methods for the collection and analysis of empirical material (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In essence, all these processes are governed by the research purpose (research questions), and the ontological and epistemological stance (research orientation) the researcher takes. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue, issues in social science must ultimately be engaged on a universal level: "questions of methods are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator; not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (ibid p.105).

Therefore, this chapter begins with a discussion of the research paradigm that led to the epistemological and ontological position at the philosophical core of my study. This is followed by a description of the strategies of the study, with reference to the research questions. Details of the methods of data collection during the fieldwork – including the selection of districts and schools for the case study – are explained in the fourth section. The fifth section describes data analysis methods. Concurrent issues of validity and reliability are clarified in the following section, and practical and ethical issues are discussed in the seventh section. The final section discusses the methodological limitations of this study.

4.2 Orientation of the Research

4.2.1 Research Orientation

Basic beliefs about the nature of reality, and objectivity and subjectivity have significant implications for the authenticity and legitimacy of the study. Historically, social inquiry first adopted the methods used in the natural sciences, which are based on a belief in the existence of universal laws and objectively verifiable truth.

At the beginning of the 20th century, some researchers – notably Dilthey – contested such an application of natural science to the social sciences, which led to the emergence of new directions in social inquiry (Smith, 1984; Thines, 1972). These authors contend that reality is socially constructed; thus, the task of the social sciences is to comprehend the context-specific meanings of the people under study. These epistemological schools of thought are sometimes called 'paradigms', and they govern the way inquiry is conducted (Kuhn, 1996).

Epistemology grounded in the natural sciences belongs to the school of positivism; while the study of concepts, which presumes the subjectivity of reality, is termed the 'interpretive paradigm'. Research within the positivistic paradigm aims to determine rules through measurement; thus, it is primarily quantitative. Conversely, research within the interpretive paradigm is concerned with process and meaning, the investigation of which usually takes a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research enables the researcher to act as a human instrument of data collection; and, by the act of observation, to describe and interpret conditions as they are, paying attention to the structural or behavioural characteristics peculiar to an individual, group or organisation. The interpretive nature of qualitative research is especially well suited to the discovery of the meaning events hold for individuals or organisations that experience them, and the researcher's own interpretations of such meanings (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Eisner and Peshkin, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990).

I locate the present study within the interpretive paradigm. This is because it aims to reveal phenomena concerned with the education actor's experience of foreign assistance from "that person's point of view" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975 p.14). My interest lies with such actors' own understanding of aid absorption, a perception I assume is subjectively constructed through individual experience within a specific context – in this case, the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme. Thus, my study shares the tenet of the interpretive paradigm, in which "the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984 p.2) and its aim is to "understand the subjective world of human experience" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979 p.253) that is constructed within a specific context.

The choice of the research approach was determined mainly by the purpose of the study, i.e. the research aim and the situation in which the inquiry was to be made (Bryman, 2001; Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990). Therefore, before proceeding to discuss the research approach, I present my research questions at this point.

4.2.2   Research Questions

The overall research question was:

What are Ghanaian education actors' perceptions of international financial assistance to basic education in Ghana?

The answer to the above question was sought in the contexts of the Whole School Development (WSD) and Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) programmes, the study being guided by the following five specific questions:

Q1   What are the differences in approach to the use of external funds in theory and in practice between WSD and QUIPS?

Q2   How do education actors perceive the contribution of WSD and QUIPS respectively, and what accounts for their perceptions?

Q3   What do they consider to be the constraints to the efficient use of external resources (in enhancing the quality of education)?

Q4   How do they perceive the efficiency of WSD and QUIPS respectively, and what factors explain differences in perception between the two programmes?

Q5   What are the implications of the findings of this study for an approach to education development in terms of making the most of the available external funds?

In order to answer these questions, the study sought Ghanaian education actors' own views. Question 1 refers to mechanisms for the delivery of aid funding under WSD and QUIPS, concentrating on the divergence between how it was planned to work in theory and how it worked in practice. Question 2 looks at the actors' perceived contributions of

WSD and QUIPS, while views on the efficiency of the two programmes are sought in question 3. Question 4 aims to explore the perceived obstacles to the use of external funds. Question 5 will be answered by an analysis of questions 1–4.

4.2.3   Research Methodology

The aim of this study was to investigate stakeholders' perceptions. The focus was on respective actors' unique conceptualisation of aid absorptiveness, which was presumably informed by their own experiences of working on WSD and/or QUIPS.

Such an investigation is related to how the world is experienced and subjective reality is constructed, seeking answers from actors' own points of view. This focus on actors' interpretation and emphasis on their understanding of phenomena in a context-specific setting is best approached by a phenomenological inquiry.

Phenomenology aims to reveal the essential meaning of an individual's experience from "that person's point of view" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975 p.14; Ray, 1994 p.122). Such meaning is viewed as product of his or her interpretation of the world, which is the result of the assimilation of "a stock of knowledge composed of common-sense constructs and categories that are social in origin" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998 p.139).

Thus, the role of the study is to grasp this stock of knowledge by focusing on how people make sense of their everyday lives, while setting aside authorial preconceptions about the world (Bryman, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Holstein and Gubrium, 1998).

Language acts as the central medium in this process of interpretation and explanation of human action and thought through descriptions of the fundamental structures of the reality (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974). Moreover, language becomes "the middle ground in which understanding and agreement concerning the objective takes place between two people" (Gadamer, 1975 p.345). Phenomenological research thus depends on narrative (conversation) (Morse, 1994; Ray, 1994).

However, such a method was incompatible with my research setting; an approach that was sensitive to language would have been problematic because the language difference between respondent and researcher was significant. English – which is not my mother tongue – was used for gathering information; and for the people with whom

I worked, English was probably a second or third language, although most of them had a very fine command of it.

As will be explained shortly, this study involves multiple sources of data and a large number of informants, partly in order to mitigate any ambiguity caused by the language barrier. Nevertheless, the orientation of the study is phenomenological, by which I mean it aims to view things from the actor's perspective. An awareness of the problem, however, has contributed to a sharpening of the reflexivity of the study.

4.3   Research Design

My research aimed to explore Ghanaian education actors' perceptions of financial assistance to basic education within the context of Ghana's FCUBE programme. To do this, I selected two programmes: WSD and QUIPS. This section describes how I set up the study for a multilevel analysis of WSD and QUIPS, starting with an explanation of why these two programmes were chosen for detailed study from the various donor-founded FCUBE projects. This is followed by a description of the case study method.

4.3.1   Selecting the Cases

As described in the previous chapter, the FCUBE programme was launched in response to an increasing need for sector coordination. Although the initiative was originally considered to be one of the most successful examples of the sector-wide approach, it was subsequently generally recognised that neither the Ghanaian government nor its donor partners had fully succeeded in achieving the objectives of the programme (van Donge et al., 2002). In other words, although the major donors had designed projects that fitted into the FCUBE framework and all their aid activities were theoretically embedded in the programme, conflicting approaches to the achievement of FCUBE objectives were concurrently implemented.

Figure 4-1 represents a conceptualisation of selected projects designed to facilitate FCUBE, together with the respective agencies in charge of implementation. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) released funds under the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) to the Ghana Education Service (GES) to implement WSD, while other donor agencies agreed to work in particular areas and concentrate on individual projects.

Figure 4-1 A breakdown of donor-funded programmes implemented under the FCUBE programme
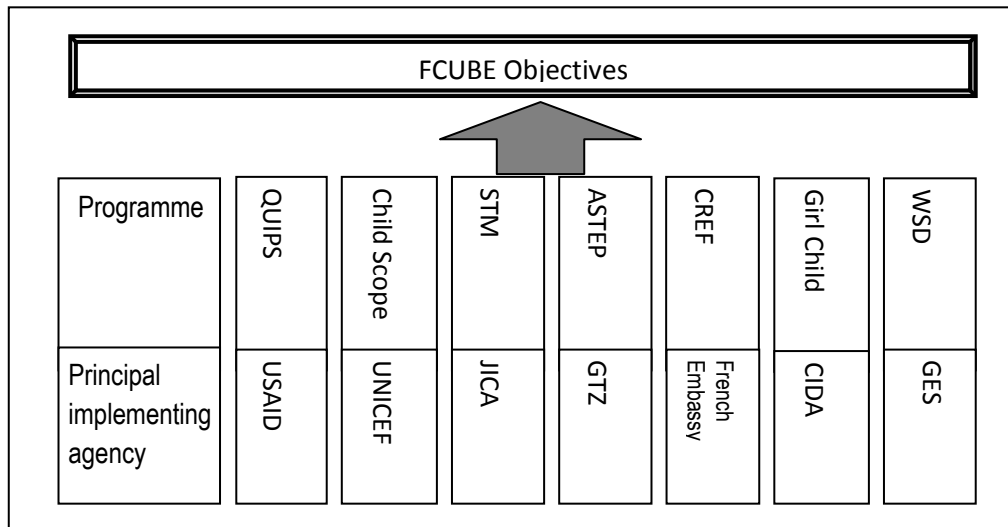
Note: see the list of acronyms on page xii for full names of organisations and projects. Source: the author.

While DFID applied its funding on a subsector-wide basis, the other organisations adopted project-type initiatives. Thus, WSD was justly chosen for this study. For the purposes of a comparison with DFID, JICA was naturally considered to be a reasonable choice, given that the motive behind this study was to make a contribution to the question of aid effectiveness, especially of Japanese aid to Africa.

Nevertheless, I eventually decided against such a comparison. One of the reasons was the different project phases WSD and the Science, Technology and Mathematics (STM) project supported by JICA were in at the time of my fieldwork: while ESSP – under which WSD was implemented – had been completed, STM was still in progress. As the objective of this study was to explore education actors' realities through their own accounts, I was not certain how this temporal gap would affect their perceptions and, I thought it might be unfair to compare a completed programme with an ongoing one.

Another reason was that I doubted that the JICA Ghana office would be willing to share information with an external student researcher, especially those details that concerned an ongoing programme. This was not because I was a complete outsider as far as

JICA was concerned; on the contrary, my concern was rooted in the very fact that I had had a glimpse that the organisation was not always open to constructive criticism.[25]

Moreover, I was also concerned that my previous relationship with JICA would inevitably plunge me into the micro politics of the Ghana office. Although this might have been an interesting area to explore, I did not wish to expend my energy on matters other than data collection during the fieldwork. Thus, for all the above reasons, I chose not to include JICA in my study.

In considering a project for comparison with WSD, QUIPS seemed the most relevant in terms of its scale and comprehensive approach to the improvement of education. Moreover, the fact that both DFID and USAID were bilateral donor agencies was another reason for selecting QUIPS.

Thus, WSD and QUIPS were chosen as case studies for my exploration of the views of education actors on aid absorption because they exemplified different approaches to education development. I intended to investigate WSD and QUIPS separately before making a comparison. Therefore, I designed my programme of research as a multiple-case study of international assistance to education. The reasons for this are explained more fully in the next section.

4.3.2 The Case Study

The definition of 'case study' is contentious. Indeed, "while the literature is replete with reference to case studies and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what a case study is" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 p.360). In other words, "every social scientific study is a case study or can be conceived as a case study, often from a variety of viewpoints, and at a minimum, every study is a case study" (Ragin, 1992a p.2).

This is probably because a case study is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and place (Ragin, 1992a). Social inquiry in general is conducted within a conceptually, geographically or temporally defined framework, and therefore in one sense all social research can be regarded as case study (Cronbach, 1982). Clearly the

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[25] In fact, when I paid a visit to the JICA Ghana office, the then country representative told me that he had recently declined two requests from students at UK universities for permission to conduct studies of JICA projects.

term 'case study' has a range of meanings (Bassey, 1999 p.27); nevertheless, the case study has some distinctive features and procedures to follow.

Yin states that the case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (1994 p.13).

Yin's emphasis on contemporaneousness is in accordance with the view of Adelman et al., who argue that the case study is "the study of an instance in action" (1980 p.49). Perhaps because of this contemporaneousness, the method of inquiry the case study most readily lends itself to is observation (Cohen et al., 2000). However, it is not limited to observation. In fact, different writers suggest the potential of using multiple data collection methods and a variety of sources of data as one of the strengths of the case study approach (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Sturman, 1994; Yin, 1994).

This suggestion was useful to my research design, as my study sought to learn the views of individual actors about events that had taken place in the past. Consequently, it would not have been appropriate to make observation my main data collection method.

For this reason, I sought various data sources in order to portray what it was like to be in a particular situation or capture reality at close quarters, by means of a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Stake, 1994 p.242) of the actors' actual experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation. Looking at a phenomenon, education issue, or 'instance' from different angles relates to the triangulation technique, which is described in more detail later in this chapter.

Another feature of the case study is that it allows "interpretation in context" (Cronbach, 1975 cited in Merriam, 1988 p.10), which refers to the notion that data collection from and interpretation of a case both involve investigation of context; the case may be context-specific and holistic yet still lend itself to rigorous interpretation. By focusing on a particular 'case', one may study a phenomenon or series of issues in depth.

The case study recognises the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social truths. By carefully attending to social situations, the case study can reveal something of the discrepancy or conflict between viewpoints held by the participants (Cohen et al., 2000 p.184). Therefore, it is important for events and situations to be allowed to speak for

themselves rather than simply to be interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2000 p.182). Moreover, the choice of case and the unit of analysis affect the outcome of the study.

Defining 'a case' is problematic. This is largely because a case can be any one (or a combination) of a phenomenon, a country, a group or an individual (Yin, 1994), and, therefore, the term 'case' is used in many different ways. Definition also depends on the conceptualisation of the case. For example, cases can be regarded as empirically observable units or they can be conceived as theoretically constructed products (Ragin and Becker, 1992). The answers to the question "what is a case" are indeed diverse (Ragin, 1992b p.217; Ragin and Becker, 1992). Nevertheless, what this question actually asks is "what is this a case of" (Ragin, 1992a p.6) or, alternatively, "what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study" (Patton, 1990 p.229).

Accordingly, my overarching case, which I wished to explore and be able to draw some conclusions about at the end of the study, is international assistance to education development. Considering a country to be an appropriate delimitation of a case, I chose Ghana as a context because of its unique experience of foreign aid. I chose the perceptions of Ghanaian education personnel because their views are not heard enough. I chose the QUIPS and WSD programmes for their marked differences from each other.

A case comprises subcases that exist at different levels. Ultimately, WSD and QUIPS were cases of international assistance to education development, and, as such, consisted of several elements, such as context and components (Merriam, 1988 p.46; Yin, 1994 pp.21-5). At a more practical level, a decision had to be made about "what groups to observe…[and] when to observe them" (Burgess 1982 cited in Merriam, 1988 p.47). In other words, it was necessary to select some research sites. Thus, my units of analysis are described in the next section.

4.3.3   Units of Analysis and Multilevel Analysis

This thesis documents a case study of international assistance to education development. I explored the QUIPS and WSD programmes in order to illuminate the subject of aid absorption in the education sector. My strategy was the use of embedded multiple-case designs with various units of analysis at different levels.

By adopting multilevel analysis, researchers are expected to provide a more comprehensive and balanced picture of education phenomena (Bray and Thomas, 1995). Thus, in exploring the perceptions of education actors, the study basically conducted its analysis on three planes, whereby the macro level concerns the country as a whole, the meso level the district, and the micro level the school.

On the macro level, the study addressed the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the GES national headquarters. With regard to the meso and micro levels, due to the extensive time requirement for a rigorous case study at district and school levels, two districts only were selected. In each district, six schools were chosen with which to conduct in-depth interviews (selection procedures are discussed in detail in sections 4.4.3 and 4.4.4). My case study is summarised in table 4-2 below.

Table 4-1 Research design of case study

Purpose	To explore education actors' perceptions of international assistance		
First level of Case	International assistance to education development		
Second level of Case	WSD and QUIPS		
Level of analysis	Macro/national	Meso/district	Micro/school
Site	MoE and GES headquarters	Twifu Henmang, Lower Denkyira District	6 primary schools
		Upper Denkyira District	6 primary schools
Actors	HQ officials	District education officials	Head teachers Teachers SMC*

* SMC = school management committee.

Source: the author.

As illustrated in the table, the purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of international assistance. Two divergent cases – WSD and QUIPS – were analysed in order to attempt to draw some conclusions around the themes of aid absorption, and to conduct a cross-case analysis of perceptions of international assistance.

The WSD and QUIPS cases were each individually investigated before analysing their combined implications. This was conducted from the viewpoint of Ghanaian actors on three levels, the voices of whom were represented through personal experience of working on the FCUBE programme. Exploring the themes through firsthand accounts was invaluable, since their views were not only formed by their own experiences of donor-funded programmes, but they also behaved and reacted according to their own subjective understanding of reality.

As it explores perceptions, I consider the present study to be an intrinsic case study that may be classified within Stake's typology (1995; 2000). According to Stake (2000 p.439), with an intrinsic case study, the researcher does not avoid generalisation; i.e. he or she extrapolates the findings and draws parallels between potential developments in his or her case in the future and other situations.

Moreover, this type of research is naturalistic, its objective is to generate information and the intention is to provide a wealth of detail such that the uniqueness and individuality of each case can be represented. However, it may still be appropriate to extend an extrapolation of findings to other districts in the same region or even to other countries (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp.201-2).

I assumed that the specific context would strongly influence the implementation of programmes and consequently the result of the study. Having said this, as both USAID and DFID work in many regions of the world, I also expected the outcomes of Ghana's experience to cut across other sites and other countries. For this reason, I hope that this study has been able to draw lessons, implications and insights from approaches to aid that are also relevant to other national contexts.

Having laid out the theoretical framework of this study, the following section outlines my research methods.

4.4   Research Methods

The fieldwork was conducted from June 2005 to January 2006. A pilot was carried out in Greater Accra Region in July 2005; and the main data collection was conducted during the following October and November in two districts in Central Region, where a total of 12 primary schools were visited. This section describes the data collection processes.

4.4.1   Preliminary Pilot Phase

The pilot was conducted in Akwapeam South district, Greater Accra Region, to which I could commute from Accra every day. A couple of weeks beforehand, I made a preliminary visit to the District Education Office (DEO) to obtain permission from the

director and introduce myself to the district education authorities as a courtesy before conducting my research in their district.

Initially, I had intended to send a letter of introduction written by the director general to the district director, but GES HQ officials had warned me that a letter might not arrive at the DEO at all, or if it did, it could take two to three months; or else the director might just put the letter aside even if it arrived in time. Therefore, they suggested that I deliver the letter myself. A former WSD zonal coordinator accompanied me on this preliminary visit.

Having obtained permission to conduct my study from the director, a DEO official took us around the schools I wished to visit and introduced me to the head teachers. This preliminary visit was very useful because, in addition to serving the initial purpose, it helped me lessen my anxiety about collecting data in an unfamiliar location. Moreover, seeing the WSD zonal coordinator who accompanied me behaving and talking in this particular social and education setting reminded me of the local protocols I should bear in mind.

I spent the first couple of days conducting interviews at the DEO and District Assembly (DA).[26] I then allocated two days for each school, spending the first day interviewing teachers and the second day meeting SMC (school management committee) representatives. After this, I continued conducting interviews with district education officials.

I visited three schools during the pilot phase. They were former QUIPS pilot schools (2002–04) as well as being supported by WSD. When WSD started in 1998, 20 schools in each district were chosen as pilot schools; and then gradually over the years, all primary schools throughout the country had been incorporated into the WSD programme. Therefore, in theory, all QUIPS schools also fell under the WSD programme.

I had therefore assumed that the head teachers, teachers and SMC representatives could share their experiences of both WSD and QUIPS with me. However, this

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[26] The District Assembly was formerly called the District Council. Indeed, the terms 'council' and 'assembly' were generally used interchangeably. In this thesis, 'District Assembly' is principally used other than in direct quotations.

assumption did not turn out to reflect the reality. My interviewees all readily talked about their QUIPS experiences, but they had little to say about WSD. In fact, none of the SMC members had ever heard of WSD, and of the 12 teachers interviewed, only two were familiar with the programme, having been transferred from WSD initial pilot schools.

One of the three head teachers knew nothing of WSD at all, while the other two said that they had once received an imprest (GBP 20) in order to organise school based in-service training as a part of a WSD initiative; but they did not have anything particular to tell me about that. This was all the information I got about WSD from the school visits. It seemed that the QUIPS experience was so intense that it had eclipsed their memories of WSD (if there had been any in the first place).

I realised that things might have been different if I had visited the initial WSD pilot schools. My original plan had been to collect information on both WSD and QUIPS by visiting QUIPS pilot schools, which automatically fell under the WSD programme as well. However, I realised that I would not obtain a balanced impression if I attempted to make a comparison between the two programmes by only visiting the QUIPS pilot schools. Thus, I decided to include the initial WSD pilot schools.

4.4.2 Sampling

This section explains the sampling selection: how case study districts were chosen and how a sample was drawn based on the findings of the preliminary pilot study.

4.4.2.1 *Selection of Districts*

The current education administrative structure consisted of the central GES, 10 Regional Education Offices (REOs) and 138 DEOs. Under the decentralisation policy, the role of the REO was limited to a monitoring capacity, while the DEO was the key implementation unit and the main link between the central GES and the schools. Accordingly, the education budget was drawn up and spent by the DEO. For this reason, I considered the district to be a suitable basis. Two districts were selected according to a number of criteria.

GES district capacity rating criteria

First, I referred to the GES district rating assessment, which classified all 138 districts into three categories – 'ready', 'partially ready' and 'non-ready – based on the financial

and administrative capacity of the district, This system had been introduced by the WSD programme. According to the rating, funds for 'ready' districts were released directly to the DEO from the GES financial controller; while funds for 'partially ready' and 'non-ready' districts were released through their REOs.

I selected districts from the above different rating categories. This tended not to confine data to a particular type of district and would enable me to gain a wider impression of how variations in administrative capacity and different procedures could affect programme implementation, and vice versa.

Active involvement in education activities

The second criterion was that a minimum number of Ghanaian officials had to be actively involved in education activities. The district in which there were very few education activities taking place could also be very intriguing to study; but obviously, the greater the number of individuals involved and the more raw data available, the more convincing the picture of education actors' views of aid and its absorption would be.

Geographical accessibility and mobility

Thirdly, the geographical accessibility of Accra from each case study district and the probability of adequate public transport within the district were taken into consideration. QUIPS project personnel used four-wheel drive vehicles to travel from school to school. However, if all three QUIPS schools had been in very isolated locations, I would have had difficulty in getting around. The nature of this study did not suit a prolonged stay in any single environment, and thus the accessibility by road to the site – ideally by public transport – was taken into account.

QUIPS cohort

The first cohort of the QUIPS programme was launched in 1998 and the last one (cohort 6) concluded its work in 2004 (Academy for Educational Development, n/a). A QUIPS team worked exclusively with three pilot schools per district for two years and then moved on to other districts. Of the six cohorts, it seemed sensible to concentrate on the latter ones because of the vividness of the experience and the high possibility of the presence of the staff who had experienced QUIPS in the DEO and schools.

Although it would have been very interesting to listen to actors' talking about a project several years after its completion, there would have been a risk of failing to get

sufficient information due to the high turnover of staff. I also considered selecting cohorts from different districts. As sampling for variability in year of project inception provides a test of the process of change (Miles and Huberman, 1994), this would hopefully give me a more comprehensive impression of how complex programmes and practices were implemented and how they varied under varying conditions and the different school timetables according to district.

QUIPS final evaluation sample districts

The final evaluation of the QUIPS programme had taken place just before my arrival in Ghana. For the purposes of this, six districts were selected as samples: two in the South, two in the Middle and two in the North. USAID kindly agreed to show me the raw data they had gathered as a basis of the evaluation. Although the QUIPS evaluation team had looked at the issues from different angles to those of my study, I judged that their rich data would be most useful for the deepening of my analysis. For this reason, the QUIPS evaluation sampling districts were taken seriously into consideration.

Ease of access to staff

As Spradley (1980) emphasises, the need to select for the degree of access that potential informants provide, I considered ease of access to staff to be a crucial factor in selecting my case districts. After having identified the districts I thought would be potentially suitable for a detailed study, I was ready to conduct my initial interviews.

I had decided that I might not be able to proceed if I met with aversion to my research at DEO director level, or if various impediments prevented me from conducting further interviews. Nevertheless, due to logistical difficulties, I was unable to enquire into the degree of amenability at the DEO in advance.

In truth, my Ghanaian colleagues – even the director general – suggested that I go straight to the DEO and start gathering data immediately. GES HQ officials were confident that the DEO would welcome me without my having informed the director of my arrival in advance because of the letter of introduction I had obtained from the director general and other HQ authorities.

The GES staff also told me that if the director was not happy with my presence, I should suspect that they had something to hide at the DEO. In the end, I took the risk of acting on their suggestions. I made one last check that the district directors were not

having a meeting at GES HQ at the time of my proposed fieldwork, and set off to conduct my district data collection.

As a result, one of the district education directors was very cooperative, regarding my presence as an opportunity to have a foreigner see the efforts of his office to improve the state of education in the district. Consequently, all the staff were very helpful and the atmosphere was very welcoming.

On the other hand, my experience at the second DEO turned out to be somewhat problematic. The Director was initially suspicious of my motives for collecting data in her district, and seemed to suspect me of having a hidden agenda assigned by GES HQ. Therefore, I had to spend a lot of time explaining my study and forming a relationship with the Director.

However, all her staff – including the assistant directors and the chief account – were very cooperative from the very beginning and eager to talk about what was going on in the DEO. Nevertheless, there was an unmistakable tension in the office. Although the director's scrutinising gaze made me uneasy at first, I did not consider this to be an obstacle, but rather a rare chance to enrich the study (there is a detailed account of my interactions in the office in chapter 6).

Having considered all these criteria in close consultation with GES officials – particularly in the Basic Education Division and the Teacher Education Division – I chose Twifu Henmang Lower Denkyira district (hereafter, Lower Denkyira for short) and Upper Denkyira district, in Central Region, as districts to study. A summary of the two districts is shown in table 4-3.

Table 4-2 State of case study districts

District	Location	GES Rating*	QUIPS Cohort
Twifu Henmang Lower Denkyira	Central Region 4 hours' drive from Accra	Partially ready	Cohort 4 2000–2002
Upper Denkyira	Central Region 7 hours' drive from Accra	Non-ready	Cohort 6 2002–2004

* District rating as of October 2005.

4.4.2.2   Selection of Schools

It is ultimately schools that education services are delivered to. Thus, a total of 12 (6 QUIPS and 6 WSD) schools from the 2 districts were selected for in-depth interviews. I

utilised a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling – a form of non-probability sampling, by which the researcher chooses "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002 p.230). Indeed, what matters most is not representativeness but the particularity of the sample from which the researcher can learn most.

The selection of QUIPS schools was straightforward, as all of its pilot schools were to be included in the study. The WSD schools were handpicked based on the following factors:

- Among the 20 initial WSD pilot schools
- Presence of the head teacher (i.e. the same head teacher in post since the introduction of WSD)
- Geographical location (i.e. urban/rural, distance from DEO, access from main road, and availability/non-availability of public transport)

The number of schools that fulfilled the first two criteria was surprisingly limited. Before considering the location, the number was already narrowed down to between three and five schools, mostly in towns, which were preferable to teachers.

In order to grasp the wider picture of the state of WSD schools in both rural and urban location, I also had to consider the WSD pilot schools with relatively newly appointed head teachers and/or non-initial pilot schools. District officials – especially the head teachers' advisor, the deputy director (supervision) and the circuit supervisors – helped in the selection process by providing key information and giving their views on school performance. In fact, I relied heavily on them in making the selection, as there were no systematic school records of, for example, when a current head teacher had taken up his or her posting.

Once the schools had been selected, I contacted the head teachers to arrange to visit them. In Lower Denkyira district, I managed to personally meet all the head teachers before the schools visits, either at the DEO or during my preliminary visits to their schools. In Upper Denkyira district, I was able to meet those attending a three-day district in-service training course for science and mathematics teachers, and I sent messages to their head teachers with them.

Although some officials had suggested that I simply go to a school and start interviewing the teachers without informing them of my arrival in advance so that I

could see what was really going on, I insisted on contacting the head teachers beforehand. This was because I was aware from previous experience that the head teacher might not only arrive late, but could possibly not be in school at all if I had not informed him or her of my visit in advance. There was even less chance of meeting with SMC representatives without prior notice.

Moreover, the teachers were only available in the mornings as they dashed off to their other jobs as soon as school finished at 1.30 p.m., so I did not want to end up wandering about the school just waiting for the arrival of the head and the other teachers. I also wanted to arrange to visit on community taboo days[27] so that I could avoid disturbing SMC work as much as possible. As a result, all the head teachers were informed of my arrival in advance and the visits were scheduled for taboo days.

4.4.2.3   *Selection of Individuals*

In order to explore various actors' perceptions of how aid funds were spent at the three different levels, interviewees were selected by a combination of purposive and snowball sampling strategies. Interviews with SMC representatives took the form of group discussion, while other interviews were conducted individually.

At the national level, I interviewed as many GES HQ officials and former personnel of the WSD and/or QUIPS programmes as I could locate. Initially I had assumed that MoE officials would be interesting to interview, but it turned out that they did not have much say about either WSD or QUIPS. Thus, only a couple of ministry officials in charge of planning and finance were interviewed, although I did have informal discussions with other ministry personnel.

At the district level, DEO officials who worked for WSD and/or QUIPS were interviewed. Planning officers at the district assembly were also interviewed, as QUIPS released funds for a construction project through the former.

At the school level, the following people were interviewed:
- Head teachers
- Representatives of the SMC
- Teachers (if applicable)

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[27] Days off for farming.

Teachers at the QUIPS schools were only interviewed if they had been in post at the time of QUIPS intervention. The sampling of SMC representatives was entrusted to the head teacher. When I paid a contact visit, I asked the head teacher to gather three or four SMC representatives who played an active part in school management. In some schools, all the SMC members got together to meet me; while in others none of them showed up.

In addition to the interviews at these three main levels, I also sampled as many donor personnel as circumstances permitted. A summary of sampled individuals is shown in Table 4-4.

Table 4-3 Interview Samples

Level	Number of informants		
National	MoE		2
	GES		14
District	DEO		27
	District Assembly		2
School	Head teachers	WSD	6
		QUIPS	6
	Teachers	WSD	5
		QUIPS	5
	SMC	WSD	23
		QUIPS	28
Total			118

Having explained the sampling procedure, I will now move on to discuss my investigation strategy.

4.4.3   Data Collection Methods

The qualitative researcher is able to use a variety of techniques for gathering information (Cohen et al., 2000), especially when employing a case study approach, whose strength lies in the use of multiple data collection methods and a variety of data sources (Merriam, 1988). In the present study, qualitative interviews and documentary analysis were used as indispensable techniques for this type of investigation. This section briefly explains the strengths and weaknesses of each method and how the study deployed these techniques for collecting field data.

4.4.3.1   Interviews

> Qualitative interviewing is a great adventure; every step of an interview brings new information and opens windows into the experiences of the people you meet. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews, you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate. Through what you hear and learn, you can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across time, class, race, sex, and geographical divisions (Rubin and Rubin, 1995 p.1).

An interview involves direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. On the one hand, this enables the collection of in-depth data; but on the other hand, it may involve subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2000). However, this very subjectivity is an advantage in interpretive research, which aims to investigate subjective understandings of the world. Moreover, through interaction "the interviewer and interviewee actively construct some version of the world" (Silverman, 1995 p.90).

In fact, the interview is not exclusively either subjective or objective; it is intersubjective (Laing, 1967 p.66). As the title of Kvale's (1996) work *InterView* suggests, the interview provides an opportunity for the interviewer and the interviewee "to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (Cohen et al., 2000 p.267). Indeed, after one interview, my interviewee commented:

> It has been a very interesting conversation with you because I think in the course of conversation it has given me the time to reflect on what we have done. This is a good opportunity for me to reflect (July 2005, an interviewee).

There are various types of interview, which may be located on a continuum depending on the degree of structure, from the highly structured interview at one end to the unstructured conversational interview at the other, according to the purposes of the interview (Cohen et al., 2000). The highly structured interview can generate quantitative data, which facilitates simple statistical analysis but is not flexible enough to be adjusted to individual circumstances. Conversely, the unstructured interview allows situational and qualitative data collection, although the data obtained tend to be less systematic and lack comparability (Cohen et al., 2000; May, 2002; Patton, 1990).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the structured interview is useful when the researcher is aware of what she does not know and is therefore in a position to frame questions that will supply the required information; whereas the unstructured interview

is useful when the researcher is not aware of what she does not know and must therefore rely on the respondent to tell her.

After considering these strengths and weaknesses, I chose a semi-structured interview or an "interview guide approach" (Patton, 2002 p.349) to my data collection. In the interview guide approach, an interview schedule is prepared in advance, but it is sufficiently open-ended to enable the contents to be re-ordered; the sequence and wording of the questions to be decided on the spot; digressions and expansions to be made; new avenues to be included; and further probing to be undertaken. Thus, open-ended questions offer more flexibility and the freedom to construct conversations based on the context while maintaining a question framework that allows comparison between responses and cases.

If there are varied ways of asking a question, it follows there will be several ways in which it may be answered. Based on a semi-structured open-ended interview framework prepared in advance, I asked my questions with the aim of eliciting an "unstructured response" (Tuckman, 1972), which ensured that the respondent had the freedom to give his or her own answer as fully as he or she chose rather than being constrained in some way by the nature of the question.

Although the chief disadvantage of the unstructured response concerns the matter of quantification, coding and analysis (Cohen et al., 2000), more importantly, flexibility of response can best explore the answers that the researcher is unaware of and allows events and situations to speak for themselves; thus, this fits my research design.

Interviews can take place with individuals or a group of people. The group interview is particularly useful where a group of people have been working together for some time and/or with a common purpose (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987). This suited the circumstances of my interviews with SMCs. Moreover, the use of a group setting allows interaction between the members, yielding a wide range of responses (Cohen et al., 2000), and thus the data collected are arguably less biased (Patton, 2002).

On the more practical side, group interviews can be a low-cost and rapid method of collecting people's views and opinions. Interviewees can be more relaxed in a group than in a one-to-one situation. Thus, in order to mitigate SMC representatives' possible intimidation in being interviewed by a foreigner (and taking into account the limited time

available for my fieldwork), I decided to conduct group interviews instead of individual sessions with SMC representatives.

The main purpose of the interview with regard to this study was to collect data from participants on their perceptions of (1) the mechanism for delivering aid funds; (2) its contribution; (3) its efficiency; and (4) the constraints of utilising aid funds. Standard interview questions were developed for each category, depending on the nature of the interviewee's involvement in WSD and/or QUIPS (a sample of the interview guides is included in appendix 2).

4.4.3.2   Document Collection

Given the limited time and resources for my study, documents were utilised to supplement the data collected from the interviews. Particularly at the national level, policy documents contain the official views of the government and in normal circumstances, it is easier to obtain a policy document than to interview high-ranking MoE officials.

Documents may include any written or recorded material produced before the study at hand that constitute a stable source of data and can provide wide coverage at relatively low cost (Merriam, 1988). Moreover, documents are deemed to be "unobtrusive" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 p.199) because they are typically composed of data collected by another person and, more importantly, are not the products of the present study (Yin, 1994). However, due to the fact that they are not prepared especially for the study, the data may lack continuity and may not meet the needs of the research (Merriam, 1988).

Nevertheless, documents help us to explore societies because they are "media through which social power is expressed" (May, 2002 p.164). This means that by carefully examining what is included and what is left out of a policy document, we gain an insight into both explicit and implicit government intentions.

In this respect, newspapers are also a good source of information, but their content necessitates careful treatment as they have relatively low credibility compared to official documents.

Thus, I expected to supplement the data collected through my interviews with the contents of various documents, supporting and sometimes even contradicting what interviewees told me.

4.4.4 Data Collection Process

Based on the discussion in the previous section, the following illustrates the data collection process during my fieldwork.

4.4.4.1 Interviews

At the central level, the interview was held at the participant's office, except in one case in which we met at the interviewee's residence as she was retired. All interviews were conducted in English and, in most cases, tape-recorded and transcribed.

At the district level, all interviews were held at the workplace and conducted in English; most of them were tape-recorded and transcribed.

At the school level, interviews with head teachers and their staff were held either in a classroom or in the head's office, and conducted in English. Some interviews were tape-recorded if circumstances allowed; that is, pupils were sometimes so curious that they came and clamoured around trying to see what was going on, and school compounds were often too noisy to use a tape recorder. Moreover, in addition to the practical difficulty of recording the interviews, I was told by the very first interviewee at the pilot that she would not allow me to use a tape recorder, and neither would the other teachers.

This comment made me aware how stressful the interview could be for the interviewee and thereafter, I made a point of asking permission to record the conversation. If the participant showed any sign of nervousness about being interviewed, I did not even ask. However, I tried to explain sincerely why I wished to record our conversation and how helpful it would be for me as I was not a native speaker of English; most interviewees were then happy to grant my request.

Group interviews with SMC representatives were held in the school compound, mostly either in the head teacher's office or a classroom, and conducted in English. Unlike the other interviews, a tape recorder was never used. This was partially because the microphone was not sensitive enough to capture voices from all directions unless I

passed the tape recorder from speaker to speaker, which not only distracted their attention but also hampered my note taking. It was also because I sensed that they were more intimidated in front of a tape recorder.

Moreover, as one of the characteristics of the group interview, my questions often triggered a discussion between the participants. However, most of these conversations were conducted in the local language and I would not have been able to listen to this part of the tape later on unless I employed an interpreter. In weighing up the pros and cons, I thus decided not to tape-record interviews with the SMC representatives.

My district and school visits were the most enlightening and valuable aspects of the research. If I was not going to a school, I usually arrived at the DEO before 8.00 a.m. and spent the whole day in the office, holding meetings from formal to very informal interviews. I soon found mentors in both DEOs who had long and rich experience of district education, and I might hurry to them at any time to ask about some aspect of their jurisdiction, which was of tremendous help to my understanding.

During school visits, I usually arrived at school before morning assembly, which was supposed to start at about 8.15 a.m. Because I was not certain about the reliability of public transport, I often set off before dawn and consequently arrived in the village at 6.30 a.m. on several occasions.

On such occasions, the villagers – including SMC members – gathered around me, probably out of curiosity; but the SMC representatives kindly arrange to be interviewed at such an early hour. In many cases, I started interviewing SMC representatives first so that they could get on with their work.

Visiting the 12 schools provided me with a clear idea of how they spent their external funding, and how they perceived the experience of doing so. Indeed, there was not a single school in which I did not discover something new; each school was different.

None of the interviews were conducted with an assistant or interpreter, which meant that I did not have anybody with whom to share the exact moment of the interview except the interviewee him or herself.

On one occasion, the responsible circuit supervisor accompanied me to the school; but he left the room when I was about to start the interview, although I had not asked him

to do so, and I appreciated his sensitivity. Afterwards, we talked about our school visit for a very long time. This exchange of opinion was an exhilarating experience and a very useful reflection on what I had learnt and seen at the school. I then realised that having somebody – possibly an assistant – to share the experience could have given me a different point of view and further insight, which might have enhanced the quality of my research.

4.4.4.2   *Documents*

In many developing countries, it is very difficult to obtain official documents such as policy papers and records of statistics, laws and registrations; worse still, sometimes they do not exist at all. Unfortunately, the education sector in Ghana is no exception. The following is an account of where and how I gained access to policy papers, implementation papers and other relevant materials.

In my quest for education documents – in particular, records of policy and its implementation papers – the first place I went to was the headquarters of the MoE/GES. However, the policy documents were not kept systematically at the HQ; worse still, they were scattered across different offices.[28]

There was a documentation centre at the ministry that had been commissioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2004, so things were better than they had previously been; or at least there was somewhere to look now, although the documents had been merely stacked in piles and most of them dated back to before 2000.

Having spent some time with me while I was digging into mountains of documents every day, a librarian shared her frustration with me in how the various departments of the MoE and GES ignored her requests to provide copies of the paperwork their departments produced. She added that she had no idea what kinds of documents were produced by individual sections or when they were written.

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[28] With regard to the lack of a systematic filing system, I witnessed how documents were treated lightly and easily scattered. When the WSD office at GES HQ was closed, boxes of documents were removed to anywhere there was space. Some were kept in a GES storage room, some landed up in a corner of corridor, and some were taken to one of the GES annexes outside Accra; and nobody knew the location of any of them.

Therefore, the next place I decided to look for documents was in each department of the MoE and GES, especially those that played a central role in the implementation of the FCUBE programme. Once I targeted a particular person, presuming that this person must have kept some paperwork somewhere with him or her, I visited his or her office repeatedly to enquire about the availability of documents and to constantly remind them how earnest I was. By employing this strategy, I sometimes happened to get what I wanted.

The other potential source of documents was the offices of the donor agencies. To some extent I had expected that paperwork would not be well kept on the Ghanaian side, yet I had naively assumed that DFID and USAID would have properly maintained filing systems.

This assumption turned out to be half right. Both DFID and USAID were very cooperative and openly shared whatever information I asked for. In fact, both donors invited me to several meetings. USAID even gave me access to the raw data it had collected for the QUIPS final evaluation report. However, I found that DFID had not kept its old documents due to a move of office.

I thus had to look into other donor agencies, including JICA and UNICEF. The fact that the MoE and GES had poorly maintained files was to some extent a given, but a situation in which documents were not properly maintained on the donors' side seemed a bit surprising.

At the district level, some relevant documents – particularly district education budget plans – had been gathered at the DEO. However, again, the records were poorly maintained.

In addition to official documents, reflecting the magnitude of public concern about education in Ghana, newspapers carried reports and features on education matters nearly every day. Such articles in English newspapers (e.g. The Ghanaian Times, The Chronicle, The Daily Graphic) were cut out for analysis.

4.4.5   Data: Analysis

This section explains the process of data analysis and its role in my case study.

4.4.5.1 Analytical Strategy

As explained in section 4.3, this study is drawn from case studies of WSD and QUIPS, employing various components and multilevel analysis of each case. Yin (2003) suggests two ways of analysing case study material: to follow theoretical propositions, or to use a description as the starting point. Such a choice is related to the question 'what is this a case of' (see section 4.3).

The diagram in the next page illustrates the analytical strategy for the study. It shows the conceptual structure of the scheme and does not include all the processes and components. The initial analysis was conducted level by level in order to develop the case studies of WSD and QUIPS by means of multilevel analysis. At this stage, the analysis was largely descriptive. However, themes emerging from the cases were then developed into a theoretical analysis to form a case study of perceptions of international assistance.

Figure 4-2 Analytical strategy
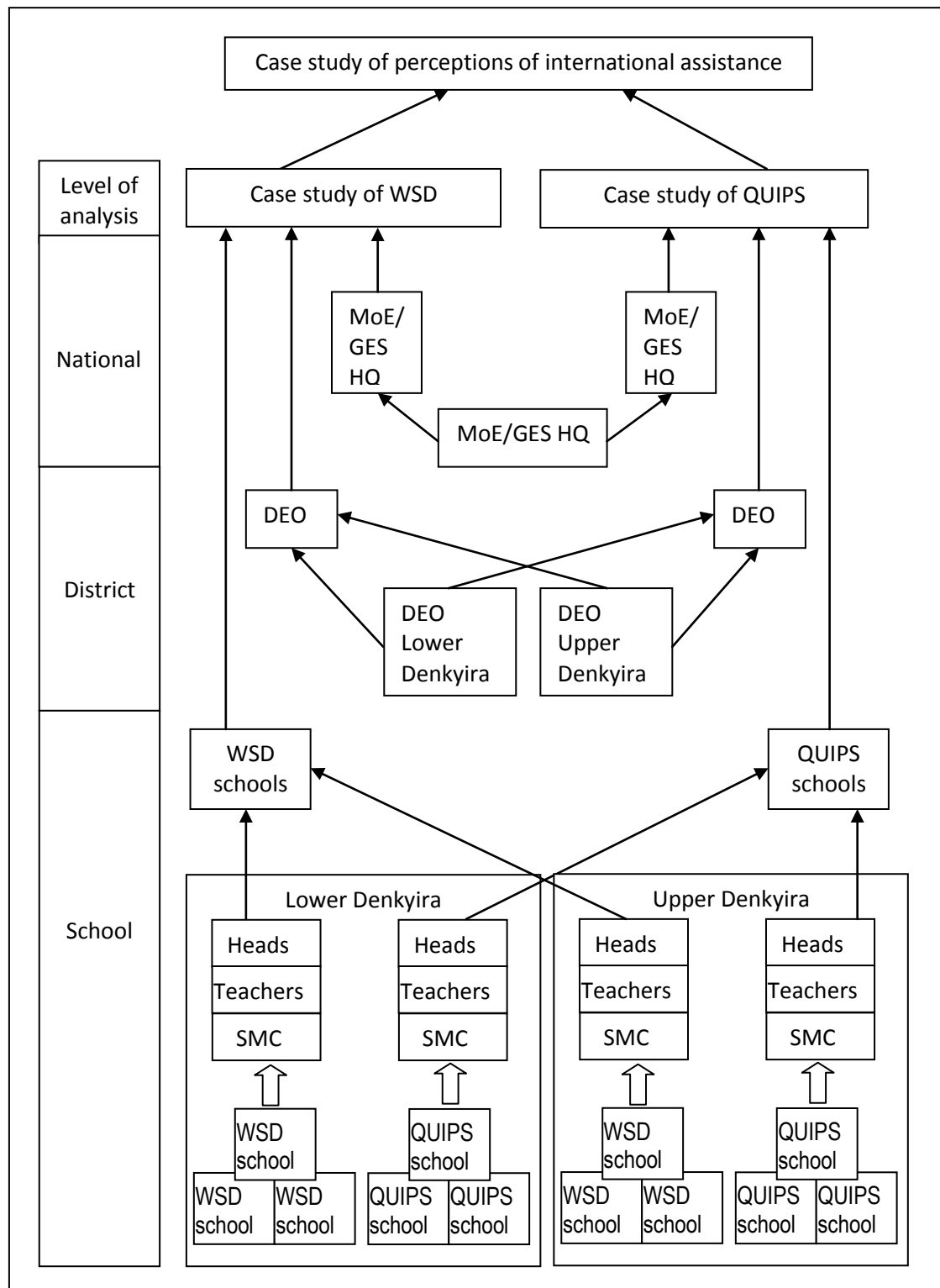
Source: adapted from Patton 1990 p.385 and 2002 p.448.

It is difficult to distinguish when data collection ended and analysis began. Rather, these processes intermingled, especially when I was in the field. Writing down whatever crossed my mind and pouring out my emotions into my journal every night

was unexpectedly helpful in making sense of what I had done and why I felt a certain way. Bennett (1998 pp.539-40) says that a writer does not always know what he or she knows, and writing is a way of finding out. The journal also helped me to retrieve the feelings I had had in the field when I read it again while writing up the thesis.

The gathering of data seemed like an endless process and I knew that I would never be wholly satisfied, but when I felt that even the marginal headway I was making was diminishing, I knew it was time to call a halt. After almost eight months in Ghana, I felt that I needed to leave the field and start analysing my data more objectively. It was hard, but every researcher needs to decide when enough is enough.

It is sensible to ask myself how I treated the cases in order to reach the conclusions I have come to. I began the study with an open mind about design, in the sense that I did not have a specific hypothesis or any analytical procedures to follow beforehand. Moreover, my conception of the research problem changed over the course of the study, as I let the data (the voices of the interviewees) guide me, although I did have some more general theoretical and methodological convictions. Nevertheless, what emerged from the fieldwork and developed into the central focus of my thesis only became apparent when I was engaged in the final analysis of my material.

4.4.5.2   Analysis of Interviews

The interview transcripts, interview notes and field memos (observation records) are the core data of this study. The interview transcripts were coded and analysed according to the emergent themes. Codes were developed from the key subjects that emerged while reading the transcripts; by attempting to categorise the interview data into a matrix according to key words and groups of informants; and the concepts that were embedded in the research questions.

Typical and recurring issues raised by interviewees were duly recorded, while infrequent and unrepresentative but critical incidents or issues were also taken into account in an attempt to reach as comprehensive an understanding of the case as possible. This procedure was adopted because a subject might only demonstrate a particular behaviour trait once, but that one instance might be too important to be ruled out simply because it did not recur. Indeed, sometimes a single event may occur that offers a hugely important insight into a person or situation; it can be the key to understanding a situation (Flanagan, 1949 cited in Cohen et al., 2000 p.185).

On the subject of selectivity, Nisbet and Watt (1984) warn case study researchers to avoid selective reporting and blandness equally, in that the former means selecting only the evidence that will support a particular conclusion, thereby misrepresenting the whole case; and the latter implies unquestionable acceptance of the views of the respondents, or only including those aspects of the case study on which people concur, rather than areas in which they might disagree (ibid p.91). Bearing these recommendations in mind, this exercise enabled me to capture the emerging critical themes of my study.

The data are categorised into three groups related to the research questions. I present the WSD and QUIPS case studies (as described in chapters 5 and 6) according to these three categorisations at each of three levels of aid implementation. These categorisations are:

- Fungibility
- Impact
- Sustainability

Interviewee Reference Codes

Interviewees are also coded. As these codes are used to identify the sources of quotations in chapters 5 and 6, the system is briefly explained here.

Table 4-4 Interviewee reference code

National level	
Agency/site/status	Code
MoE	M
GES	G
USAID	UQ
USAID/QUIPS/ILP*	UQI
USAID/QUIPS/CSA**	UQC
DFID	DW

District level
Lower Denkyira district   code: L
Upper Denkyira district   code: U

DEO Lower Denkyira	L
District Assembly Lower Denkyira	L/D
DEO Upper Denkyira	U
District Assembly Upper Denkyira	U/D

School level
QUIPS school code: Q
WSD school code: W

SMC	SMC
Head teacher	HT
Teacher	T

* Improving Learning through Partnerships (a sub-programme of QUIPS)
** Community School Alliance (a sub-programme of QUIPS)

Basically, interviewee codes are derived from a combination of agency, site or status letter and the number assigned to each interviewee (or group in the case of an SMC). The letter represents the initial of the first word of the agency, group or individual. For example:

- M1   First MoE official interviewed
- G9   Ninth GES HQ official interviewed
- UQI2   Second ILP project officer interviewed
- L7   Seventh DEO official in Lower Denkyira district interviewed

In the case of a school, a forward slash is used in each code thus: district code/school code/status/number, for example:

- L/W2/HT   Head teacher in the second WSD school visited in Lower Denkyira
- U/Q3/SMC4   Fourth SMC representative in the third QUIPS school visited in Upper Denkyira

A list of interviewees with reference codes is attached in appendix 1.

4.4.5.3   Documentary Analysis

Document analyses were conducted for two main purposes. Firstly, this was in order to contextualise and draw conclusions with regard to the situation of basic education, particularly that subsequent to the introduction of the FCUBE programme. Literature on the development of the education system, and the political, financial and general administrative history forming the socio-cultural and political framework for education development in Ghana was analysed. Education budget data were also analysed to get a picture of the macro financial environment of the education sector.

Secondly, official documents on education policies and administration; appraisal reports; and other research reports of foreign-funded projects – especially anything related to FCUBE, WSD and QUIPS – were examined with special reference to the fungibility, impact and sustainability aspects mentioned in the previous section. This was in order to identify the critical sectoral issues that warranted further investigation, and to cross-check the actuality of events referred to during the interviews.

District–school census data were available for very recent years in education management Information system electronic form. The data were analysed in order to grasp the changes to and current levels of key education indicators, such as the number of schools, pupils and teachers in the two districts under study.

The main documents analysed are as follows:

- QUIPS evaluation reports (midterm and final)
- Education Sector Support Programme evaluation reports
- FCUBE policy, implementation and evaluation reports
- MoE and GES auditing reports (various years)
- District work plans (various years)

4.4.5.4   Synthesis and Writing Up

Data from the national level were disaggregated and reorganised in terms of the aspects of fungibility, impact and sustainability. Meanwhile, data from the district and school levels were analysed using the same protocol. The results from all levels were then combined for analysis in accordance with the three aspects as they related to WSD and QUIPS. The results of the case studies of WSD and QUIPS were then amalgamated in order to analyse the themes that had emerged, i.e. power, trust, ownership, accountability and sustainability.

Through the entire process of describing the case study, I have tried to ensure that my interpretations and analyses appear credible in terms of the data they present as evidence for my conclusions; and that, "the interpretations are presented in a way that allows readers to see why the research reached a certain conclusion based on the available data," (Mehra, 2002) which was collected by various methods: field notes of experiences and shared experiences; journal records; interview transcripts; the observations of others; and documents of various types.

Moreover, as Platt (1992) notes:

> One way, and a rhetorically very effective way, of reaching a conclusion and taking the reader with you to that conclusion is to tell the story of how you arrived there yourself. This almost certainly entails showing that you were initially wrong or were surprised by what you discovered (p.29).

In this section, I have discussed the process I went through in reaching an understanding of and portraying actors' own constructions of reality. Inevitably, the question arises as to how far the story that emerged from the fieldwork can be asserted to be valid and reliable; thus, the issue of validity and reliability is discussed next.

4.5   Validity and Reliability

> All fieldwork done by a single field-worker invites the question, why should we believe it? (Bosk, 1979 p.193)

Validity and reliability are paramount in research; if a piece of research is invalid, it is worthless. Validity is thus a requirement of both quantitative and qualitative research. The qualitative researcher relies – implicitly or explicitly – on a variety of understandings and corresponding types of validity in the process of describing, interpreting, and explaining phenomena of interest (Maxwell, 1992).

The notions of validity and reliability are multifaceted, and different researchers have conceptualised them in many different ways (Angen, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Hammersley, 1987; Mishler, 1990). However, most importantly, the concepts of validity and reliability are defined by the ontological and epistemological paradigm on which the research is based (Kuhn, 1996).

Positivists assume that there is absolute truth independent of human perception and the purpose of research is to find 'the truth'. Therefore, validity means the accuracy of the findings in relation to 'the truth', while reliability is the quality of the research measured by the consistency and replicability of one's findings.

On the other hand, interpretive inquiry rejects such foundationalism and advocates the existence of multiple subjective realities. The role of the researcher is thus to understand the realities constructed by the respondents through a process in which the data are generated and interpreted by means of interaction between the researcher and the respondents. In other words, the researcher "is part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture he/she is trying to understand and represent" (Athleide and Johnson, 1998 p.486).

Owing to the philosophical stance and the nature of this research approach, standardised prescriptions for validity and reliability are not applicable to interpretive research. Therefore, researchers try to establish alternative concepts of validity and reliability in the interpretive and naturalistic paradigm (Angen, 2000; Guba, 1981; Mishler, 1990; Silverman, 1995; Smith, 1984; Wolcott, 1990).

In essence, validity and reliability mean making a judgement about the trustworthiness (Guba, 1981) of the research process and its findings. The basis on which 'trustworthiness' is judged or claimed may be contentious; nevertheless, validity and

reliability are "more about broad principles that must be carefully considered in each specific instance" (Angen, 2000 p.387).

The conceptualisation of validity propounded by Maxwell (1992) is helpful in this respect. In accordance with Wolcott's (1990) critique, he claims that "understanding is a more fundamental concept for qualitative research than validity" (1992 p.281). He goes on to suggest five kinds of validity in qualitative methodology that validate understanding. His typology follows a logical sequence of data analysis and is therefore useful for identifying the aspects to consider in the 'specific instances' referred to in Angen (2000 p.387).

Angen's notions of validity are as follows:

Firstly, descriptive validity: the data accurately records the physical objects, acts, events, behaviours and narratives that took place.

Secondly, interpretive validity: understanding of participants' perspectives is largely (although not necessarily wholly) based on their accounts. Maxwell notes that, "accounts of participants' meanings are never a matter of direct access, but are always constructed by the researcher(s) on the basis of participants' accounts and other evidence" (p.290).

Thirdly, theoretical validity: the application of a certain theory is appropriate for explaining the phenomena. Theoretical validity differs from the first two in the sense that it refers to an explanation or theory of a given phenomenon as well as a description or interpretation of it. The issue is the legitimacy of the concepts that the theory employs as they are applied to the phenomena, and the postulated relationships between the concepts.

Fourthly, generalisability: the theory generated is useful in understanding similar situations within the research setting (internal generalisability), or outside the case parameter (external generalisability). That is, generalisability extends the account of a particular situation or population either to persons, events and settings within the community group or institution under study, or to other communities groups or institutions.

Lastly, evaluative validity: judgement of the phenomena under study is based on an evaluative framework.

As instruments for reflecting on the above aspects, Miles and Huberman (1994 p.263) list 13 techniques for checking the quality of the data and its interpretation. Among them, triangulation was used explicitly in this study.

Triangulation is a research design as well as a strategy for using multiple data collection methods and sources of data, in order to assess and strengthen the validity of the research. According to Patton (1990 p.556), four types of triangulation are possible in qualitative research: (1) methods triangulation; (2) triangulation of sources; (3) analyst triangulation; and (4) theory/perspective triangulation.

In this study, triangulation was used mainly in terms of methods and sources, by deploying two data collection methods (interview and documents) and choosing multiple data sources (GES HQ officials, DEO officials, head teachers, teachers, SMCs, etc).

Validity of understanding in this research was ensured by the following means. For descriptive validity, whenever I engaged in fieldwork, I followed the procedure adopted by Wolcott (1990 p.128); i.e. I tried to record as much as possible, as accurately as possible, and in the respondent's precise words, what I judged to be important in what people did and said.

Based on the information I recorded in this way – and in most cases, was corroborated by the transcript made afterwards – the factual accuracy of interviewee's accounts was triangulated with other respondents' accounts, as well as with documentary records. Finally, information was cross-checked by asking different stakeholders similar questions.

Moreover, I asked for comments from the officers at the GES and DEO on my initial findings. Strictly speaking, this is not actual 'member checking' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 p.219) because, although these education officials were the main components of the case, they could not confirm the picture emerging at the school level; that is, they could only confirmed the voices from the schools according to their own point of view as education officials.

The direct 'member checking' of school voices would have helped to confirm the 'reality' that the officials may not have been able to perceive. Nevertheless, since my findings included some policy issues, I was able to employ the above process to check for descriptive validity. To determine interpretive validity, I tried to be as conscious as possible of any preconceived perceptions and understandings my interviewees or I might have held, although I cannot claim to have eliminated them completely.

Theoretical validity was ensured by comparing the findings of this study with the existing literature on international assistance, and other relevant literature (aid approaches, fungibility, power, accountability, ownership, trust, sustainability).

In terms of generalisability, I did not explicitly attempt to apply the findings of this case study to either the region as a whole or to another country. Rather, both internal and external generalisability are limited to a review of the existing literature.

Having said this, the present study expects its findings to be generalisable to some extent because similar (if not identical) aid approaches and modalities have been adopted to deliver international assistance to other countries. Although Maxwell (1992) claims that evaluative validity is not central to qualitative research, the present study may be seen to have an evaluative aspect because it implicitly aims to evaluate the efficiency of donor-funded programmes and corroborate the assumptions donor agencies or aid approaches make in terms of possible improvements, which, hopefully, other donors and policy-makers might consider.

4.6   Practical and Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were explicitly taken into account in this study, i.e. protocol, consent, anonymity and confidentiality.[29] As a matter of protocol, acquiring permission from the MoE and GES to conduct my research and gain access to their officers was the first thing I attended to after arriving in Ghana. As I was known to most of the officials at the HQ due to my previous work there, I was able to use both formal and informal channels to make appointments with potential informants.

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[29] The study was conducted in accordance to the Sussex School of Education and Social Work Ethics Standards and Guidelines.

In terms of the district case studies, the MoE helped me get assistance from the district assemblies, which were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Local Government, while the GES introduced me to the DEOs. On my arrival at a DEO, I explained my research purposes and research plan to the district director and obtained his or her approval to conduct a study in the district.

With regard to protocol at school level, I asked the head teacher for his or her consent to and cooperation in my research, and then the head teacher arranged all the interviews with SMC representatives and teachers (if applicable). At the beginning of each interview, I explained my position; the purpose of the research and interview; the anonymity of the respondent; and the confidentiality of the data I would collect, and sought his or her consent to proceed.

I gave verbal feedback on my findings to the director of the DEO in the late afternoon after each school visit. In this respect, since the selection of schools was made with the help of the DEO, it was impossible to maintain the anonymity of the school and the informants I had visited. Nevertheless, although I did not obtain any information that seemed to be highly confidential, I omitted from my verbal report to the director some of the incidents I observed and heard about.

Moreover, in writing this thesis, all the names of schools, individuals and groups are referred to by their positions or codes only.

This study relied heavily on the cooperation of all the officials, head teachers, teachers and SMC representatives who made themselves available for interview. When conducting interviews at school, I was most concerned about taking the participants away from their work. I tried to interview SMC representatives as early in the day as possible – or as soon as they met – so that they could return to their farming work in good time afterwards, even though I might have scheduled my visit for a taboo day.

I was also anxious about head teachers and teachers being away from their classrooms, particularly in the small schools in which there were insufficient staff. Inevitably, there were some occasions on which pupils were left unattended in the classroom while their teacher was being interviewed. To mitigate this situation, I asked the teachers if they could give their pupils some work to get on with during our interviews.

I did not offer any financial or material recompense to officers, head teachers, teachers or SMC representatives for cooperating with my research; I thus owe a deep debt of gratitude for information freely given. The most they received was my sincere acknowledgement of their hard work, along with whatever stimulus and encouragement our interviews offered, as many head teachers – particularly those in rural areas – were struggling on their own without much support from either the government or their colleagues.

My visit seemed to mean something in itself. In several schools, I introduced head teachers and SMCs to the grassroots grants scheme facilitated by the Japanese embassy. I felt that QUIPS schools and those in towns were to a certain extent accustomed to writing funding proposals, while their rural colleagues seemed to have no idea how to fill in a blank application form. I thus offered to follow up their applications if they wished. Although communication in the rural areas was often very difficult, some schools contacted me of their own accord and I introduced them to the embassy, and helped them develop their initial plan. However, it seemed that where strong leadership existed, schools took the initiative to contact me and/or apply for funding, but they did not in schools that lacked such leadership.

With regard to the DEO, one of the two districts impressed me by its commitment under the strong leadership of the director in close cooperation with the district assembly, which was not common to see. Therefore, I arranged for a JICA coordinator to discuss the potential posting of volunteer teachers with the director. The first volunteer teacher was posted to the district in 2007.

4.7 Limitations of this Study

There are some aspects of methodology that should be mentioned here as a limitation of the study. They are mostly associated with the collection of information and interview data.

4.7.1 Imbalance of Power and an Unnatural Environment

One concern that arose from the interviews at school level was the issue of the imbalance of power between the researcher and researched, i.e. the interview situation in this study constituted a wholly unnatural environment for school staff, especially

those teaching in very rural areas. In an area where *oboroni* (white people in the Ghanaian language, although I am not literally 'white') were traditionally missionaries and, more recently, expatriate aid workers, people tended to associate them with concepts such as wealth and advanced technology.

Thus, there was a potential perceived power imbalance between the interviewer and the interviewee. Moreover, an *oboroni* researcher asking questions could have affected the way in which the answers were constructed. In such cases, the interviewee might have tried to respond in a way calculated to best meet my expectations or to please me.

Although I think few of them were particularly uncomfortable with this interview setting, some SMC representatives – e.g. a queen mother (local female leader) and a chief – came to the interview in traditional costume. This probably implies that they perceived the interview to be a formal or special occasion.

4.7.2   Reliability of Interview Data

In most cases, the head teacher arranged to get some SMC representatives together in response to my request in advance of my visit. Usually, the head informed the SMC chairperson, and then the chairperson arranged for some SMC members to meet me. At some schools, all the SMC representatives came to meet me, while at others, none of them appeared. Therefore, the representatives I met might have been relatively more enthusiastic and cooperative with the head teacher and/or SMC chairperson.

Furthermore, there were occasions when I could not accurately observe the 'reality' through the interview. For example, on interviewing a group of SMC representatives, they insisted that they visited the school almost every day to make sure it was running smoothly. I could not tell if or to what extent they were exaggerating their own diligence until the head teacher showed me the visitors' record, indicating that none of them had visited the school for nearly four months.

In another school, an habitually tardy teacher claimed that he usually arrived on time and worked hard for his pupils. I could not detect his falsehood during the interview, and did not learn the truth until both SMC representatives and DEO officials told me a different story.

On another occasion, the head teacher explained that all the teachers were consulted in deciding what items the school imprest should be spent on. However, when I asked the head which teacher I could interview next, I was told not to enquire of the staff about the school imprest.

Similarly, in another school, the head teacher explained about the school imprest. Then, when I asked if I could have a look at the record, he claimed that he had lost the key to the drawer in which it was kept that very morning, and could do nothing about it unless he called a carpenter to break it open.

Although I could neither tell if this head had really lost the key, nor why the other did not want me to ask his staff about the school imprest, these incidents aroused my suspicion sufficiently to make me doubt the authenticity of anything they had told me during their interviews.

Furthermore, when officials referred to education statistics back in the mid-1990s, or even in the 2000s, I am sure that they did not intend to provide incorrect information, but the statistics they gave were not necessarily correct either.

Thus, the reliability of interview data needed to be checked through triangulation, using information from other people and factual data (if available). Despite these efforts, it should be noted that there has remained some difficulty in eliminating all intentionally or unintentionally inaccurate information.

4.7.3   The Challenge of Accessing Information from Donors

I should note here one of the most significant limitations of this study. My intention to compare aid approaches between project type assistance and sector-wide type assistance notwithstanding, the analysis did not include the principal donor agencies (DFID and USAID) as a specific level of analysis. Originally, data collection from the donors was included as an explicit source of information, and an analysis of their accounts was planned as a major level of analysis. However, this plan was ultimately dropped at the final writing stage. This was due to the difficulty in collecting sufficient financial information and arranging interviews with donors to enable me to present an in-depth analysis.

My intention in conducting analysis at the donor level was to examine WSD and QUIPS in financial terms. Although both USAID and DFID personnel generously allowed me access to programme information – e.g. USAID-related consultancy firms gave me access to raw data for the QUIPS final evaluation report – a breakdown of each programme budget was unobtainable. This was not for the same reason in the case of each agency, but rather reflected their different modalities. A breakdown of the QUIPS budget was literally not available to me, while DFID did not possess such a breakdown, as it did not require the GES to return it in such detail once the funds had been delivered.

Moreover, in attempting to gain substantial data, it was a challenge to access donor personnel who had been with the respective programmes. Consultants who had worked for QUIPS were easily located as many of them continued to work for a new USAID-funded education programme; but DFID education expatriates were invariably no longer on hand and were difficult to trace. Additionally, since Ghanaian consultants who had worked for WSD were also GES officials, I reasoned that their views should be incorporated into the analysis of Ghanaian actors.

For these reasons, I decided to concentrate on an exploration of Ghanaian actors' views, incorporating interviews and information obtained from donor personnel at the various levels of analysis to deepen my examination of these subjects' perceptions. Although this strategy allowed me insight into recipient perspectives on different aid approaches, an independent level of analysis of donors in contrast to recipient views could have contributed more to the capacity of this study to capture a more holistic picture. This point remains a shortcoming of the present study and further research in this area is necessary.

4.8   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the orientation and approach adopted in this study, as well as the details of the research design. The overarching epistemological and ontological framework that informed the study is interpretive, buttressed by a phenomenological approach, which is appropriate for the purpose of seeking to understand actors' perception of phenomena from their own points of view, and the construction of their own reality, in a context-specific setting.

With a phenomenological orientation, my research took the form of a case study; the case being perceptions of international assistance to the basic education sector in Ghana, and the aim to illustrate the diversity of multi-level actors' perceptions. Two cases were examined in depth in order to investigate the emerging implications of international assistance.

The data were gathered using qualitative research tools such as the semi-structured open-ended interview and documentary analysis. In order to assure the validity and reliability of the data and their interpretation, a triangulation technique was utilised.

In summary, this chapter is a guide to the first phase of the study: the preparation of the research proposal, the fieldwork and the data analysis. The think analytic description that emerged through this process are the subjects of the next two chapters: chapter 5 presents a case study of the QUIPS programme and chapter 6 addresses the WSD programme.

Chapter 5 Quality Improvement in Primary Schools

The Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) intervention was inaugurated in September in 1996, and concluded in 2005;[30] and was designed to help meet the objectives of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) initiative (Bonner et al., 2001). QUIPS built upon USAID's previous aid (Primary Education Programme)[31] to Ghana, which provided essential input such as textbooks, in-service teacher training and national assessment systems aimed at reinforcing the sector (USAID/Ghana, 1995).

The total cost of QUIPS was USD 58 million, comprising USD 52 million in project assistance and USD 6 million in non-project assistance (NPA). The host country contribution was estimated to be USD 18 million (USAID/Ghana, 2005b).

QUIPS was principally composed of two sub-projects: Improving Learning through Partnerships (ILP), and Community School Alliances (CSA). However, as the programme evolved, it mushroomed into a complex amalgam of several projects, some of which overlapped (USAID/Ghana, 2005b). As a result, the programme was administrated by eight national and international implementing agencies (USAID/Ghana, 2005a).[32]

The primary focus of QUIPS was on the improvement of school quality standards by means of a model school programme, which was implemented through project assistance facilitating the delivery of high quality, cost-effective education that was replicable on a national scale. At the same time, QUIPS addressed national level policy and programme reform through NPA in order to create a more supportive environment for primary education.

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[30] QUIPS activities were wound up in September 2004, but the programme was formally extended to 2005 in order to complete its evaluation.

[31] The Primary Education Programme was a USD 35 million programme embarked upon in 1991.

[32] QUIPS implementing partners were Academy for Educational Development; Educational Development Centre; Catholic Relief Services; The Mitchell Group; Harvard Institute for International Development; International Foundation for Education and Self-Help; Education Assessment and Research Centre; and World Education (USAID/Ghana, 2005b).

The original key components of QUIPS comprised 1) the provision of training and support aimed at enhancing the practice of child-centred education, as well as school management; 2) the promotion of increased community involvement in education; and 3) the improvement of education management (Bonner et al., 2001). QUIPS worked for two years per district, in each of which three primary schools were selected to form partnerships with their respective communities.

This chapter explores how QUIPS funds were absorbed and utilised from the viewpoint of those involved in the project. The analysis is conducted according to the themes that emerged through data collection: monetary fungibility, impact and sustainability; and the findings with regard to each theme examined level by level, i.e. Ministry of Education (MoE)/Ghana Education Service (GES) HQ, district and school.

5.1   Perceptions of QUIPS Fungibility

This section explores the views of educational actors on QUIPS financial assistance.

Figure 5-1 The flow of funds under the QUIPS programme
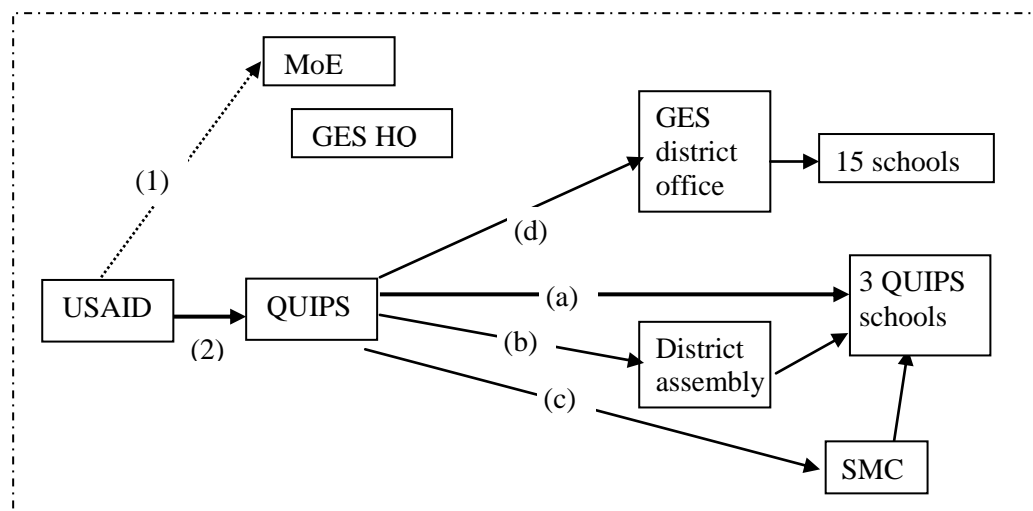
Source: the author.

The above diagram illustrates the flow of funds from UAID to the Ghanaian basic education sector under the QUIPS programme, the total budget being USD 58 million (USAID/Ghana, 2005b). QUIPS comprised non-project assistance (NPA) (1) and project assistance (2), whose budget allocation was 10.4% and 89.6% respectively. NPA was released to the MoE while project assistance was held by the QUIPS programme office. The NPA (1) was originally intended to be USD 18 million but

USAID decided to withdraw this funding in 2001 and total NPA was cut by a third to USD 6 million.

Funding for project assistance (2) was handed over to the QUIPS programme office. Most of it was directed to the pilot schools, three of which were selected in each district (2a). The funds were delivered in kind, for example, in the form of training, teaching and learning materials, and school reading books. Along with this direct assistance, funding for construction projects (school compounds and teachers' quarters) was released to the district assembly (2b), and a micro grant was made available to school management committees (SMCs) to meet the needs of the schools (2c). Apart from the pilot schools, the District Education Office (DEO) received a district grant to expand the QUIPS programme to a further 15 schools (2d).

As figure 5-1 indicates, the education personnel concerned in this study dealt with the allocation of the different funds under QUIPS. The only exception was MoE and GES HQ, which did not have access to any funds from USAID after its withdrawal of NPA.

The following section firstly explores how the MoE/GES regarded USAID's method of providing financial support to the education sector. Secondly, the DEO's view of the district grant is explored. Thirdly, the section looks at those who were responsible for the micro grant at school level, paying particular attention to the views of the SMC, which was in charge of the grant's usage. The SMC formed its opinion of the micro grant through unconsciously comparing it to its experience of construction work, the funds for which were released to the district assembly. For this reason, the SMC's attitude towards the release of QUIPS funds to the district assembly is included in the last part of the school level analysis.

5.1.1 Macro Level

The MoE did not receive any funds associated with the QUIPS programme after the termination of NPA in 2001. As revealed through interviews with MoE/GES HQ officials, their view of QUIPS assistance was shaped by the fact that the other levels of the GES, i.e. the DEO and the schools, received direct QUIPS assistance but the HQ did not. For this reason, this section starts by providing the background to the termination of NPA and the view of the HQ with regard to this funding mechanism, especially in terms of accountability and efficiency.

5.1.1.1 Non-project Assistance

NPA was originally intended to provide funding to the education sector by means of strengthening the capacity of the MoE/GES through quarterly released tranches, which were based on evidence that negotiated targets were being met. Conditions for the release of the tranches were to be determined annually by the MoE and USAID through a review process of mutually agreed targets. However, USAID found it difficult to justify its disbursal of the planned tranches to the MoE since the ministry's targets were too unrealistic – although USAID repeatedly suggested that they be set at a more achievable level – resulting in the inevitable suspension of the funds in 2000 (interview UQ1).[33]

Moreover, a high turnover of MoE/GES division heads during the lifetime of the programme meant that the annual review process became non-functional and that senior staff were never fully cognisant of the conditions and requirements for the release of the tranches (USAID/Ghana, 2005b p.3). This led USAID to the conclusion that the "use of NPA is not an effective means of strengthening the policy/management environment of the MoE" (USAID/Ghana, 2005b p.7).

Consequently, in 2001, USAID withdrew NPA to the MoE completely and added the remaining funds to QUIPS programme support (Bonner et al., 2001), which resulted in USAID funds becoming inaccessible to the HQ. This meant that national policy for the enhancement of the quality of education in primary schools – one of the main objectives of QUIPS – was severely weakened and had no particular means to influence the MoE.

The termination of pledged instalments by USAID, which one high-ranking official called a "breach of contract" (interview G17), was a disappointment and resulted in damage to USAID's reputation in the MoE. This episode was bound to have made some officials sceptical of USAID's commitment to the education sector, leading them to regard the Americans as a capricious donor.

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[33] At the time USAID broke off NPA, the imminent presidential election – in which the then ruling party eventually lost power – overshadowed the day-to-day operation of the MoE/GES, and there were widespread rumours of the alleged misapplication of donor funds to the election campaign. In fact, I myself heard the then MoE donor coordinator saying that the funds had disappeared somewhere in the ministry and that there was no way of tracing them.

Moreover, because of the nature of the programme, QUIPS assistance targeted pilot schools and DEOs, bypassing GES HQ. This, along with the NPA incident, convinced HQ officials that USAID was bypassing official MoE/GES channels.

5.1.1.2   Accountability

Concern over accountability was the central issue, and USAID was not prepared to enter into an agreement that might compromise its own accountability requirements. Moreover, it lacked confidence in the ability of the GES to manage project implementation funds. Thus, it awarded the grants to organisations that were familiar with USAID requirements and had financial procedures that were acceptable to the Americans.

As a result, GES HQ implementers uniformly maintained that QUIPS financial information was not shared with them but was kept within USAID/QUIPS circles. Indeed, the officials I interviewed at HQ knew little about the funds and resources that QUIPS brought in to the education sector at district and school levels.

A budget officer in the Teacher Education Division (TED) highlighted USAID/QUIPS' tendency to remain unaccountable for QUIPS funds to the Ghanaian side.

> If the donors hold the funds, where is [the] accountability? When other donors give us money, after we implement the activities, we have to account [for] the money to the donors. After we are given the funds, [the] donors monitor us and audit us. Donors come to our office to check the record, so there is a checking system. But USAID, they budget, they use, they monitor, they audit, everything by themselves; everything within their circle. Where is [the] accountability? They don't account for [the] money they spend. They may do [so] to USAID [internally], but not to us. We never know how they spend the money, how much they did (interview G6).

The officials questioned to whom the programme should have been accountable, and came to the conclusion that QUIPS was not intended to be accountable to the GES for the funds it poured into the Ghanaian education sector, but only to USAID.

This had serious consequences. Since information about QUIPS was not shared, the HQ was aware of few of the details of QUIPS assistance. In other words, the HQ officials failed to capture the whole financial and implementation picture at district level.

5.1.1.3   Efficiency

Because they were kept in the dark with regard to the QUIPS budget, the officials harboured nagging doubts about whether QUIPS spent its funds efficiently. Some officials argued that the GES would have achieved more if the same amount had been granted to them to implement the activities. The deputy director of TED said:

> Do you know how much QUIPS spent? It's a really huge amount. With that amount, we could have achieved more. We could have worked more effectively, more efficiently, more wisely if the money had been granted to us (interview G13).

Closely associated with this point, many officials voiced their doubts about providing substantial resources solely to three selected schools in each district, questioning the monetary efficiency of the programme in terms of the enhancement of the quality of education nationwide. A former officer of Basic Education Division said:

> They only concentrated on 3 schools; only 3 in each [of] 110 districts, so [a] total of 330 schools [the actual number of pilot schools was 367]. How many schools do we have in Ghana? They may improve quality in these schools, but in …[the] wider picture, that is almost nothing. Considering the amount of money they spent, I think it is unwise. They can afford only to think about three schools, but we should think about all the schools in the country (interview G11).

Another officer commented that QUIPS indulged in experimentation in targeting a limited number of pilot schools with a huge amount of input (interview G15). To these officials, such a strategy appeared to be an unrealistic approach to national education development.

Conversely, several former GES directors who had been taken on as consultants by donor projects after retirement took a different position. They frankly revealed that the way in which GES officials managed money and resources was not always honest (interview G3; UQI4). Therefore, holding the programme funds at the QUIPS office was the inevitable and reasonable second best choice (interview UQ14).

USAID and QUIPS staff were fully aware of the officials' dissatisfaction with this financial arrangement (interview UQ1; UQI1; UQC1; UQI4). However, the team leader of the Community–School Alliance (CSA, one of the subprojects of QUIPS) questioned their motives for complaining about their lack of access to funds.

> We are very well aware that GES complains that USAID doesn't release the funds to GES. Part of the reason that the US government will not do budgetary support here is

> that they do not feel confident that the funds will be used appropriately here; and you see it, and it is pretty obvious.
>
> We will do a workshop and why should they care about who is handling the money, if it is happening? Why don't they take it as an opportunity, an opportunity to learn new things; improve their skills and knowledge? If the activity is actually happening, and they have been invited to participate in any way that they want to, why should it matter? What should the difference be, if we are paying the bill or they are paying the bill?
>
> Well, the difference is, if the money went to them, they will spend [it] differently. And you will see a lot more money going into peoples' pockets, and going to caterers who are preferred for reasons that we are aware [of], you know. So, I think that it is an argument that only highlights why we do not do it. You know, why do they care so much about money? Why don't they care that the activity is happening, you know, regardless of who is paying for it? (interview UQC2).

As USAID/QUIPS could not entrust the funds to the GES, the QUIPS office ensured accountability by taking charge of the funds itself. On their part, the Ghanaian officials accused USAID of not trusting them and that such concerns were simply a ploy to maintain control and retain power in the relationship (interview G12).

5.1.1.4   *Summary of Findings at the Macro Level*

QUIPS was designed to achieve the aims of the Ghanaian national education programme, objectives that, in theory, were shared by USAID and the MoE/GES (Bonner et al., 2001). However, the perceptions that emerged through interviews at the HQ revealed that mutual objectives were insufficient to build a working relationship based on trust between USAID/QUIPS and MoE/GES HQ. For USAID/QUIPS, maintaining control over the funds was a reasonable decision if it increased the efficiency of the use of programme resources. This arrangement also met the financial requirement imposed on the project office by the US government. However, the efficiency of the QUIPS approach was severely questioned by HQ officials, who felt that they had been excluded from the implementation of QUIPS.

5.1.2   Meso Level

Unlike GES HQ, the DEOs had greater involvement in the implementation of QUIPS, having been awarded a district grant to expand activities to a further 15 schools. This section explores the experiences of DEO officials – from their points of view – as they managed this grant, in order to find out how fungible and how efficient QUIPS funds were seen to be.

The aim of the grant was to build capacity at the district level by providing support to the DEOs. Accordingly, the two case study DEOs each received a total grant of about ¢7.3 million (USD 10,000), which was dispersed in two tranches.

5.1.2.1   *Procedures*

A district management implementation team (DMIT)[34] was formed to manage the grant and plan activities to support the 15 additional primary schools[35] (Ahiadeke et al., 2003). However, there were differences in the operation of the DMIT between the two DEOs.

In Lower Denkyira district, the DMIT was quite active and functioned effectively. It held weekly meetings "in a friendly atmosphere, after which the entire directorate was briefed" (interview U7). The district chief executive of the district assembly was kept well informed by the DEO, and was aware that work was being carried out under QUIPS.

On the other hand, the DMIT in the other district was not very active during the QUIPS intervention. In fact, the DMIT existed little more than in name only and met rarely (interview L13). No one from the district assembly was involved in planning and implementing the grant (interview L/D1).

The DMIT was mandated by the DEO to plan activities in a participatory way, and QUIPS expected the DMIT to continue to do so after the end of the intervention (Ahiadeke et al., 2003). However, the DMIT was regarded by the DEO as having been established solely for the management of the district grant; and therefore, there seemed to be no doubt in the minds of the officials that the DMIT had completed its role with the termination of the grant (interview U7).

Once DMIT work plans were approved by QUIPS, district grant funds were released to a dedicated account. Although the GES was also authorised to approve plans for the

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[34] The DMT had nine mandated members: the director of district education; four frontline assistant directors; the community participation coordinator (CPC), a girl child officer, a budget officer; and a district education planning team (DEPT) member.

[35] The grant was expended mainly on 1) in-service teacher training; 2) community mobilisation activities; 3) teaching English as a second language workshops; 4) the supervising of circuit supervisors and other DEO staff supporting QUIPS and non-QUIPS schools; and 5) the monitoring and evaluation of grant activities.

use of the grant (Ahiadeke et al., 2003 p.35), whether it actually did and, if so, at what level of the hierarchy, was not confirmed by DEO interviewees. All they would say was that they had had nothing to do with GES HQ with regard to the district grant scheme.

The level of information sharing regarding the district grant also varied between offices. When funds were required for the implementation of approved activities, a memorandum was written and presented to the district director of education for approval before authorisation was given for the required amount to be withdrawn from the account. In Upper Denkyira, most officials were aware when a grant disbursement was received, while in Lower Denkyira, many of the DEO staff did not know when the funds were available (interview L5; L7).

5.1.2.2   Accountability

Once an activity was completed, a report was written to account for the use of the funds and submitted to the QUIPS programme office (interview L1; U7). These written reports were then vetted and had to be approved by QUIPS before the next tranche of funds was released.

Indeed, there was a substantial amount of paperwork associated with the district grant mechanism (Ahiadeke et al., 2003). There were quarterly financial and programme reports that had to be completed, along with an account of each activity undertaken. This report form required information on the type of activity; its location; its duration and time frame; staff involved in its implementation; participants; its budget (estimate and actual expenditure); an overall assessment of the activity; the problems encountered in implementing the activity; and an evaluation consisting of lessons learnt from the activity, how it might be improved and a proposal for the follow-up.

Filling out this form for all district grant-funded activities took up a significant amount of DEO officials' time (Ahiadeke et al., 2003 pp.35-8). However, although the process of accounting for the grant was "cumbersome" (interview L7), it was considered necessary and quite straightforward because the procedures required by QUIPS were not new (interview U5; U12). A senior officer who worked as a QUIPS district coordinator added:

> It was not difficult. It was rather straightforward. You see, it was not quite [very] different from DFID [Department for International Development]. If you are an

activity initiator, you will be given the money to implement your activity. When [the] QUIPS grant came, it followed the same procedure as DFID money (interview U7).

The QUIPS procedure for allocating the grant was familiar to DEO officials, since it was basically the same as that of DFID's Whole School Development (WSD) programme, yet they found the attitude of QUIPS to be somewhat different. The officials felt that they were being urged to plan, implement and report back to QUIPS as quickly as possible. As soon as the financial report was completed, QUIPS staff came from Accra to collect the report from the DEO (interview U7). This means that accountability for the district grant was to the QUIPS programme office, unlike the DEO and GES HQ.

5.1.2.3   A Donor-led Process

DEO officials were unfamiliar with the short time frame for the completion of activities. In fact, one DEO failed to complete its planned activities by the date that "QUIPS [had] fixed" (interview U7). Instead of carrying plans over to the following term, the DEO was told that they "should use the money for different purposes for the 15 schools by giving up the initial plan [which they had agreed to] in order to use the rest right away" (interview U7). They were then forced to reset priorities and buy supplementary school reading books – after seeking due approval from the QUIPS office.

The officials felt that meeting the deadline was regarded as more important than spending the funds in the district's best interest (interview U7; U8; U9). Moreover, in order to meet the deadline, the DEO had to suspend its other duties if it was to meet QUIPS requirements (interview U3). The whole process left the officials with the impression that their priorities were being compromised for the sake of complying with QUIPS regulations.

5.1.2.4   Monitoring and Auditing

Most of the officials also asserted that the use of the grant was strictly audited by QUIPS: "the auditors were always on us and all this while;" which meant that there was no possibility of the officials acting in a way that was "dishonest" (interview U7):

> They brought us the money, we did [carried out the] activities; we prepared the reports and they came and took all the receipts. If you can't find a receipt [for money] you spent, if you lose a receipt, you will be in trouble. QUIPS team will chase you. Chop the money ['chop' meaning 'to eat', a Ghanaian English term for embezzlement on any scale]; with QUIPS? No way (interview U7).

In general, the DEO officials I interviewed declared that the monetary fungibility of the QUIPS grant was extremely small – or presumably zero – because of the strict QUIPS monitoring. Yet, an assistant director of finance and administration said that the DEO should not be permitted to hold the money until the whole directorate was capable of managing the funds by itself. He went on to caution that things were not always as they were claimed to be:

> The donors should manage and get to the ground [field] to ensure that activities are really performed as stated. USAID often visited us, but they couldn't attend and check all the activities we organised. [The] only way they can find out is to visit the site. The work plan and the stringent reporting requirements – activities reported on – may not always have been undertaken as described in reports (interview U3).

This seems to imply two things. Firstly, there was always a risk of monetary fungibility among the officials at the DEO. In fact, an audit of the QUIPS district grant accounts conducted by the internal GES internal Auditing Unit found some payment vouchers to be insufficiently accounted for in both case study districts.[36]

Secondly, the fact that the assistant director – who was ultimately responsible for finance and administration at the DEO – preferred a QUIPS team to ensure that the DEO functioned properly and spent its funds as planned, may imply the lack of an internal checking system and suggest that the DEO did not function efficiently enough to manage its funds without being closely monitored by an outside body.

I went to see the QUIPS/CSA project team leader and asked if she thought that the DEO could have managed its funds (not only the district grant, but also a bigger portion of the programme funds) if USAID had released the money to them. She replied:

> I think that, yes, they [the DEO] could have handled the money. They probably could have. But I am not sure, if they would have without so much, let's say, involvement from our side. I am not sure that they would have found the means of doing it as economically as we were doing it with them. We currently in this project deal with grants to districts and one of the big struggles is when they do the training, they spend a lot of money. They sort of are not willing or able to come up with cheaper alternatives for doing training (interview UQC2).

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[36] The DEO submitted district grant financial reports to the QUIPS project office, but not to GES HQ. However, the GES HQ Auditing Unit audited the use of the second tranche of the grant in both districts. It reported that in Lower Denkyira ¢4.9 million, i.e. 10% of the second tranche of ¢48 million (USD 6,900), were insufficiently accounted for (GES 2003). In Upper Denkyira, ¢623,000 (USD 79) were found to be unaccounted for (GES 2004a).

USAID/QUIPS believed that the transaction costs of monitoring the funds, which were mostly borne by QUIPS, would have been higher if the funds were completely handed over to the DEO.

5.1.2.5   Summary of Findings at the Meso Level

The process of applying the district grant was strictly monitored by the QUIPS office. Indeed, its usage was considered to be largely driven by the QUIPS facilitators, leaving DEO officials with the impression that their priorities were compromised by the need to comply with QUIPS regulations.

Owing to the high level of control imposed by QUIPS, the grant was spent efficiently. Nevertheless, the QUIPS grant was not completely free of potential fungibility. The DEO directorates themselves acknowledged that there was always a possibility that officials might misappropriate any available funds (interview U3; U7; L3), a view that was echoed by the QUIPS subproject leaders (interview UQC2; UQC1; UQI1) and other QUIPS staff (interview UQI3; UQI2). Until the internal monitoring function began to take effect and all officials gained the capacity to manage the funds efficiently, the DEO regarded close monitoring by QUIPS to be necessary.

5.1.3   Micro Level

This section explores how the funds dispersed to the pilot schools were viewed by the staff working in them. The pilot schools received extensive support from QUIPS during a two-year intervention period. They were given various forms of training (e.g. the instruction of teachers in pupil-centred teaching and assessment techniques; and training for the SMC in school management and community participation), teaching and learning materials, books, a school block or teachers' quarters, and the micro grant.

The funds were managed by a QUIPS programme office in Accra, with the exception of the micro grant and construction project. The former was awarded to the SMC and the latter was released through the district assembly. In other words, the micro grant was the only fund that the pilot schools received and managed directly.

Therefore, this section focuses on the views of head teachers, teachers and SMC members of the micro grant project. Through the interviews during school visits, it became obvious that respondents expressed their views about the micro grant –

wittingly or unwittingly – by comparing it with their experience of the construction project. For this reason, their views, in particular those of the SMC, of the funds for the infrastructure project were also explored.

5.1.3.1   The Micro Grant

The micro grant was awarded to all pilot schools, and to their SMCs in particular (CSA 2004). It was intended to meet school needs by supporting school/community initiatives that had been identified in QUIPS workshops. Together with extensive training in school management, each SMC was asked to open a bank account for the grant, into which a total ¢12 million (USD 1,714) was paid in three tranches, i.e. ¢4 million (USD 571) for each instalment. The micro grant was accompanied by a 'match' obligation, whereby the SMC had to find a minimum of ¢2 million (USD 286) to top up each tranche so that the final total was at least ¢18 million (USD 2,571).

Firstly, the use to which the money should be put was discussed at a meeting of the SMC and parent teacher association (PTA), the head teacher, and some teachers. The items that arose were then put to a community meeting to discuss and approve (e.g. interview L/Q3/SMC2; U/Q1/SMC1). After the SMC had received approval from the QUIPS team, teaching and learning materials[37] were purchased. Finally, the SMC wrote a financial report, which the QUIPS team came and collected together with all the receipts.

5.1.3.1.1   Wider Participation in School Management

The micro grant was seen as a great success by all interviewees. All respondents – including four head teachers who had experienced the QUIPS intervention from the beginning – stated that community involvement in school planning and budgeting was a step in the right direction, and that the micro grant was instrumental in realising the plans they had all made together. One of the head teachers commented:

> QUIPS taught us how to make an action plan. It was the first time to get the community involved in school action plans. Resources needed [the necessary resources were identified], and action plans accompanied the resources. It is a big, big, big success (interview L/Q2/HT).

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[37] School requirements varied, but most schools bought a mixture of the following items: sports jerseys, football equipment, table tennis balls, cups, textbooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, erasers, towels, clocks, scales, cardboard and calculators (interview with SMCs).

The role that head teachers and their staff played in the application of the micro grant was to identify the needs of the school at the SMC/PTA meeting and subsequent community meeting. Usually, teachers' involvement in the micro grant was limited to making sure that the school's needs were accurately communicated to the SMC/PTA/community through their head teacher. Head teachers participated in the planning stage but did not deal with the funds themselves, except in signing for the withdrawal of the money.

When asked what they thought about the arrangement whereby the SMC received the grant on behalf of the school, the four heads who had been in post during the QUIPS period agreed that it was appropriate that the SMC should have been delegated this responsibility.

5.1.3.1.2   Accessibility

In order to access the grant, the SMC formulated an action plan and, working closely with the head teacher, drew up the budget, filled in the form and got the go ahead from the QUIPS team. The task of receiving and applying the funds did not seem to have troubled the SMC members much because they had received intensive training in the procedure. None of the SMC chairpersons complained about the process involved in accessing the funds. This was mainly because the grant was kept under the SMC's control at the bank, the three signatories required for the withdrawal of funds being the SMC chairperson, an SMC member and the head teacher.

5.1.3.1.3   Prerequisites of the Micro Grant

The difficulty some SMCs faced was in raising the supplementary 'match' amount of money from the community within a limited period. Collecting the matching funds was a prerequisite to the release of the grant from QUIPS to the SMC. However, five out of six SMCs did not find the collection of the matching funds so very challenging because "the community came to understand and manage it" (interview U/Q2/SMC1).

Unfortunately, not all schools–community relationships were so successful in the management of their grant. One of the schools failed to collect the match funds for the third tranche and was not granted the last instalment. This SMC emphasised that they did whatever they could to collect the money from the community, but eventually they failed because the community "was overwhelmed by the workload brought by the QUIPS at that time" (interview U/Q3/SMC1). A DEO official explained:

> For the farmers, contributing the money is very difficult. When the collection of the money is in the harvest season, they have cash. But when the collection is just before the harvest season, practically they don't have any cash in the pocket. The communities where most of them work in town – working at the market – have daily cash, but farming communities, they don't (interview U7).

As the amount of matching funds was uniform, some pilot schools and their communities were forced to stretch their financial capacity during the QUIPS period.

After having met the preconditions for collecting the matching funds for each tranche, there was another pressure. This was the limited period during in which they were obliged to spend the grant. A town SMC said that this was "very stressful" (interview U/Q1/SMC1). However, again, this was an even more serious challenge to rural pilot schools, where the SMC had to make several trips to town to obtain invoices and purchase the items (interview U/Q3/SMC1).

5.1.3.1.4 Transparency

Although all the SMCs commented on the stress they were under, and complained about collecting the 'match', and having to spend the grant within a short time, all six SMCs acknowledged that a community-based system of accounting for the match ensured the transparent management of the grant:

> The use of the micro grant wasn't a decision made by [the] SMC or PTA only. The community, the whole community, they themselves planned by themselves and paid for the school. So they want to know how their money was spent (interview U/Q2/SMC1).

After it had been agreed which items to purchase, three invoices were presented at a community meeting to compare suppliers. Then the receipts and actual items were shown at another meeting after the purchases had been made. One SMC member said:

> The money was theirs, so they checked us. There was a checking system and it really worked (interview U/Q3/SMC1).

Thus, the SMC was held accountable for its purchases to the whole community; and as the community had a vested interested in how its money was spent, the internal monitoring mechanism appeared to work well.

5.1.3.1.5 Accountability

With regard to ensuring accountability to the QUIPS office, the SMC prepared a financial report to accompany the receipts tranche by tranche, and then "the QUIPS [staff] came and took all with them" (interview L/Q3/SMC2). SMCs were repeatedly informed of and received training in the correct procedure (interview U/Q2/SMC1). However, one SMC admitted that it had initially "messed up" by making mistakes with the receipts without having been fully aware that QUIPS would insist on such an accurate financial report (interview L/Q3/SMC2).

Another SMC described the situation as a state of alert due to QUIPS' close monitoring (interview U/Q3/SMC1). Yet, there was no doubt among SMCs that a strict monitoring and reporting system along with internal community checks enabled the SMC to ensure that the management of the micro grant was both transparent and accountable.

5.1.3.2   Infrastructure Project

This study found that SMCs' high regard for the transparency and accountability of the micro grant could be attributed to some extent to experience gained through their involvement in the school building project, which was another QUIPS initiative.

The construction project was a joint venture between QUIPS, the district assembly and the school/community. QUIPS made a 60% contribution (USD 21-24,000) (Academy for Educational Development, 2004). The assembly contributed 20% in the form of a top-up (more than 20% if necessary) and the community contributed 20%, providing materials and communal labour respectively. The QUIPS funds were paid to the district assembly, three signatories being required for the purchase of materials – the SMC chairperson, the director of the DEO and a district assembly financial officer. Lastly, it had to be approved by the district chief executive.

Generally, most SMCs regarded the management of construction project funds to have been far from transparent. This was largely because the SMCs had not seen district assembly financial reports, although only one SMC had actually asked to see it (interview L/Q2/SMC1):

> If [the] DC [district council; the former name of the district assembly] top up the amount, we don't know. They said that they supported [us], but [the] DC didn't produce the whole project expenses. So we don't know. [It is] difficult to grasp the whole cost, whole picture, total figure, amount of expenses. [The] DC didn't disclose the amount; [the] DC [did] not account for the money. [The] money should come to the community or at least [the] community should know the amount. [The] DC should

give us [a] copy of the budget, expenses, who were paid, how much. Whoever the money was passed through, the community and the head should have been involved in it or at least informed (interview L/Q2/SMC1).

The three signatories system for the purchase of materials was seen to increase transparency to some extent, although all SMCs tended to believe that the procedure was overly bureaucratic. Nevertheless, no matter how cumbersome this might have been, a cross-check was seen to be the only way to ensure the efficient and candid use of the funds, and avoid the possibility of "temptation" (interview U/Q2/SMC1).

In some cases, this verification system did not work, which caused SMCs to be even more suspicious of the assembly (interview L/Q2/SMC1). Moreover, this led some to think that the SMC itself could have put up many more buildings. One SMC that had had a three-block school building constructed believed that it could have built six classrooms if the money had been channelled through the community (interview L/Q2/SMC6). This might sound a little unrealistic, but lack of transparency had made them so suspicious that they could not help but question the efficiency of the project.

5.1.3.3 *Summary of Findings at the Micro Level*

The whole micro grant process was felt to be driven by QUIPS. However, accordingly, the grant tended to be spent in a transparent and efficient manner. This was achieved by a mechanism of internal community checks and external monitoring by the QUIPS facilitators. Sharing the preconditions set by QUIPS among the community enhanced the internal checking mechanism. In other words, the SMC was accountable not only to the QUIPS office, but also to the wider community.

In contrast, the management of construction project funds was thought to be less transparent. Financial details were not shared with the schools, unlike the case with the micro grant. This resulted in a strained relationship between the school/community and the assembly, and led to the suspicion of those in charge of the funds, although the level of mistrust differed depending on relationships between and among the groups of actors.

5.1.4 Summary of QUIPS Fungibility

The whole process of QUIPS was seen to be led by USAID/QUIPS. QUIPS insisted on absolute propriety in the processing of recipients in order to ensure the accountability of the funds, since the QUIPS office was in turn obliged to account to USAID.

Consequently, while accountability of the grant to the QUIPS office was accentuated, accountability to the GES was downplayed. The micro grant was monitored internally by the community and externally by the QUIPS office. However, the success of this monitoring system, which ensured the transparency of grant management in the school/community, was again due to the considerable efforts of the QUIPS facilitators and the threat of the sanctions that would be imposed on defaulters.

Where financial information was not shared, those who were excluded grew doubtful about the efficiency of funding management. Non-involvement in information sharing and financial processes resulted in damage to working relations between actors. This was observed at all levels.

It can be safely asserted that under QUIPS control, the fungibility of funds was relatively low (or lower than in other cases). In other words, the QUIPS grant was seen as being spent efficiently. However, it seems that such a perception depended on the definition of 'efficiency'.

USAID/QUIPS considered its grant mechanism to be efficient so long as it was under the strict control of the QUIPS office. In fact, control over the grant was considered to be a significant contribution to keeping down the cost of the overall USAID intervention, if it were compared to the cost of maintaining the same level of accountability had all the funds been handed over to the DEO. In other words, the control of funds by USAID/QUIPS was efficient, but not necessarily satisfactory from the point of view of the recipient.

5.2   Perceptions of QUIPS Impact

This section explores the impact of the QUIPS programme from the viewpoint of Ghanaian education actors at the three levels.

5.2.1   Macro Level

This section looks at the views of GES HQ officials on two main components of the QUIPS programme: SMC/PTA/community participation in school management, and

academic progress in pilot schools. This is followed by a discussion of their views on the QUIPS approach to nationwide education development.

5.2.1.1   Impact on Community Participation in Pilot Schools

Those interviewed at GES HQ recognised that QUIPS efforts generated community awareness, and that, as a result, SMCs and PTAs made a renewed contribution to the enhancement of the performance of pupils, teachers and the school as a whole. They also acknowledged that QUIPS had demonstrated that the activation and reinforcement of SMC initiatives allowed communities to overcome severe structural and environmental constraints to school improvement.

Indeed, USAID/QUIPS regarded the impact of QUIPS-initiated community involvement to be "the best component, [which led to] …the great achievement" (interview UQ1). Such an impact was seen to "exceed the expectations of what we had laid out as what would happen with the project" (interview UQC2). Indeed, the former BED director in the GES HQ acknowledges that the innovations were so marked that they led HQ officials to recognise the effectiveness of community participation in school management (interview G3).

5.2.1.2   Impact on Learning in Pilot Schools

In contrast to the wider recognition of community level impact on pilot schools, many officials at GES HQ questioned the degree of impact on the academic improvement of pupils in the pilot schools. GES officials assumed that these schools would have demonstrated a high level of performance, as their teachers had received intensive training and substantial materials support (interview G3; G11). However, they were not certain that this was actually the case.

In fact, USAID/QUIPS failed to present convincing evidence of academic progress in the pilot schools to the Ghanaian side. According to the assessment test that compared QUIPS schools with non-QUIPS schools, pupils in the former had a higher proficiency in reading than their counterparts in the latter, but the difference was not great (see the detail QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005, Chap.5). A USAID officer agreed that the margin was not significant in comparison to the resources that had been poured into these three schools (interview UQ1).

Consequently, the officials questioned the effectiveness of the QUIPS approach to the pilot schools and, by extension, the effectiveness of the whole QUIPS approach itself (interview G3). Moreover, the officials were certain that the state would have achieved more if a corresponding amount of funding had been available to the GES (interview G1).

5.2.1.3   Summary of Findings at the Macro Level

The impact of community participation came to be widely acknowledged at GES HQ. In contrast, its officials were not convinced of academic improvement in the pilot schools. Considering the substantial amount of support the pilot had schools received, the progress made was regarded as being rather disappointing. The HQ officials ultimately called into question the effectiveness of the entire QUIPS approach.

5.2.2   Meso Level

QUIPS was quite conspicuous at the district level, a DEO officer noting that the programme "stood in the light" (interview U1). This section firstly explores DEO officials' views of QUIPS impact on the pilot schools, especially in terms of progress made in SMC/PTA/community participation training. Secondly, it explores their views of the impact the district grant scheme and QUIPS training made on administration capacity.

5.2.2.1   Impact on Pilot Schools

5.2.2.1.1   Impact on SMC/PTA/Community Participation

> Before QUIPS, SMC[s] [and] PTA[s] had been set up in many schools, as required by [the] GES, but they were dormant. They were given little or no training. The head teachers or the chiefs and elders were often selected [as] the PTA members. There was often poor rapport between the community and the school before the QUIPS. Consultations to discuss problems were infrequent, and teachers made few visits to the communities (interview U4).

SMC/PTA/community participation was believed to have had "a huge impact" on the pilot schools and communities (interview Q7). It was recognised that QUIPS support led to the increase of awareness, interest and commitment of communities in the process of education.

5.2.2.1.1.1   Level of Input

DEO officials thought that there were several elements of the QUIPS programme that led to the successful mobilisation of the SMC/PTA/communities in the pilot schools. Firstly, intensive support and training were provided by the QUIPS facilitators; and they immediately transformed training to practice (interview U17). Secondly, the facilitators were very effective and well motivated (interview U2). Thirdly, the financial incentive (e.g. the micro grant, a school compound or teachers' quarters) was seen as instrumental in mobilising the SMC/PTA/community:

> QUIPS motivated the SMC and PTA. They could imagine what they would do with the money after the training. [The] GES might give them training, but funds to let them practice what they were taught will never come. So the training goes in vain – just theory, never practical. They never get any money to do whatever they are taught. But in [the] case of QUIPS, even [the] SMC were trained by QUIPS, [and] all the funds were provided. QUIPS motivated the community, drew the SPIP,[38] followed by QUIPS monitoring. That is why the SMC, PTA, community, all became very active (interview U8).

The level of mobilisation and its intensity, along with the input of the grant, was regarded as an unprecedented experience for those in the pilot schools and communities.

5.2.2.1.1.2   Active Involvement

Communities were encouraged to take part in school management; and SMCs grew more aware of their role and became proactive. One community began to pay their own volunteer teachers to fill vacant teaching positions (interview U/Q3). Another began buying storybooks and readers to ensure that their children had the necessary learning materials (interview U/Q1). Some SMCs started visiting the director every week to discuss the problems their schools faced (interview L13).

Having seen how effective the QUIPS approach to SMC/PTA/community mobilisation was, an assistant director concluded that bypassing the bureaucratic state system and channelling support straight to schools and communities had more of an impact than all the efforts of the GES (interview L13).

5.2.2.1.2   Impact on School Performance and Pupils' Learning

On the contrary, DEO officials' views on academic improvement in the pilot schools were not very clear.

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[38] School performance improvement plan.

Nevertheless, they acknowledged several factors that should have or might have had a positive impact:

- Intensive training in child-centred teaching for 'all' teachers (interview U1)
- Availability of teaching and learning materials
- Concerted supervision by head teachers, the SMC and PTA (interview U1)
- Strict monitoring and frequent visits from QUIPS facilitators (interview U4)
- Enhanced support and monitoring from the DEO (interview L4)

Thus, their inference was that academic performance must have improved (interview U1).

However, the officials were generally more interested in behavioural changes, for example, whether pupils had become more studious; stayed at home in the evenings; read English; enjoyed learning; and went to school every day. DEO officials were reluctant to affirm that it was certain pupils had improved in these terms because of the lack of concrete and quantifiable evidence. One assistant director did acknowledge an upward trend in academic performance, especially in English, but conceded that such improvement was quite subtle (interview L13).

5.2.2.1.3   Distortion of District Resources: An Unexpected Impact

QUIPS pilot schools received frequent visits from DEO officials during the intervention, which provided effective monitoring (interview L1). However, it may be argued that a high level of support to a few schools created an imbalance in the district. Lack of funds at the district level restricted the frequency of DEO visits to non-QUIPS schools.[39] Since GES HQ did not regularly provide the DEO with adequate funds for supervision, QUIPS created an imbalance within the system by providing monitoring assistance (e.g. fuel) to the three pilot schools. However, it must be acknowledged that without such a disparity, the quality of instructional improvement seen under QUIPS would not have been possible.

5.2.2.2   Impact of the District Grant Scheme on Extension Schools

As seen earlier (section 5.1.2), the district grant was provided to the DEO to expand the QUIPS programme to 15 other selected schools.

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[39] One official admitted: "often, visits to non-QUIPS schools were limited to just saying hello and signing in the log books to show the officer was present" (interview U2).

5.3.2.2.1   An Isolated Intervention

In instances where GES HQ could not provide the DEO with a sufficient budget, the district grant came as a big relief (interview U5), and the further 15 selected schools benefited a great deal (interview U6). However, this was a one-off intervention, described as "fireworks" or a "festival" for them (interview U7). Thus, "expecting long-term outcomes [was] unrealistic" (interview U7). Indeed, there were several factors that limited the impact of the district grant.

5.3.2.2.2   Applicability

From the beginning, aiming to apply QUIPS to another 15 schools as a way of extending the programme throughout the district (Academy for Educational Development, 2004) was seen as "too ambitious" (interview U3). There were insufficient resources to extend QUIPS model practices to the 15 new schools (interview L1; U7). Therefore, the strategy adopted with the grant scheme was to replicate only a selected few of the best practices to all the schools. Thus, the duration and intensity of teacher training and community sensitisation was limited compared to what had been provided to the pilot schools.

5.3.2.2.3   DEO Officials as Facilitators

Unlike the pilot schools, in which QUIPS facilitators from Accra took charge, DEO officials were trained to conduct activities in the expansion phase of the programme. However, since the officials themselves were left in charge of 15 schools, they claimed that the quality of the activities they were expected to facilitate was compromised, maintaining that they were not sufficiently well motivated in comparison with the QUIPS consultants. One official contended:

> You see, the QUIPS team was well paid, came from Accra with a four-wheel [drive] car. But we had other duties to do. When we did QUIPS works, we had to put our duties aside (interview L13).

This implies that the DEO officials not only considered QUIPS facilitators to be more efficient in service delivery, but also that they saw their role as facilitators or trainers as extra work for the QUIPS project in addition to their usual duties.

5.3.2.2.4   Lack of Relevancy and Donor-centricity

Interviews with the DEO suggested that broader consultation was necessary to ensure that QUIPS design and implementation was both effective and relevant given the

contextual constraints throughout the district. However, they recollected that the programme was not embedded within these realities; if it were, it would have implemented its programmes in harmony, at a pace that took into consideration the realities of people on the ground (interview L1; U7). In fact, they felt constrained, had very little room to manoeuvre, and simply followed the lead of the QUIPS programme implementers' instruction (interview U7).

5.3.2.2.5 Lack of Follow-up

The district monitoring and evaluation team was responsible for monitoring the implementation and impact of the district grant. However, it did not actually know anything of the way in which teachers used materials or generally how effective the training in these 15 schools had proved to be afterwards, because they did not conduct a follow-up evaluation (interview L12; U10). Thus, the efficacy of the district grant was unknown to most DEO officials.

5.2.2.3   Impact on District Education Offices

During the QUIPS intervention, DEO officials attended various residential training courses. This last section briefly looks at how the ensuing impact on the DEO was viewed by its officials. During the two-year intervention, new bodies, i.e. the district management implementation team (DMIT); the monitoring and evaluation (ME) team; and the community participation coordinator (CPC), were put in place by QUIPS, and DEO officials attended the appropriate courses.[40] Their capacity was enhanced through such training (interview L13; L4; U5). The skills imparted to the DEO through the QUIPS courses enabled it to carry out a great deal of in-service training for both teachers and communities, and helped it reform district administrative and decision-making procedures (interview U7; U5).

5.2.2.4   Summary of Findings at the Meso Level

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[40] QUIPS district programmes centred on 1) training of district staff including statisticians, the inspectorate, girl child officers, circuit supervisors, and district monitoring assistants; 2) ME training for district statisticians and ME teams; 3) teacher training of trainers for circuit supervisors, the inspectorate division and girl child officers, all of whom were often members of the district teaching support team (DTST); and 4) management, planning and financial management training for the district director of education, four line assistant directors (AD of supervision, the inspectorate, finance and administration, and human resources development) and the accountant and budgeting officer.

The QUIPS pilot schools received intensive support from the QUIPS project office during a two-year intervention. This community-based programme was regarded as a great success, while its impact on the academic progress of pupils was thought to be relatively intangible considering the amount of assistance the QUIPS pilot schools had received, although many positive changes were also observed.

Therefore, some officials questioned whether the QUIPS approach in the targeting of pilot schools was effective. Nevertheless, the delivery of funding and support from the project office directly to the schools was considered to be more efficient than channelling them via the GES bureaucracy. However, in the extension of the intervention, DEO officials were not keen on taking on the role and responsibility of QUIPS facilitators; and some DEO officials admitted that the training and service delivery that QUIPS facilitators provided was more efficient than that of the officials themselves.

The impact of the district grant scheme on the 15 extension schools was regarded in terms of something of an isolated intervention. Additionally, it did not contribute to the application of all QUIPS practice to the 15 schools, much less to the whole district. The entire process of the distribution of the district grant was considered to be donor-centric, and, moreover, not sensitive enough to the needs of the districts. However, the training that DEO officials received was thought to be very effective, and gave them a greater sense of competency.

5.2.3   Micro Level

This section explores how the impact of the QUIPS intervention was viewed by those in the schools (head teachers, teachers and SMC members). This is assessed in terms of the two main components that QUIPS focused on, i.e. SMC/PTA/community involvement and learning improvement.

5.2.3.1   *Impact of SMC/PTA/Community Training*

It was widely recognised in the QUIPS schools that QUIPS-initiated community involvement in school management had a huge impact on the school environment and the resulting improvement in the quality of education. The interviewees unanimously expressed their high regard for QUIPS, asserting how the programme had brought about positive changes in the pilot schools and communities. SMC members in

particular were most enthusiastic, as they had played a key role, and expressed their ardent desire for QUIPS to return. One of the SMC executives said:

> SMC Chairperson calls the meeting. SMC and the committee are involved in school management. We, including Head, plan what we want to do regarding school. Previously, [a] gong gong was beaten, [but] people didn't come (interview L/Q3/SMC1).

Another SMC executive explained other positive changes brought by QUIPS:

> Vast changes, so many things changed. All things we've learnt from QUIPS. A lot [has been] learnt from them: how to maintain and improve teaching and learning; how to contribute communal labour; how to consider teachers' welfare. [The] school and children are now very disciplined. [The] children speak English. Parents provide the needs of children (interview L/Q2/SMC1).

These changes were also noticed by headteachers. One of the headteachers said:

> [The] SMC had been there – constitutional provision. But before QUIPS, [the] SMC had [only] existed on paper. QUIPS brought us the practical aspect of the whole thing. [The] SMC became dynamic and the whole thing started moving (interview L/Q2/HT).

The key to this success was considered to be due to several factors. Firstly, there was intensive training for sensitisation and awareness of the roles of the SMC, PTA and community in school improvement, together with the provision of substantial resources for its realisation. Secondly, the effectiveness of the QUIPS facilitators was also raised in every school. In fact, SMCs in particular grew to trust the QUIPS facilitators implicitly. This was observed in all QUIPS schools, indicating a good working relationship. Thirdly, the financial incentive (i.e. the micro grant) was thought to be instrumental in mobilising the SMC and getting the community involved in the programme.

5.2.3.2   Impact on Learning

Unlike the uncertainty about the improvement in educational achievement observed among GES officials at HQ and at the DEO, all the head teachers[41] and SMC members who had been in the pilot schools for the whole two-year intervention confirmed that great progress had been made in pupils' academic performance, especially in their

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[41] Only four of six head teachers in the pilot schools had been in post throughout the QUIPS intervention.

spoken English. Indeed, one of the QUIPS schools (U/Q1) came top of its district in 2005, while another (U/Q2) came top of the three primary schools in its junior secondary school (JSS) catchment area. This was considered to be due to great effort and substantial input from the QUIPS programme office (interview U/Q1/HT; U/Q1/SMC1; U/Q2/SMC1).

Among the many teaching and learning materials supplied, the provision of English readers and textbooks was considered to be instrumental in helping pupils to understand and use English (interview L/Q3/T1).

The QUIPS in-service training course, which focused on child-centred teaching, was considered to be vital. This course was regarded as the first thorough and effective training that many teachers had received (interview L/Q3/HT; U/Q2/HT), and a vast difference in comparison with the cascade model of in-service training advocated by the GES (interview L/Q2/HT).

All the QUIPS-trained head teachers and teachers agreed wholeheartedly that the course was "extensive, intensive, excellent, rigorous, hands-on…[which] made us know exactly how to handle the subjects," (interview L/Q2/HT) and how to prepare and use the teaching and learning materials (interview L/Q3/T1). This of course also made lessons easier to teach (interview L/Q3/HT3).

Moreover, the teachers considered their QUIPS trainers to be very capable (interview L/Q2/HT; U/Q2/HT). As a result, the QUIPS-trained teachers were confident of their enhanced teaching skills.

5.2.3.3   *An Unexpected Impact on the Neighbourhood*
Because the QUIPS pilot schools quickly developed a reputation for being 'good' schools, parents in surrounding communities began transferring their children from nearby schools to the QUIPS schools. This trend was mentioned in five out of six QUIPS schools.[42]

Thus, although the improved access and increased enrolment resulting from the QUIPS programme was generally viewed favourably at school level, interviews at the

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[42] One QUIPS school was not certain whether this was the case because all the QUIPS-trained teachers had left by the time of my visit.

DEO suggest that it presented systemic problems. In other words, the inflow of pupils from non-QUIPS schools to QUIPS schools produced an imbalance in enrolment distribution in those communities adjacent to the latter.

As enrolment at nearby schools became depleted, the enthusiasm and general support for education in many surrounding schools began to diminish. Some GES HQ officials pointed out this imbalance in favour of the novel and "very exciting" QUIPS school as a negative outcome of the QUIPS programme (interview G4; G1; G3). In fact, it seems to have introduced unforeseen problems in the delivery and administration of local and district primary education.

5.2.3.4   Summary of Findings at the Micro Level

Interviews in the pilot schools revealed that the QUIPS programme was seen to have had a tremendously positive impact on school performance and pupils' learning.

5.2.4   Summary of QUIPS Impact

In general, the QUIPS programme had a visible impact at school and district levels, and on the pilot schools in particular. Community participation was regarded as being very successful in terms of improvement of school performance at all three levels. However, the positive impact of QUIPS on pupils' academic performance was perceived as more doubtful according to HQ officials.

Interviews with education actors in the pilot schools revealed that pupil attainment had improved as a result of the unprecedented support from QUIPS. However, considering the amount of support the QUIPS pilot schools had received, the impact on academic achievement was thought to be rather disappointing by GES officials, especially those at HQ. GES wanted to see clear and quantifiable evidence that a QUIPS approach had had an impact on pupils' academic performance nationwide, rather than anecdotal accounts from pilot schools. However, QUIPS failed to deliver a statistically convincing result. There was thus a perception gap over the impact of QUIPS on pupils' academic performance between the GES and the pilot schools.

Concluding that QUIPS had failed to achieve substantial improvement in pupils' academic performance, even in the pilot schools, HQ officials questioned the effectiveness of the QUIPS approach to its pilot schools, and, more critically, to any policy for nationwide improvement in education. Indeed, the DEO had struggled to

replicate the QUIPS model to an additional 15 schools; it was therefore seemingly unrealistic to expect it to expand the initiative throughout the district.

Nevertheless, the role of the Ghanaian QUIPS facilitators was considered to be instrumental to the delivery of support to the schools. This view was echoed by DEO officials, who admitted that they did not have the capacity to deliver such support to the same degree of efficiency and efficacy under the prevailing GES system.

The QUIPS programme was highly visible at district and school levels. In general, the impact of the programme was considered to be significant, especially at the school level.

The challenge ahead was the question of whether this impact could continue to lead to development outcomes after the completion of interventions. The next section explores views of sustainability in this regard.

5.3   Perceptions of QUIPS Sustainability

One of the biggest challenges for any attempt at education development is how to sustain the impact and changes brought about by innovations, and the QUIPS programme was no exception. This section explores how Ghanaian education actors viewed the sustainability of the QUIPS programme.

5.3.1   Macro Level

> [We have] no interest in QUIPS. Considering it is out of our system, it's nonsense that USAID expects [the] GES to take over QUIPS (interview G11).

It became clear from interviews with the directorate and implementing officials at GES HQ that they were convinced that the QUIPS programme – or any combination of its individual components – could not easily be incorporated into the state education system, much less sustain it. At least, they did not regard themselves as being responsible for attempting such a task. The following is an examination of the reasoning that led to this view.

5.3.1.1   *Ownership*

Ownership comprises a relation between the owned and the owner, and is considered to be a necessary prerequisite for the sustainability of any intervention (Molund, 2000 pp.12-3; Ostrom et al., 2002b p.16). In this regard, the Ghanaian officials at HQ bitterly regretted their lack of ownership of the QUIPS programme, an attitude formed through the way the programme was designed and implemented, and how the Ghanaians were involved in it.

As seen earlier (section 5.2), the QUIPS programme was administered from a programme office set up by USAID and had full control of its budget, which was outside the jurisdiction of the GES. Therefore, the officials believed that the state should not be expected to take over the QUIPS programme.

More practically, the fact that the GES officials were kept in the dark about the finances meant that it was literally impossible for the GES to sustain QUIPS, even if they wished to do so. A GES budget officer explained:

> GES never [knew] how much USAID spent on the project. Then, when the project ends, GES is expected to take over, but how? Where are the funds? We don't even know how much the expenses were. How can we continue what they started? QUIPS is GES's – that is what USAID says. But I would say, "no." Nothing [was] left after the ending of the intervention; QUIPS is nil (interview G6).

The entire QUIPS intervention process – from conception to completion – was regarded as having been driven by USAID/QUIPS. The MoE/GES failed to engage in full collaboration, or even reach an effective agreement on the programme details (interview M1; G4; G5; G12). This view was echoed by USAID/QUIPS personnel (interview UQ1; UQC1; UQC2). A former GES basic education officer recalled the way in which QUIPS was brought into the Basic Education division:

> USAID hired some consultants who were developing programmes, developing concepts and sending them to the GES [with the details of] what they wanted to do. So, GES personnel went along with what QUIPS had planned for basic education. So QUIPS was stimulated and ran [the programme] from the outside but involved the GES personnel in implementation (interview G11).

5.3.1.2   *Degree of involvement of GES officials*

Thus, the officials at GES HQ were 'involved' in QUIPS implementation, but the extent to which they were engaged in the programme was regarded as being relegated to "manual labour" (interview G12). Another officer said, "QUIPS come only when they

need you, when they need signatures" (interview G13). This view was even echoed by the director general (interview G17).

The fact that the programme was led by USAID and administered by the QUIPS office, made officials feel that their work schedules were being interrupted when they received requests from QUIPS. As QUIPS was not integrated into their work schedules, the officials felt that they did not know when or what they would be asked to do next (interview G11).

The director of CRDD[43] explained how much her work was interrupted by requests from USAID/QUIPS:

> They just come... They have a plan, and they send [the plan or letter] to you [the director herself] and tell you that they have funds and want to help you in this [plan]. You are not part of the planning, so it interferes with your work, because they [have] already fixed their dates. They expect that when they come, you [will] stop everything and work with them. It does not matter whether you are busy or not. We also have our own calendar of activities, and they just interrupt. [If] they are not satisfied with your way of work[ing] with them, they start complaining that you are not cooperative. It is like lording [it] over everybody. Me, I am getting fed up with them (interview G12).

Because QUIPS was not integrated into the GES operation schedule, the officials felt that they were not paid to carry out work requested by the QUIPS programme office. They saw it as an extra burden put upon them by the agency, given that QUIPS was not their responsibility. Being well aware that QUIPS staff were much better paid than them, some officials felt that the donor was not sensitive to their needs (interview G8). When QUIPS refused to pay GES officers the same daily subsistence allowance as USAID paid even their drivers, they felt that they were not being respected (interview G6; G12; G13).

5.3.1.3 *Imbalance of Power*

Trust and understanding among partners in any working relationship are considered to be critical. When institutions work together towards a common goal, it is essential that they clearly understand the nature of the relationship and their respective roles and responsibilities, and express their views and listen to each other. However, such a relationship between the GES and QUIPS failed miserably. Although the CSA/QUIPS

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[43] Curriculum, Research and Development division at GES.

team leader tried to assure the GES that they always tried to include the MoE in whatever they did (interview UQC2), the donor's efforts were not appreciated.

Any mechanism for delivering assistance must be accompanied by a working relationship. However, the officials believed that their relationship was never equal and there was an obvious imbalance of power between USAID/QUIPS and the MoE/GES. The epitome of this inequity was seen in USAID's refusal to hand the funds over to the GES. Regardless of its reasons for taking such a stance, the money represented power (interview G6). Therefore, it appeared to the officials that USAID was refusing to relinquish some of its power and was clinging to total power by holding onto the funds. USAID claimed that they were "partners" with the Ghanaians sitting in "the driving seat," but these words sounded to the officials like nothing more than "meaningless jargon" (interview G6).

In an arrangement in which "only USAID controlled the programmes, determined what [was] to be done and kept the power" (interview G12), their working relationship was often strained. Moreover, the attitude of QUIPS facilitators was sometimes too objective-oriented for the officials to work with (interview G5). As long as QUIPS pursued tangible and immediate results, any working relationship with the GES was going to continue being damaged (interview G11), because QUIPS staff "behaved as though they had authority over GES personnel" (interview G11). As a result, one CSA/QUIPS team leader commented that there was a prevailing "resentment" at HQ, which had become "a huge, huge barrier to sustainability" (interview UQC2).

5.3.1.4   Summary of Findings at the Macro Level

It may be concluded that the officials at MoE/GES HQ did not consider the QUIPS component to be sustainable within the GES system. QUIPS was not owned by the MoE/GES, so they did not see it as their responsibility. There were a myriad of factors contributing to this conclusion, e.g. the donor-driven planning and implementation process; the fact that QUIPS had not been integrated into the GES sector plan; and the lack of GES control over the programme funds. Indeed, power was never handed over to the Ghanaians but kept by the donor alone. The sense of inequity that prevailed at the GES hampered the development of a good working relationship, causing a huge disparity between the two sides.

The sustainability of QUIPS practices was ultimately contingent upon the GES (interview UQC2). Only the GES, with the support of the MoE, could connect the successful outcomes achieved in the pilot schools and districts with a system of progressive good practice and eventual expansion to a national education policy. However, the officials did not think it was their responsibility.

5.3.2 Meso Level

> QUIPS will die gradually, naturally. If the funds for keeping the project moving on are not in place, gradually it will die. It is [a] natural death. We are supposed to keep the QUIPS experience in those schools or even scale up, but there are no resources for doing that. All the QUIPS efforts QUIPS have made will go in vain. QUIPS brought a huge chunk of money, and have the schools accustomed to using and enjoying the money, and left. This is no good. The next time USAID [will/should] make sure that the Ghanaian government will take over the project (interview U7).

The following section explores the views of district education officials on the sustainability of the QUIPS programme in their districts. The following section looks at how the officials saw the continuation of QUIPS practices in the pilot schools; the application of these practices for education improvement throughout the district; and the potential sustainability of DEO administrative innovations brought about by the QUIPS programme.

5.3.2.1   Sustainability in Pilot Schools

An officer in charge of the QUIPS intervention at the DEO commented:

> The benefits are not being sustained. The officers and teachers trained were hard working when they knew [that] people [from QUIPS] would come and see them. Supervision to schools came more frequently because they had money and fuel, and QUIPS people came. Now this is not happening and for many, it is easier to slip back into our old ways if no one is there to push (interview U7).

Another officer confirmed:

> Without supervision, the outcomes, improvement caused by QUIPS wouldn't last long. QUIPS would die out soon without monitoring and supervision. QUIPS intended that [the] DEO would take over responsibility in terms of finance; [the] office is aware of it. But we [can't] afford to organise the workshops as often as QUIPS did (interview U10).

The implementation of the QUIPS intervention in the pilot schools was directly administered by the QUIPS programme office; and officials were invited whenever the

QUIPS facilitator went to the district to organise workshops in the pilot schools. As seen earlier (section 5.2.3), the officials acknowledged that there had been huge positive changes in the pilot schools. However, they had serious reservations about the continuation of such innovations. In fact, none of the officers actually believed that the changes brought about by QUIPS would last long unless continuous support and supervision was provided by the DEO. An Assistant Director explained:

> Two years are not enough; not long enough to change the schools and communities fundamentally, because the mechanism to sustain [for sustainability] is needed. [A] support system is needed. Follow-up is more important than initiatives (interview U3).

Circuit supervisors' school visits to support teachers were irregular or nonexistent after the end of the QUIPS programme (interview L5; U8). Despite officials' notion that extra monitoring was key to the maintenance of QUIPS practices, interviews with the district directors of education and budget officers revealed that the DEO had not allocated an extra budget for the pilot schools or 15 expansion schools since the completion of the intervention. District director in Uper Denkyira commented that the DEO could not afford to allocate extra resources to the QUIPS-related schools (interview U13).

Nevertheless, even if it had been manageable, the DEO directorate did not have any intention of offering extra support, since it reasoned that the pilot schools had enjoyed disproportionate funding not only from QUIPS, but also from the DEO throughout the intervention (interview U5; U7; U9).

QUIPS programme requirements placed heavy demands on DEOs, and the capacity of the district to respond to other needs was considered to have been compromised. Indeed, the professional time and energy required in supporting QUIPS innovations in the three pilots left as many as a hundred or more other schools with radically reduced support (interview L1).

Thus, due in large part to the notion that existing district resources were being unevenly drained, it was believed that supporting the pilot schools in the sustenance of their QUIPS practices was not fair to other schools:

> We don't allocate [an] extra budget [to the QUIPS schools] to [conduct] follow-up. They enjoyed extra support, but others didn't. We have to look after all the schools in the district. QUIPS is over; we don't allocate any money to these schools. All schools

in the district should have fair treatment. All the schools should receive the same, equal support from [the] DEO (interview U7).

It was argued that QUIPS should have taken the budgetary limitation of the DEO into consideration at the programme planning stage and given some thought to how it might be sustained after the termination of the intervention. From a practical point of view, it was suggested that QUIPS should have financed programme follow-up:

In theory, it's [the] office's responsibility to monitor but in practice, it's impossible. QUIPS should provide resources to let us mobilise to supervise schools if they [QUIPS] are serious [about sustaining the programme]. Realistically, it is the only way to maintain QUIPS [practices] in schools (interview U2).

Moreover, it was criticised that choosing and allocating substantial support to just three schools per district was a significant drawback (e.g. interview L4; L1; U7; U13). The district grant was provided in order to enable the district to assume more control over QUIPS interventions by equipping it to improve school quality and community participation. However, district directors contended that the 3 schools in the project and a grant to finance support to an additional 15 would not effect districtwide change because the resources of the QUIPS schools were so much greater than those of the average school (interview L10; U13; G15). It was thus thought to be practically impossible to apply QUIPS practices to schools throughout the district.

Interviewees made it clear that supporting 3 schools per district during a mere 2-year intervention, and/or granting another 15 schools some support on a couple of isolated occasions, was insufficient to help the district move forward with new approaches to improving quality in the classroom, or effectively replicate good practice across the whole district (e.g. interview U7; U9; U8; L1; L4; L2; L3). The fundamental limiting factor was that the QUIPS approach did not convince district officials that it could be practically applicable to districtwide change.

5.3.2.2   Sustainability of Administrative Changes at the DEO
5.3.2.2.1   Organisational Structure

QUIPS aimed to strengthen the administrative capacity of the DEO by introducing a consultative planning process, and by installing new functions such as DMIT, ME and CPC (QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005). The following briefly looks at how far these structures were maintained.

❖ *DMIT*

By the time of this study, the DMIT had ceased to function in either district. Contrary to QUIPS objectives, officials contended that the DMIT was established to manage the QUIPS district grant, and thus its role concluded along with the completion of grant expenditure.

❖ *ME*

This had had also stopped functioning in both districts. Again, ME was regarded to have been established in order to monitor QUIPS grant activities; thus, the task was complete. Meanwhile, the existing oversight of schools, i.e. the duties of the circuit supervisor – headed by the assistant director (supervision) – continued to be carried out regardless of any wider notion of ME.

❖ *CPC*

Unlike ME and DMIT, a CPC was kept on in both districts. This was because GES HQ had decided to maintain the position in order to promote community participation in school management. It thus instructed all DEOs to retain their CPCs, financing the position from the district education budget, which was ultimately facilitated through funding from DFID.

However, merely keeping on the CPCs did not necessarily mean that the position was functioning efficiently. The CPC in Upper Denkyira was the original postholder who had been trained by QUIPS, while the CPC at the other DEO was not. In fact, in the latter district, the postholder was a CPC in name only as there had been no activities organised in relation to the position since the officer had been appointed several years previously (interview L5).

5.3.2.2.2 Professional Capacity

Interviews with officials suggested that planning in the DEO was no longer consultative. In fact, it had only been so at the time when it had been necessary to make decisions on the usage of the district grant. However, it was asserted that professional skills acquired through QUIPS training remained useful at the individual level and officials could apply the benefits of their training in their daily work:

> The administrative skills we learnt from QUIPS enable us in some cases to effectively influence planning, because staff here have become more competent through the QUIPS [programme] (interview U7).

Nevertheless, some members of staff were transferred and others retired.[44] When a QUIPS-trained officer left, the position was often filled by someone who had not been trained by QUIPS. The enhancement of individual professional competency and capability through QUIPS training was acknowledged, but it was also seen as being limited to the individual level – unless GES HQ provided continuous training.

5.3.2.3   Lack of Government Planning

Interviews with officials revealed that a lack of programme termination planning by the MoE/GES or USIAD/QUIPS was regarded as a fundamental obstacle to sustainability. This was especially significant because DEO officials considered that maintaining QUIPS practices in their districts was beyond their means and responsibility alone.

In theory, the Ghanaian government should have taken over the programme, but it was believed that in practice, a more realistic arrangement was necessary at the design stage (interview U7). One director of district education argued that proper planning would have allowed additional support to the primary school sector when QUIPS was withdrawn (interview U13). However, without any provision for following this up, a negative view of sustainability prevailed at the DEOs.

5.3.2.4   QUIPS Facilitators and the Effects of Poaching

Ironically, some Ghanaian QUIPS facilitators were retired or former employees of the GES, while others were still employed by the state but were temporarily working for the QUIPS programme through the unpaid leave system. As is frequently the case in the development sector, the offer of better remuneration and conditions of service played a big part in attracting highly capable former and even current GES staff to the programme. By poaching education administrators and teachers from government institutions and offering higher salaries and a supportive working environment, these personnel were able to work at an optimum level in the best interests of the programme. Indeed, these 'efficient' and 'capable' facilitators were regarded by DEO officials, as well as those in the schools, as being instrumental in moving QUIPS

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[44] The transfer or retirement of officials influenced all aspects of the QUIPS legacy. For example, the assistant director (statistics) in both districts, who had each received training in data analysis, were not in post at the time I conducted my fieldwork – one had retired and was yet to be replaced, and the other was on extended leave – and their absence affected efficient data analysis.

forward. However, there was no arrangement integrating their knowledge and skills into the GES system.

5.3.2.5 *Summary of Findings at the Meso Level*

The sustainability of QUIPS was considered to be beyond the responsibility of those at district level. Indeed, whether they could influence it all depended on the question of whether MoE/GES HQ provided the DEO with sufficient funds to continue QUIPS practices in the pilot and extension schools; as well as the necessary support and resources to extend the QUIPS approach throughout the district. The constraint of such a policy was that the officials were not convinced that QUIPS practices were relevant to education development in the districtwide context. Considering the limited resources available to them, the approach itself was not seen to be sufficiently practicable to ensure sustainability.

5.3.3 Micro Level

As seen in section 5.2.3, QUIPS had a huge impact on those in the pilot schools and communities. This section looks at the sustainability of the QUIPS initiative from the viewpoint of those in the schools. It explores this from two main angles, i.e. quality of education and community participation.

5.3.3.1 *Sustainability of Teaching Quality*

The degree to which teachers continued providing a high standard of education varied, depending on the school. However, the biggest challenge to sustainability in the pilot schools was the retention of QUIPS-trained teachers.

Of a total of six QUIPS schools in the two districts, five head teachers remained in post after the end of the intervention.[45] However, of approximately 36 teachers, only 5 stayed in their posts afterwards. These five taught at schools in Upper Denkyira, while all the QUIPS-trained teachers in Lower Denkyira left the pilot schools.

The QUIPS facilitators had asked teachers to stay at their schools for 'a number' of years, but since no one had officially imposed such a requirement, they were under no obligation to comply with it. In truth, many of them waited for QUIPS to leave and then

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[45] One was posted in the middle of the intervention, as the former head teacher was dismissed for misconduct.

"immediately" sought a transfer (interview L/Q2/HT). This was because many felt that the workload imposed on them had been unfair compared with that of their peers who were earning the same salary (interview L/Q1/SMC3; L/Q2/HT; L/Q3/HT).

All the teachers I met condemned QUIPS' treatment of teachers, complaining that the economic opportunity cost of teaching was not factored into the implementation of the programme (e.g. interview L/Q3/T1; U/Q1/T1; U/Q2/T2; U/Q3/T1). Sometimes, they felt that they were not up to the demands that QUIPS made of them and resented the fact that they had been forced to join the programme (interview U/Q3/HT). They harboured the sense that teachers were the only ones who had not benefited from the project at all – except in the enhancement of their professional skills – while pupils and communities had reaped more tangible benefits. Several teachers told me, "We helped QUIPS people" (e.g. interview U/Q1/T2), which implies that they did not feel that they owned the programme.

Many teachers complained bitterly about their lack of incentive to work harder; but the same people also said that they would have left in any case, even if incentives had been provided by QUIPS during the intervention (e.g. interview U/Q1/T3). One teacher added that he had worked hard throughout the programme and could not have worked any harder even if QUIPS had provided incentives (interview U/Q1/T4).

As the extent of DEO supervision went back to the 'usual' after the end of the programme, maintaining the high standard of teaching attained in the QUIPS schools was down to the head teacher alone (interview L/Q3/T1). In theory, it was essential that the head continued to offer teachers – especially newcomers – supervision and support, but in practice, the level of support that had been established was an impossible act to follow (interview U/Q1/HT; L/Q3/HT4).

Although many teachers were keen to leave QUIPS schools for less demanding environments, they were definitely more confident and proud of their newly acquired professional knowledge and skills, claiming that they would attempt to apply their teaching skills as much as possible wherever they taught in future (interview U/Q1/HT; L/Q3/HT; L/Q2/HT).

However, from point of view of the SMC, QUIPS practices would not be sustainable unless QUIPS-trained teachers remained in post. According to the SMCs, schools and communities ceased to benefit from the intervention when QUIPS-trained teachers left,

and this was exactly what was happening. It did not matter to them that teachers might take their new skills to other more deprived schools, thus benefiting the education sector as a whole. For the SMCs, the most important consideration was the issue of whether 'their' children continued to benefit from the QUIPS teachers. Most SMCs were thus disappointed that so many teachers were leaving, a phenomenon that appeared to them to be ill fated.

5.3.3.2 Sustainability of Community Involvement

> Cooperation of the community towards the school has drastically lessened in comparison to the time when QUIPS was here. They seem to wait for [an] outside intervention to boost them up again (interview L/Q3/T1).

Five out of the six SMCs got together for me in response to my invitation through the head teachers. In three of the schools, all the SMC members came along. Such a response was a remarkable contrast to that of the non-QUIPS schools, which might indicate the greater interest of the former in their schools.

Nevertheless, the sense of ownership of the school prevailing in schools and communities during the intervention period was considered to have dwindled; the enthusiasm of SMCs, which had prompted the success of their communities in the micro grant and construction projects, had waned.

One of the QUIPS schools (L/Q3) was introduced to me by the district directorate as having grown to be the "most dynamic" community as a result of the QUIPS intervention. Interviews at the school confirmed this claim: in the CSA final evaluation, the community had been judged to be one in which there was a high probability of sustainability (CSA 2004).

Nevertheless, it turned out that the gathering for me was the first SMC meeting in the two years or more since the completion of the QUIPS programme. This implies that communities described as engendering a high level of school–community interaction and strengthened community support during the intervention were not always able to sustain these outcomes.

Similarly, at another school, all the SMC members assembled, expressing in unison how much they continued to support the school and its teachers, and how often they visited to monitor teaching quality (interview U/Q3/SMC1). Yet, interviews with the head

teacher and teachers (interview U/Q3/HT; U/Q3/T1), as well as the evidence of the visitors' book, revealed that nobody had visited the school for almost a year.

According to the SMCs, the reason for their becoming so lax was that they no longer had the resources to manage schools properly. However, they emphasised that they would retain the knowledge and school management skills acquired through QUIPS training, to be exercised whenever the "extra resources" became available (interview U/Q2/SMC1; L/Q2/SMC1). This casts doubt on the role of the SMC and community in school management, as well as calling into question the meaning of ownership and sustainability.

5.3.3.3   *Summary of Findings at the Micro Level*

The findings at school level reveal to us how difficult it was to sustain such innovations beyond the lifetime of the programme. No matter how thoroughly the teachers were trained, most of them resigned from their posts, leaving the pilot schools with newly arrived non-QUIPS-trained teachers. This presented a significant challenge to head teachers in their attempts to keep up QUIPS practices as much as possible with scant support from the DEO, SMC, PTA or community.

Though many SMCs became dormant, the QUIPS experience was seen as something that had changed their attitude towards the schools. It is possible that the SMC, PTA and community around pilot schools will have a greater receptivity to subsequent interventions, and that they are able to bring greater capacity to future development activities due to their experiences through the QUIPS programme.

5.3.4   Summary of QUIPS Sustainability

Whether the externally provided QUIPS programme is sustained depends on whether schools receive the continuous support and capacity building necessary to do so. After an intensive intervention period of two years, the DEO was the only agency that was in a position to do so. Therefore, responsibility for sustainability at the school level lies with the DEO.

However, the DEO was unable to afford to provide practical support to the level that the pilot schools had become accustomed; neither did it have the capacity to extend QUIPS practices throughout the district. Moreover, given that there was an uneven distribution of resources among schools during the intervention period, the DEO did not

see any reason to maintain this inequitable situation afterwards. It was considered to be a challenge that should be resolved at national level.

However, HQ did not consider sustainability to be its responsibility either, since the QUIPS programme was never integrated into the GES system. The fundamental stumbling block was that GES officials – both at the DEO and HQ – remained unconvinced that the QUIPS approach was an (or the most) appropriate approach to education development, either at district or national level. Without such a conviction, it would be difficult to envisage QUIPS activities being sustainable in the wider education sector.

5.4 Conclusion

The QUIPS programme was implemented under the general auspices of the FCUBE initiative. QUIPS was executed through an integrated programme of training and support that targeted improvement in teaching and school management; community involvement; and national education policy in education, with the aim of improving the quality of primary education. In order to do so, USAID set up the QUIPS programme office to direct its intervention outside the jurisdiction of the GES.

QUIPS targeted three pilot schools in each district for two years, directly supplying teachers and communities with substantial resources and training. Along with this, grants were provided to DEOs and schools, as well as district assemblies.

As a result, the impact of QUIPS during the intervention period was highly visible. Owing to QUIPS' strict control over the pilot schools and DEOs, there was little room for grant funds becoming fungible, although there was always a risk that they would do so.

Because of the inherent risk of fungibility, QUIPS tightened its control over funds and implementation to ensure ultimate accountability to USAID. Thus, while pursuing a tangible and visible impact, the entire process – including the application of grants and the implementation of activities – was inevitably driven by QUIPS consultants.

The fact that the programme was designed and implemented by USAID/QUIPS, and concurrent dismay at the cessation of NPA, caused considerable friction between HQ

officials and USIAD/QUIPS, which resulted in damage to their working relationship. Critically, this led GES HQ to form the opinion that it did not own the QUIPS programme.

The absence of national ownership of the QUIPS programme might not have limited its impact at the district or school level in the short term; yet, since improvement in the quality of education and its sustainability was primarily the responsibility of the Ghanaian state, the absence of national ownership of QUIPS ultimately presented a huge obstacle to its sustainability in the long term.

Since the conclusion of QUIPS, USAID has continued to help the Government of Ghana achieve the FCUBE objectives embedded in the nation's Education Strategic Plan (GoG 2009). Building on the QUIPS experience, the Education Quality for All (EQUALL) programme commenced in 2004 with the aim of continuing to support the basic education sector, primary education in particular. Like QUIPS, the EQUALL programme consists of project assistance that is carried out in partnership with the MOE/GES. Thus, it is implemented by a consortium of local and international partners led by Education Development Centre. However, unlike the nationwide aspiration of QUIPS, EQUALL concentrates on 30 districts. Programme activities have to date benefited more than 2,000 schools and 700 communities in the selected areas.[46]

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[46] http://www.equall.com/ (accessed on 14/09/10).

Chapter 6 Whole School Development

Implemented as an initiative of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Whole School Development (WSD) programme was also designed to meet the goals of Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). WSD was piloted with support from DFID; and, accordingly, the programme was adopted as the Ministry of Education (MoE)/Ghana Education Service (GES) framework for the achievement of comprehensive school development by means of the decentralisation of resource management in the education sector (GES 2001b).

The WSD intervention mainly sought to promote 1) child-centred primary education; 2) community participation; 3) school-based in-service teacher training; and 4) improved efficiency of resource management (GES WSD Report 2004).

Under WSD, districts and schools became responsible for their own planning and budgeting, and were made accountable for performance. Such decentralised education management is a move that has been replicated in many countries (Sayed, 1999). In fact, elements of WSD have been introduced into various development projects in, for example, South Africa (Sayed et al., 2000), Sri Lanka (GES 1999), Tanzania, Malawi, Nigeria (Piron and Watkins, 2004), Zambia, Kenya (Mattson, 2006) and Gansu province in China. In South Africa, a WSD approach has been taken in an in-service teacher training programme, as a holistic and systemic intervention to improve school performance at all levels (Sayed et al., 2000). In Kenya and Zambia, district education offices have been assigned to monitor school-based in-service teacher training (Mattson, 2006).

Several structures were installed in order to meet these goals (GES 2000). A WSD national coordinator was appointed to oversee activities in various departments, for example Basic Education Division (BED), Teacher Education Division (TED) and the Inspectorate. At regional and district levels, zonal coordinators were engaged to provide support to the District Education Office (DEO) in the management of the intervention. At district level, district teacher support teams (DTSTs) offered instructional and managerial support to head teachers, while community participation coordinators (CPCs) promoted the involvement of the community in its children's education.

The WSD programme was implemented under the auspices of the UK's Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP), which ran from 1998 to 2005. The WSD budget was GBP 50 million, comprising GBP 40 million for financial support and GBP10 million for technical assistance. A breakdown of the budget for the 2002/03 fiscal year shows, for example, that the majority of ESSP funding was disbursed to the districts – 10% for divisional activities; 25% for readers; 2% for local technical assistance; and 7% for international technical assistance.[47]

This chapter explores the findings of the study with regard to the WSD programme from the viewpoint of those who were involved in the intervention, especially in the use of WSD funds. The analysis is conducted according to the themes such as monetary fungibility, impact and sustainability at the three levels – HQ, district and school – presenting the findings in terms of each theme separately level by level.

6.1. Perceptions of WSD Fungibility

The figure below shows the flow of funds from DFID to the Ghanaian basic education sector through the WSD programme. DFID provided financial support to the sector by means of the existing GES financial system, supplying funds to GES HQ, which, in turn, released the budget to the DEO, either directly or through the Regional Office (RO). From the district budget, the DEO then distributed small payments, namely the head teachers' imprest (hereafter 'imprest'), to all basic schools in the district.

Figure 6-1 The flow of funds under the WSD programme
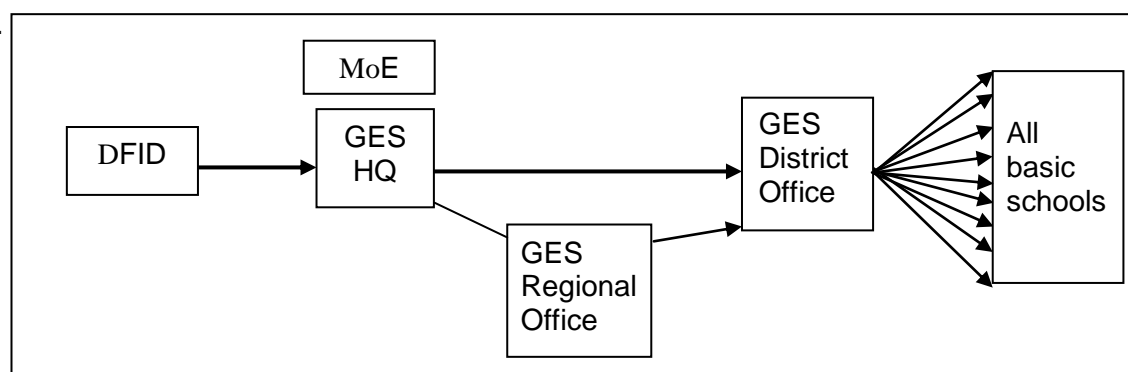
Source: the author.

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[47] Based on ESSP data obtained from the DFID education field office.

The following section firstly explores how HQ officials regarded financial support to the sector. This is followed by an account from district education officials' viewpoint. Thirdly, the section looks at the views of those were responsible for the imprest in the schools. To understand the situation surrounding the use of the imprest, the DEO's audit is included in the final part the school analysis.

6.1.1 Macro Level

During interviews with HQ officials, I often heard that the GES could not function without the financial support of DFID (e.g. interview G6; G8; G11; G14). In fact, HQ officials considered that DFID was a reliable supporter (e.g. interview G3; G13; G1). The prevailing positive view of the HQ officials might have partially arisen from chronic disappointment caused by the unreliable release of the government education budget. This section thus begins with the views of HQ officials on the education budget.

6.1.1.1   Government Budget for Basic Education

More than 70% of the government budget for basic education was allocated to personal remuneration, for example 73.3% in 2005.[48] Consequently, there was not much left over for service and investment expenditure. This was likely to have undermined effective service delivery, as critical non-salary input (e.g. construction and maintenance of classrooms; desks and blackboards; and textbooks and teaching materials) could not be provided by the state (interview M1; M2).

Budget officers at the GES were therefore understandably frustrated with attempting to budget for government funds that they might never receive (interview G6; G14). Indeed, few of them believed that they would receive more than a small fraction of the resources allocated to them for service delivery. Thus, there was little incentive to plan properly or manage education services on anything other than a "hand to mouth" basis (interview G2).

It was under such circumstances that financial assistance was released to GES HQ from DFID in order to implement the WSD programme. Excluding funding for classroom construction, it was reported that DFID provided about 80% of all service and investment funds to the districts for the duration of the intervention (1998–2003)

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[48] World Bank EdSttes calculation on 2006 PER vol.I p.15 from http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/EdStates/ExpReport (20 April 2010).

(GoG 2003 p. 42). By concentrating the flow of assistance on the basic education sector, it was not surprising that WSD had a major influence on education management at both GES HQ and district levels.

6.1.1.2   GES HQ Funds from DFID

Funds from DFID were released to the GES quarterly. In theory, DFID's financial support for the year ahead should have been agreed upon at the time of the consultative panel meeting in September, in order that the donor's funding might be integrated into the government budget cycle (interview M1; M2). However, in reality, this was not always the case. It appears that DFID support had hitherto been provided to coincide with the UK fiscal year, which resulted in reported delays to the WSD programme (GoG 2003 p.14). Despite this reported hold-up, none of the 17 HQ officials I interviewed argued that planned WSD activities were hampered by the late release of the money. Rather, the funding from DFID was considered to be substantial and indeed the only input that enabled them to conduct their activities (interview G14).

6.1.1.3   DEO Budget from GES HQ

One of the prerequisites of DFID assistance was that the existing GES structure should be used to implement the WSD programme (GES 2001b). Various officials, including budget officers of individual departments – e.g. TED – confirmed that existing GES financial procedures had been adopted and used throughout the GES system (interview G1; G2; G3; G6; G14). Interviews with officials also revealed that DFID's method of assisting the education sector enabled them (the officials) to take charge of programme implementation (interview G4; G11).

DFID policy was to strengthen the financial and management capacity of the GES from HQ level through the whole system down to the schools. In actual fact, the programme focused on the administrative capacity of the DEO because this was the first time that the district had regularly received substantial external funds from GES HQ. This enabled the DEO to procure resources the necessity for which had been identified at district level.

Districts were categorised according to administrative capacity (i.e. ready, partially ready and non-ready). Ready districts received funds directly from the financial controller at HQ. Funds for non-ready and partially ready districts were released after they had received the approval of budget plans from HQ and/or the RO.

As Canagarajah and Ye (2002) note, there are substantial differences between budgeted and actual outlays to administrative districts and to schools due to leakage and corruption. Accordingly, plenty of cases of the misapplication and misappropriation of WSD funds are cited in monitoring and auditing reports (Quao, various years). Many officials acknowledged how fragile the GES financial system was, and there was always a risk that funds would be misapplied and/or misappropriated whenever hitherto tight supervision was slackened. In fact, the capacity weakness in dealing with funds at HQ and the DEO was the biggest threat to the implementation of the programme (interview G14).

Nevertheless, it was also widely acknowledged that a financial channel from GES HQ to the schools had at least been established under the WSD programme. (interview G1; G3; G4; G6; G8; G13; G14). For this reason, it was appreciated that DFID had taken a risk and entrusted GES to strengthen the system by letting it work independently. The deputy director of TED explained:

> That was the first time for the districts to receive substantial money. That was a huge challenge. I wouldn't say that all districts were capable enough to handle the huge amount coming into their districts. But I still remember what Michael [a pseudonym, a DFID field officer] told me at the time DFID decided to release the funds to districts. He said, "Let them do [it] first. Let them budget their own plans by themselves. Some can cope. Some may not. We shouldn't wait until all the districts become ready. Let them do [it] and then find out what more we should do; otherwise, we can't move forwards." I think we have come quite far. There are still so many problems. Money leaks. People chop money. There are so many misuses and misapplications. But without that initiative DFID took, the government couldn't release the capitation grant to the districts now (interview G13).

Therefore, the WSD programme was considered to have contributed to the improvement of the means of channelling money throughout the GES, although the system was still very weak.

6.1.1.4   The Extent of DFID Involvement

One or sometimes two expatriates oversaw the UK's Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) from the DFID Ghana Office. Although the field officer was often to be seen at the GES and was said to be close to its officials, DFID did not participate in the day-to-day operation of WSD (interview G8). Rather, once the outline had been

agreed, DFID entrusted the management of the programme to the GES (interview G3). The former implementing coordinator of FCUBE elaborated:

> They entrusted you… They didn't tell you what you should and shouldn't do. They let you plan and gave [you the] money to implement it. It is the first time to get funds in GES and it made you independent…. It is a grant given to the GoG [Government of Ghana]. We regarded DFID funds as our own money (interview G5).

As they began to be entrusted with funds and programme implementation, the boundary between donor resources and GES resources became blurred in the eyes of the officials.

6.1.1.5   *Summary of Findings at the Macro Level*

This was the first time that the GES had been entrusted with donor funds for the implementation of a programme. Although DFID's intention with WSD was to strengthen GES financial capacity, monetary fungibility remained high. Nevertheless, thanks to the use of GES systems for the delivery of funds to district and school levels, along with the low profile of DFID personnel, HQ officials came to regard DFID funding as their own.

6.1.2   Meso Level

This section explores how WSD funds from GES HQ were spent at the DEO.

6.1.2.1   *HQ Funding of the DEO*

WSD funds for the two case study DEOs were transferred through the RO, as Lower Denkyira was classified as partially ready, while Upper Denkyira was deemed to be non-ready. In the former case, funds were transferred to the district through the RO in the form of a cheque. In the latter case, funds were transferred to a single account to be administrated by HQ on behalf of the districts, and were then distributed by cheque through the RO. In both cases, activities had to be approved by either RO, HQ or both before disbursement to the DEO, and the use of funds were also strictly monitored by the RO and HQ (interview L6; L9; U5; U12).

A budget committee led by the district chief executive (of the district assembly) – and including the director of district education – was established to discuss plans submitted

by the DEO. In theory, final plans for investment (e.g. desks and chairs) and educational activities were drawn up and approved at a committee meeting.

In reality, in Lower Denkyira, there was no budget committee and relevant matters were dealt with by the director and accountant only (interview L3; L5; L6; L7). The budget committee in Upper Denkyira held meetings to draw up the final budget plan. However, one of its members questioned the function of the committee. He considered that it did not have the authority to determine activities to be carried out and any decision it made was a mere formality, simply requiring committee members to sign and stamp the plan to demonstrate to HQ that that it had been drawn up collectively (interview U3).

There was also the district education oversight committee; again led by the chief executive, it was installed in order to supervise funds and activities. However, in one district, it existed in name only, while in the other, it did not exist at all. It can thus only be concluded that the institutions installed under WSD to oversee financial affairs outside the DEO do not seem to have fully functioned.

6.1.2.2   *Unpredictable Amount and Timing of Disbursement*

The actual amount of funding that the DEO received often turned out to be lower than the minimum it had previously been guaranteed (interview U3). On being asked how costs were reduced to meet the actual funds available, budget officers in both districts replied that the number of participants in or the duration of an activity (e.g. from a three-day in-service training course to a two-day one) was curtailed rather than dropping certain activities altogether (interview L12; U5).

In Upper Denkyira DEO, all eight action implementers (e.g. circuit supervisor, CPC, and DTST) I interviewed made similar comments, confirming the budget officer's explanation that activities were shrunk to fit the available budget (interview U1; U2; U4; U6; U7; U8; U9; U10). In Lower Denkyira DEO, some officers felt that the activities they had submitted were targeted by the director for removal from the budget plan (interview L5; L7). The consequent obvious tension at the DEO is discussed in further detail later in this section.

Related to the fact that the DEOs were not informed in advance exactly how much they were to receive, they were also unaware of precisely when they would eventually receive the funds. In fact, one DEO had not received the second and third tranches by

the time I visited the district, which was well into the fourth tranche period. This was because the financial controller at HQ was suspending DFID funds until all the DEOs in Central Region had returned the receipts for expenditure during the previous accounting period (interview L6).

Similar to the attitude of those at HQ, district officials acknowledged that no activities could be implemented without funding from DFID (interview L3; L6; U3; U5; U13). Although the actual disbursement often turned out lower than action-implementing officials had previously been informed and they were often still forced to curtail activities when they finally received the cheque, DFID funding was the only regular source for them to implement activities in districts (e.g. interview L1; L2; L4; L8; U1; U2; U6; U7; U10).

The officials were aware that the funding for their activities originated from the UK government, and referred to the DEO budget in terms of both 'WSD funds' and 'DFID funds'. However, their only contact in this regard was with GES HQ, to which DFID gave a free hand in the prioritising of activities at district level (interview DW1).

6.1.2.3 Unauthorised Activities

Perhaps as a result of late disbursement, there were some occasions on which the DEO (or its action implementers) undertook activities that had not been 'officially' approved by the budget committee (interview L6), hence the expenditure of WSD funds on activities that had not been approved or authorised.

There might have been a tacit understanding at the DEO that the budget committee would automatically approve activities already undertaken. However, this situation also implies that no matter how far it was insisted that funds were strictly applied to planned activities, GES guidelines were not strictly followed, thus indicating the fungibility of the DEO budget.

In fact, the assistant director (Administration and Finance) who was ultimately in charge of monetary affairs at Upper Denkyira DEO was very cautious about the potential for monetary fungibility and the inherent risks associated with his office's handling of the funds on its own. He did not think the district should be upgraded to 'ready' status, given how cumbersome and bureaucratic procedures then were, since "anything can happen when incapable people hold the funds" (interview U3). I later read a special

auditing report on this DEO issued in 2002, which uncovered numerous instances of the inappropriate use of funds (see Box 6-1).

Box6-1 Report on the audit investigation of the accounts of Upper Denkyira DEO

Auditors investigated DFID and GoG funding and record keeping at Upper Denkyira DEO for the period January 2001 to June 2002. The report highlighted serious mismanagement, of which the following are some instances:

➢ HQ-released funds were far in excess of the district's own budget. In the work plan for the first tranche, the district requested ¢18 million (USD 2,500) for service activities and ¢10 million (USD 1,400) for teaching and learning materials, but were given ¢61 million (USD 8,700) and ¢21 million (USD 3,100) respectively. No reason could be given by the district for this excess income of ¢55 million (USD 7,900).
➢ A cheque for ¢5 million (USD 760) was drawn on the DFID account for the personal use of the director and the accountant.
➢ Refunds from advances made by schedule officers totalling ¢10 million (USD 1,400) were misappropriated by the director and the accountant.
➢ Advances totalling ¢29 million (USD 4,100) could not be accounted for by schedule officers.
➢ Over ¢80 million (USD 11,600) earmarked for construction and rehabilitation works could not be properly accounted for.
➢ Goods and services totalling ¢32 million (USD 4,700) were paid for but not supplied.
➢ Various allowance totalling ¢15 million (USD 2,200) was not paid to beneficiaries (GES 2001a).

With regard to the activity budget referred to in an earlier section 6.1.2.3, in Lower Denkyira, officials commented that they had not received WSD funds in full for approved plans from the director. Some vehemently argued and others mildly pointed out that they were often granted only half the planned budget, and sometimes there were no funds at all (interview L5; L7). It perhaps did not help the situation that when appointed, the director brought an accountant with her and let him work on the DFID budget rather than the incumbent chief accountant.

Coupled with the fact that the budget committee was non-existent, this lack of transparency and accountability left officials frustrated. Yet, all those who whispered to me of their nagging suspicions said that they had not challenged and would not challenge the director's authority but just continue to pray for her to leave.[49] Rather,

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[49] DEO staff may not have confronted the director openly but still made their dissatisfaction clear in many ways. For example, the director ordered the office driver to return to the office immediately after driving the circuit supervisor and me to a case study school. However, the driver did not intend to go back and the circuit supervisor had no intention of ordering him to do so. I asked the driver to return, being afraid that the director might think I was disobeying her. But they insisted on staying at the school with me, saying that they wanted to demonstrate their dissatisfaction to the director about her attitude towards me. They believed that she was treating

they suggested that I request the Auditing Office and financial controller at HQ to come down and investigate the problem. This culture of silence (Fobih et al. 1995) not only prevented officials from communicating information about problems up the hierarchy, but was also an impediment to the proper functioning of the DEO internal monitoring system.

Finding out whether officials' suspicions about the alleged fraud had any factual basis was beyond the scope of my study, yet the point was that they believed they did and thus behaved accordingly, which inevitably seemed to cause friction among them and make the office operate less efficiently. Therefore, curtailing the approved budget without informing anyone of course not only led to a reduction in activities but also fuelled mistrust of the office directorate.

6.1.2.4 Summary of Findings at the Meso Level

DFID did not have a presence at the district level, although WSD funds were considered to be the sole means of financing DEO activities. As DFID had no control or influence over the funds, responsibility for ensuring that they were properly spent depended on GES HQ supervision and, most importantly, the DEO internal monitoring mechanism. However, neither functioned efficiently enough to prevent DEO funds from becoming fungible, which inevitably affected the successful implementation of activities.

6.1.3 Micro Level

Under WSD, a small amount of imprest was released from the DEO to the schools to enable head teachers to provide in-service training. This section examines the imprest, how often it was delivered, how it was spent and who was involved in deciding how it was spent. To understand how the DEO attempted to monitor the expenditure of the imprest, DEO auditing is also considered in the last part of this section.

6.1.3.1 Imprest

With the incorporation of their schools into the WSD programme, head teachers were instructed to open a bank account in order to receive the imprest. This was the first time that schools had received physical cash (interview L1). The imprest was intended

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me unfairly because of her suspicion that I might have a hidden agenda assigned to me by GES HQ, which wanted revelations about the goings on at the DEO.

to help schools carry out their action plan, especially in terms of in-service training. Head teachers attended an initial three-day course on how to prepare an action plan with their teachers and the SMC.

In order to draw cash from the imprest account, the head teacher and SMC chairperson were both required as signatories. All basic schools were gradually incorporated into WSD, 15 to 25 schools at a time. As the number of beneficiary schools increased, the amount of the imprest and DEO support to each school was necessarily reduced (interview L2; U9; L/W2/HT; L/W1/HT).

6.1.3.1.1　　Frequency and Amount of Imprest

The frequency and amount of imprest that schools received differed between the two districts.

Table 6-1 shows the frequency and amount of imprest at schools in Lower Denkyira, the district in which DEO officials complained about a lack of transparency in the office with regard to the management of funds.

Table 6-1 School imprest in Lower Denkyira district

School	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	Source
L/W1	¢150,000		¢150,000	¢200,000	¢100,000	Verbal; accounts book
L/W2	¢120,000	¢120,000				Verbal
L/W3		¢100,000		¢100,000	¢80,000	Verbal; accounts book

Source: interviews with head teachers.

The three schools represented in the above table were all in the first WSD cohort. According to the DEO, they were all entitled to the same amount of imprest at the same frequency (interview L1). However, one school (L/W2) had not received an imprest since the academic year 2001/2002. The other two schools had received it more recently (although not in every year), but the amount varied between them when it should have been identical. Head teachers did not usually compare their school's imprest with each other and were therefore unaware if they had received less than they were entitled to.

Table 6-2 shows the total allocation of imprest, as drawn from official district records in Upper Denkyira. It was paid biannually, the amount having been fixed at ¢150,000 (USD 21) per tranche at its introduction, rising to ¢220,000 (USD 31) with the final

instalment. When there were insufficient funds to provide each school with its entitlement, the imprest was distributed by cohort, e.g. 2002/3 and 2003/4.

Table 6-2 Release of imprest in Upper Denkyira district

Tranche	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6
First	*	¢150,000×37	¢150,000 × 37	¢150,000 × 114	¢220,000 × 115
Second	*	¢150,000×37	¢150,000 × 37	¢150,000 × 115	

* Budget unavailable.
Source: implementation of district education budget ESSP district work plan, Upper Denkyira, various years.

Table 6-3 School imprest in Upper Denkyira district

School	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	Source
U/W1	¢250,000					Verbal
U/W2		¢150,000 ¢150,000	¢150,000 ¢150,000	¢150,000 ¢150,000	¢220,000	Verbal
U/W3		¢300,000	¢250,000	¢150,000 ¢150,000	¢220,000	Verbal; accounts book

Source: interviews with head teachers.

Table 6-3 provides information about the frequency and amount of imprest. If tables 6-2 and 6-3 are compared, it may be noted that two schools (U/W3 and U/W2) received their imprest quite regularly and as per the district budget plan (although the amount differed in 2003/04). In contrast, the other school (U/W1) received its imprest only once.

The latter school's name was duly listed in the official disbursement record provided to the local bank. Nevertheless, the head teacher insisted that the school had not received anything since 2001/02. It was possible that the money was still in the bank account without having been withdrawn; otherwise, one can only conclude that it went astray somewhere between the DEO and the school.

In comparing the two districts, it can be safely assumed that the question of how often the imprest was distributed depended heavily on the DEO. The head teachers of schools regularly receiving the imprest regarded it as a reliable income that facilitated the realisation of their action plans (interview U/W2/HT; U/W3/HT). In contrast, the heads who had not received the imprest regularly did not consider it to be of much use for this purpose; and in some cases, even stopped making action plans altogether soon after the funds started failing to materialise. One such head teacher commented:

> We stopped making an action plan long ago because money doesn't come. What should we make it for? Why should we make it? (interview L/W2/HT).

A district head teacher advisor at the DEO argued that attributing the cessation of the production of an action plan to the unreliable release of the imprest was merely a pretext, claiming:

> They [head teachers] said that they stopped making action plans because the funds hadn't come. Then, how can the office release the imprest to the schools in which there is no action plan prepared? It is a flimsy excuse (interview L1).

This seemed like a vicious circle. The point was that the imprest was not delivered to schools according to national WSD principle.

6.1.3.1.2   Extent of Teacher and SMC Involvement

As to the number of WSD schools in which at least one teacher (in addition to the head) and one SMC member was aware of the imprest released from the DEO, over the two districts, only teachers in two schools knew about the imprest, and the SMC in only one school had been informed about it by the head teacher. There was no school in which both teachers and SMC members were aware of the imprest.

This means that information about the imprest was seldom shared by the head among his or her teachers and the SMC members. For example, in one school that had received the imprest regularly (U/W3), it was managed solely by the head and SMC chairperson, from collecting the money to deciding what items to buy. On the other hand, none of the teachers were aware of the imprest, asserting that the school had never received funds from the DEO (interview U/W3/T1; U/W3/T2; U/W3/T3).

The head teacher of this school claimed that the imprest was spent on materials for in-service training, which took place twice a year (interview U/W3/HT), while all the other teachers informed me that they had never had any training organised by the head. Conversely, in another school (U/W2), although the imprest was handled by the head teacher alone, it was spent on teaching and learning materials for the provision of in-service training for two hours every week.

6.1.3.1.3   DEO Monitoring and Auditing of the Imprest

The DEO was supposed to monitor the imprest it allocated to schools. However, it was a challenging task considering the resources available to those such as auditors and circuit supervisors.

In Upper Denkyira, an audit of the imprest took place each year. The following table shows the number of head teachers in both circuits who took part in the 2005 audit. It indicates that only half the head teachers were in attendance with their requisite records of purchase and receipts.

Table 6-4 Head teachers of two circuits in Upper Denkyira district participating in the 2005 audit

Circuit	A	B
Schools in circuit	26	15
Schools represented	13	7
Schools not represented	13	8

Source: audit record, Upper Denkyira DEO.

Moreover, the auditors suspected that not all receipts were sufficiently authentic to be regarded as genuine proof of purchase. Nevertheless, they were obliged to accept any type of receipt, even if there was no serial number, name of cashier or manager, or business address, because GES HQ had instructed the DEO to accept 'honour certificates' as genuine proof of purchase.[50] However:

> It is easy for heads to use the honour certificate and cover the fake ones...When the head puts [the] 'quantity', 'list' and 'amount' down on the paper, this paper becomes [an] honour certificate and [is] treated as [a] genuine receipt (interview U11).

Moreover, the auditors admitted that they had not been informed by the directorate of the items the imprest should have been spent on. Therefore, they could only check receipts; they did not know whether head teachers had spent the money on authorised items or not (interview U11). Furthermore, there did not seem to be any sanctions if any misuse of funds was revealed as the result of an audit. The auditor continued:

> We submitted the report to the director but we're not authorised, so I don't know if [any] action is taken [in the case of misuse] or not. The director is supposed to take action against the schools, but we don't know (interview U11).

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[50] The GES authorised head teachers to produce such 'honour certificates' when official receipts were not obtainable, e.g. in the hinterland where there were no proper shops or retailers to issue receipts.

As a result, if head teachers could produce 'honour certificates' and no sanction was imposed, there was a danger that head teachers have liberty to use the funds as free money which is given to them as personal money (interview U9).

Some head teachers expressed this opinion themselves, emphasising the need for tight monitoring because "receipts can be forged" (interview L/W3/HT). More importantly, a situation in which there were no guidelines, no instructions, no follow-up and no sanctions caused some head teachers to take the attitude that the DEO was not interested in whether the imprest was spent conscientiously or not (interview U/W3/HT; -L/W1/HT; U/W3/HT; U/W2/HT).

6.1.3.2   *Summary of Findings at the Micro Level*

The imprest was not distributed from the DEO to the schools as regularly as it should have been. The frequency and amount of imprest varied between the two DEOs, and, in some cases, even between schools in the same district. When the imprest was received by schools, information was not sufficiently shared amongst staff in order to manage it efficiently. Auditing was not strictly applied, and thus accountability of the imprest to the DEO was also lacking. Finally, since DEO supervision was also limited, the question of whether the imprest was effectively spent seemed to fall to the individual head teacher.

6.1.4 Summary of WSD Fungibility

DFID did not play a visible role in terms of delivering funding from GES HQ to the schools through the DEO since the existing MoE structure was used for this task. Thus, the entire process was the sole responsibility of the GES. In contrast to the positive view held by HQ officials of their independent management of the funds, what actually took place in the districts was far from adherence to the established mechanism, especially in terms of interaction between the DEO and the schools. In general, leakage and diversion of funds was highly probable, which inevitably affected the efficiency of programme implementation.

6.2.   Perceptions of WSD Impact

This section explores Ghanaian education actors' views on the impact of the WSD programme. They are examined from three angles, namely, capacity building; teaching

and learning; and community participation. The discussion begins with a consideration of the views of those at HQ, followed by actors at the district level and, finally, those in the schools.

6.2.1 Macro Level

> If Whole School Development had not been around, there could have been isolated projects and programmes. But the process, the system, would not have been strengthened. So, the success of Whole School Development depended on strengthening the existing systems to be able to perform. That is the measure of success that we see. We strengthened the existing structures to enable GES [to] perform (interview G4).

6.2.1.1   Impact on the GES System

GES officials at HQ acknowledged that the foremost impact of WSD was its strengthening of the state system. Accordingly, GES administration capacity was enhanced through its leading the entire intervention, i.e. from planning to budgeting, implementing and, finally, monitoring and evaluation.

WSD made use of existing GES structures from HQ to the DEO down to the schools in order to implement the programme. Activities were planned and implemented by each division according to a WSD framework. Thus, each division took charge of its own activities (interview G8; G9; G11; G13). For example, WSD supported TED in its direct training of 2,200 head teachers and 1,100 DTST members (Seidu, 2003).

The former director of BED said that WSD was internally generated and integrated into each department, going on to explain:

> What had to be done, what ought to be done, what is going to be done, all generate from inside various divisions in [the] GES. Whereas Teacher Education looked at teaching and learning aspects, Basic Education was taxed with [the] community involvement aspect. Then, [the] Inspectorate was charged with [the] assessment of children aspect of it, whilst Manpower was changed with [the] management aspect. So, you can see that GES as a whole unit had a hold on WSD, by division, by the structure itself. [The] GES system itself was in charge of WSD. WSD was generated from inside, created the structure (interview G11).

GES HQ created new positions and bodies in order to strengthen administrative capacity at district level, and to shift more power and responsibility for school

improvement to the district and school levels; for example, the district head teacher advisor, the DTST, the budget committee, and the district education oversight committee. WSD coordinators mentioned that the creation of these bodies was crucial to the efficient use of funds and effective training delivery (interview G1; G4). Finally, with the advent of WSD, structures that would enable GES officials to carry out their duties professionally had been installed (interview G11). A district director – a former BED officer – commented:

> These structures are working in the districts and schools. And interestingly enough, other donors who are entering the education sector are now using those structures. So, the structures are in place (interview G3).

6.2.1.2   Impact on the GES Financial System

Through WSD implementation, the GES financial system was strengthened by targeting funding at administration capacity building in the districts. However, in practice, it was the first time that the DEOs had planned and drawn up their own budgets (interview G5). Thus, it was perhaps unsurprisingly a far from smooth operation and confusion reigned at the introduction of financial planning procedures, many DEOs facing repeated planning and budgeting problems (interview G3). The former coordinator of FCUBE recalled:

> There were so many problems. We delegated leadership, accountability, transparency to [the] district office. That was new to them. Some coped, some couldn't (interview G5).

Nevertheless, over the years, the DEO grew accustomed to budgeting for itself (interview G6; G14). A budget officer commented:

> At the time of the introduction of Whole School, preparing a work plan with budget was an innovation for [the] district. It was a challenge for them, but this time it's normal… There are still misappropriated funds. We have measures in place but we still have a lot of problems. But what I am saying is that we have come so far, and at the time we started WSD, things were not as we are seeing now (interview G6).

The deputy director of TED acknowledged that GES/WSD was taking the risk of funds being misused or misappropriated, but argued that this should not stop them from building capacity in the districts and schools:

> So, yes, we are running some risks, by putting both effective and non-effective people together – lumping them together. But if we are driven by sheer fear that our people

will misuse funds, misappropriate them, then our schools will never grow. Some districts perform well, some [do] not; some head teachers perform well, some [do] not. It will take time to encourage and motivate all the heads to come to perform well to do their jobs (interview G6).

6.2.1.3   *Impact on Schools*

A GES structure might have been put in place; the GES system might have been strengthened; and funds might have been delivered to schools through the DEO. However, the most important thing officials had to consider was how far WSD efforts had actually led to the achievement of planned outcomes and, ultimately, improvement in learning and the school environment:

> The present standard, which we are even saying is not good enough, without the WSD, we could not have achieved even that standard. We may not fulfil the promise, but I would say I am satisfied with the WSD outcomes. Without this, we could not reach even this point (interview G4).

According to an evaluation of World Bank (2004) support to primary education in Ghana, which included an analysis of various inputs, the evidence appeared to show that WSD was having some impact in terms of test scores,[51] although this could not be attributed to the effects of WSD alone.

Officials admitted that the GES could not produce quantifiable evidence that WSD had made an impact in terms of primary school achievement:

> Since GES took [the] initiative, the journey has been very slow, yes, very slow. [The] GES system [has] become capable under Whole School, but if we measure the performance of the child, we would not say that we have succeeded so much. WSD is [a] more extensive arrangement because it concerns every school in Ghana. That is why the outcomes are ambiguous. The effect of WSD in terms of performance of school children is a very difficult thing to say. But we are happy to see some glimpse of success somewhere (interview G11).

Despite the prevailing notion that the GES could not demonstrate tangible or statistical results to prove the impact of WSD, officials strongly believed that the WSD approach, which supported the GES system by releasing funds directly to the state, was "a better

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[51] The Criteria Reference Test (CRT), which was conducted by the MoE since 1992, confirmed the modest improvement: mean English score improved from 29.9% to 36.9% between 1992 and 2000. However it also confirmed that standards were still very low: less than 10% children reached mastery level in math, and less than 5% did so in English (World Bank, 2004a pp.34-6).

way," (interview G12) or "the best in [the] long run" (interview G6). Moreover, being entrusted with funds and resources, the GES gained a sense of ownership of WSD (interview G11).

Given the fact that the WSD intervention did not make a short-term tangible impact, it is arguable whether using the existing GES structure was an efficient channel for fund delivery. However, the officials were confident that this was the only road to eventual education development, maintaining the view that it would take time before the effects of macro impact indicators became apparent.

Nevertheless, the weakness embedded in the system at the district level was well reported. In a GES WSD report (2003), a persistent problem was identified in that "most district directors are unwilling to co-operate in the provision of budgetary allocation for the operation of district structures" (p.25). This could affect all aspects of development at district and school levels (interview G4). It was thus probably not surprising that the impact had yet to be translated into significant improvements in terms of examination results, enrolment and dropout rates.

6.2.1.4 *Summary of Findings at the Macro Level*

A major impact of WSD was considered to be its strengthening of the system from HQ, to the DEO and schools by releasing funds to the GES and enabling officials to take responsibility for the overall implementation of the programme.

Officials argued that WSD had a significant impact in terms of providing more cost-efficient service delivery through direct support to GES structures. They also emphasised that this contributed to the promotion of Ghanaian ownership of WSD.

The question of the extent to which WSD had made an impact on the improvement of education was not yet quantifiable. However, despite this lack of tangible results, HQ officials asserted that an approach in which GES took charge was the best way to achieve education development in Ghana.

6.2.2 Meso Level

The DEO played a central role in developing WSD by providing teachers with support and training, and enhancing community support to education. This section looks at how district education officers regarded the impact of WSD, firstly, in terms of DEO

management capacity; secondly, with regard to delivery of in-service training; and lastly, in the extent to which their efforts led to school improvement, especially in respect of learning outcomes and community participation.

6.2.2.1 Impact on Capacity at the District Education Office

With the introduction of WSD, DEOs began to receive a quarterly payment. This was the first time they had received a regular operational budget. As confirmed by the views of those at GES HQ, once the financial system was installed and began to function, DEOs gradually grew accustomed to WSD financial procedures . Budget officers and chief accountants in both districts stated that, as a result of the numerous training sessions organised by HQ, they had become competent and capable of drawing up the budget, and dealing with its daily management (interview L3; L9; U5; U12).

The capitation grant, a financial mechanism for the channelling of funds from the DEO to the schools, was about to be released at the time of my fieldwork. The DEO provided head teachers with training in planning and budgeting for action plans, and how to manage the imprest on a daily basis. Although they expected teething problems, DEO officials believed that the procedure would be more confusing if WSD had not introduced the imprest and the action plan (interview U5; U3).

The view of HQ was that the DEO had been delegated responsibility, leadership and accountability with the provision of an operational budget. This view was contested by some DEO officials (interview U5; U3). Budget officers in particular considered that authority had not actually been transferred because the DEO was not informed about the annual budget or even the amount of the next tranche. The actual disbursement was often lower than the minimum the DEO had been guaranteed, and plans for activities still needed to be approved by HQ and/or the RO. Thus, DEO officials argued that HQ still held the power and had not really delegated leadership to them.

Conversely, some of the directorate considered that at least decentralised WSD planning and budgeting procedures promoted a better culture of information sharing and transparency among DEO staff due to their involvement in budgeting for activities. However, this arrangement was so far limited to the meso level, an assistant director admitting that such a culture was not the case between the DEO and the schools (interview U3).

Moreover, in terms of a sense of professional competency, many officials saw themselves as having become more competent and confident in their professional capacity. Through a series of training courses, they had been "equipped," their individual capacity "lifted" (interview U9), and they felt "empowered" (interview L7). At the same time, they emphasised the importance of continuous support from the DEO directorate, because "old habits…easily come back" (interview L8).

6.2.2.2   *Impact on In-service Training*

The cascade model of teacher training and development was an important strategy employed by WSD to promote school improvement. Firstly, head teachers received training in pupil-centred teaching. Then, with supervision and support from district officials – including the district head teacher advisor, DTST and the circuit supervisors – the heads used the imprest to provide their teachers with on-site support and training. This took place at school as well as cluster level. This process was seen as "a first step towards the school itself carrying [out] their own in-service training" (interview L1). Moreover:

> Whole School brought the district systematic in-service training [for the] first time. Training was finally organised; INSET wasn't held regularly before Whole School. School-based training and cluster-based training became systematised; courses were held so many times (interview U8).

Structures for supporting and training teachers, such as DTST, were established. WSD was considered to have facilitated teacher development in a cost-effective manner because training took place in a local setting and was organised by the DEO (interview U13; G15). However, officials also admitted that it lacked effectiveness and did not fully meet initial expectations (interview L1).

They identified several reasons for this. Firstly, the success of training activities ultimately depended on the integrity and leadership of the head teacher (interview L4; L8; L12; U13; U7). Secondly, it also depended on the willingness of staff, especially in the absence of any reward or incentive (interview U9). Thirdly, support and supervision provided by HQ to the DEO, for example, through the zonal coordinator and DST, to facilitate training fell away over time (interview U8). Fourthly, related to this point, some officials questioned whether DEO personnel were actually capable of delivering effective training and introducing pupil-centred teaching (interview L13). Fifthly, there was the problem of retaining trained teachers (interview L4; U9).

Officials found themselves in a dilemma between incorporating all schools in the district into the WSD programme, and the physical limitations of providing adequate supervision and support to each one (interview L1; L13). However, given that retention of trained teachers was a serious problem, accommodating all the schools was thought to be the right approach, since teachers would cease to benefit from WSD training if they moved to non-WSD schools (interview L4). Therefore, the importance of continuous support was repeatedly emphasised.

What was less evident was the extent to which WSD encouraged teachers to adopt a pupil-centred teaching and learning approach. But because it was disseminated through cluster and school-based in-service training, the question of whether this methodology was gaining ground at school level depended to a large extent on how regular and effective these training workshops were. Consequently, it was considered that there was a long way to go (interview L4; U7), and it would require prolonged and continuous effort before any reflection on academic performance in the classroom could be observed.

6.2.2.3   Impact on Schools and Community Participation

Apart from the training aspect, it was also considered that the school environment had improved under WSD, for example, chairs and desks labelled DFID/WSD were brought in; chalk, pens and books were procured; furniture and cupboards were put in place; and school compounds were renovated. However, officials were not certain that such inputs would lead to a tangible impact on academic performance; sometimes, environmental difficulties overwhelmed any efforts on the part of the DEO and teachers, especially in rural schools (interview L7).

Community participation in school improvement was considered to be the weakest aspect of the WSD intervention. However, the standard framework of the SMC was at least in place in nearly all schools in response to DEO instructions (interview U2). In both districts, the DEO organised several workshops, but it was acknowledged that it would be a long time before SMCs were functioning at full capacity (interview L2; U2).

6.2.2.4   Summary of Findings at the Meso Level

A mechanism for the receipt of funds from HQ had to a certain extent been established. DEO capacity in terms of budgeting and planning was thus considered to have at least

been strengthened. Similarly, structures for providing in-service training – e.g. DTST, and school-based and cluster-based training – had been put in place. But these systems did not appear to be operating as effectively as officials had expected.

Nevertheless, the cascade model of training was considered to be not only cost-efficient, but also a relevant approach under circumstances in which the retention rate of teachers was low, since all schools were targeted. However, even these combined efforts had not yet made a tangible impact on the academic performance of pupils.

In terms of community participation, the SMC had been standardised but was yet to function at full capacity.

6.2.3   Micro Level

This section explores how the impact of the programme was viewed in WSD schools.

6.2.3.1   Impact on Teaching and Learning

All six head teachers in the case study districts thought that there had been some positive changes since their schools had joined the WSD programme (interview L/W1/HT; L/W2/HT; L/W3/HT; U/W1/HT3; U/W2/HT; U/W3/HT).

Head teachers attended residential and intensive school administration and pupil-centred teaching workshops, for example one week in Accra. They then acted as facilitators for training back in their schools. Later, other teachers were appointed as facilitators or lead teachers. As DEO officials confirmed, the frequency of training events varied among schools.

Three schools (L/W1, L/W3 and U/W2) had on-site training from time to time, and cluster-based training once a year (interview L/W1/HT1; L/W3/HT; U/W2/HT2). Of these, one head teacher provided a two-hour session each week. His efforts were highly appreciated by the community, as all the teachers at this school were untrained. There appeared to be a correlation between receipt of the imprest and initiation of a training event, with the exception of one case in which the school did not have training despite the fact that it had received the imprest.

In the remaining three schools (L/W2, U/W1, U/W3), teachers could not recall any training sessions in the previous two or three years, although two head teachers claimed that training was held twice a term (interview L/W2/HT; U/W3/HT).

Some head teachers noted that the level of DEO supervision, especially that of the circuit supervisors, was higher than it had been before the advent of WSD (interview L/W2/HT; U/W3/HT). Head teachers and circuit supervisors tried to sit in on classes, and check teachers' lesson plans and their pupils' work. These efforts were mentioned by both head teachers and their staff in some schools.

However, all the head teachers agreed that DEO support and supervision had latterly waned. Although they expressed some disappointment at this, they accepted it as inevitable because they knew that other schools had joined the programme cohort by cohort, necessitating the sharing of resources.

With regard to the impact of such support, four out of six head teachers thought that their pupils had made a degree of progress. One head teacher emphasised that teaching style had changed markedly under WSD:

> [There were] vast changes after…the introduction of WSD – drastic changes in the teaching methods, from [the] abstract to 'reality friendly'. Teachers were instructed to show real materials to pupils to let them understand. Children are able to read, explain themselves and ask questions when they don't understand. Formerly, teachers taught and taught. Teachers asked them, "Do you understand?" They said, "Yes, madam." That was all, when they may not understand something, but they fear to say so. They don't feel shy of asking questions now (interview L/W1/HT).

This implies that the results of training had started to take root in some schools.

The same four head teachers also identified an upward trend in enrolment in their schools:

> Enrolment is getting higher and higher. Before WSD, enrolment was not that high. After WSD, [it increased], maybe because textbooks and exercise books were supplied to the school. Parents around here are aware that this school is WSD and receive resources more than other schools do (interview L/W3/HT).

The conviction that increased enrolment was a result of WSD support to the schools notwithstanding, it was again difficult to say if this could be attributed solely to WSD. Three out of the four schools were located in towns (L/W1, L/W3 and U/W3) and there

must have been many other factors affecting their increase in enrolment. The remaining school was located in a remote rural setting but its head teacher displayed outstanding leadership qualities, which in all likelihood had just as great, if not greater, influence on enrolment.

6.2.3.2   Impact on the SMC and Community Participation

The SMC was established in all six schools. However, although their degree of involvement differed slightly, they were not playing an active role in school improvement.

In one case (U/W3), the SMC members worked relatively closely with the head teacher, who counted on their support whenever there was an administrative problem, the teachers being somewhat excluded from school management. Thus, it was the SMC chairperson who accompanied the head teacher to the bank to withdraw the imprest.

Conversely, some SMCs (L/W1/SMC1; L/W3/SMC1; U/W2/SMC1) remained ignorant of school finances, even though they helped collect levies. The reasons why SMCs did not press head teachers to include them in financial matters and/or involve them in school management varied.

One SMC was aware that it ought to be more involved but was afraid that the teachers would leave if it intervened in school matters:

> I think that something is not clear. We don't know about grants, action plans or [the] budget. I think something [is] wrong. If we intervene [in] teachers' or [the] school's affairs, like checking if they are making action plans, if planned activities were done or not, they wouldn't like it and they will leave the school. So we don't bother them. Teachers would think that the community worry them; in order to avoid trouble, [we] just leave them [to] whatever they are doing (interview L/W2/SMC1).

Another SMC asserted that financial matters were the head teacher's responsibility, saying that "The Head has been here for more than 10 years; we trust him" (interview U/W1/SMC1).

Thus, whatever the reason, the SMC did not make an active contribution to school improvement.

6.2.3.3   Summary of Findings at the Micro Level

The extent to which WSD had made an impact on the quality of teaching and learning was not clear. It depended heavily on the character of the school or, to be more precise, the integrity of the head teacher. However, indications of positive change could be seen in schools and heard in the accounts of head teachers and their staff. There were some cases in which training sessions took place frequently, and teaching style had noticeably shifted to a much more pupil-centred approach in some schools. However, in terms of community participation, the SMC had not yet played a substantial role in school improvement.

6.2.4   Summary of WSD Impact

A major benefit of the WSD intervention was to strengthen existing GES institutions, for example TED, BED, the DEO and the schools themselves. Officials at HQ argued that WSD had made a significant impact in providing more cost-efficient service delivery through direct support to GES structures. They emphasised that the direct funding of the WSD programme had contributed to promoting Ghanaian ownership of the initiative. HQ officials also asserted that WSD had led to greater leadership, responsibility and accountability among district education officers, teachers and community members, through the delegation of financial responsibility to DEO and school levels.

However, the latter claim was not so willingly acknowledged by DEO officials, much less the school and community. Nevertheless, officials at the district level considered that WSD had strengthened the administrative capacity of the DEO by granting it the means to independently budget for its activities.

The cascade model of training and development was established. This was a pivotal WSD strategy to promote educational decentralisation and school improvement. However, it was generally agreed that it should be broadened in order to include as many teachers as possible and to organise training as often as possible. The problems identified were in the capability limitations of implementation. Likewise, many heads, teachers and SMC representatives believed WSD impact to be insubstantial except in the cases of a few schools that had benefited from the programme to a relatively greater extent.

Structures were put in place and the system was strengthened. However, although there were some noticeable positive changes in the schools, it was believed that it would take time to translate them into measurable outcomes, which would only be possible if WSD efforts were maintained and reinforced.

6.3.   Perceptions of WSD Sustainability

The UK's ESSP, which facilitated WSD, came to an end in 2003.[52] This section explores how the sustainability of WSD after the termination of the intervention was perceived by Ghanaian education actors.

6.3.1 Macro Level

Views on the sustainability of WSD at GES HQ varied considerably. This difference of opinion appears to have originated from the way an individual played his or her part in the WSD programme. Their views may thus be categorised according to three professional groups: Senior GES executives, WSD coordinators (national and zonal) and implementation officers (in various GES divisions). This section begins by looking at the different views of these groups in terms of the sustainability of WSD.

6.3.1.1   Lack of Leadership and Commitment to WSD

The highest-ranking GES executives, i.e. the director general and his deputy, lacked commitment to WSD, and did not exercise the leadership necessary to sustain it as a constituent part of national education policy. Rather, the director general regarded WSD as a completed programme within the FCUBE framework (interview G17).

There was also a power struggle and tension at senior level at the time I was conducting the study. Consequently, for some reason that was not immediately apparent, WSD fell out of favour. In fact, on one occasion, the deputy director general abruptly told me that she did not know anything about WSD and did not want to be asked about it (interview G16), despite the fact that she had previously been a district director.[53]

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[52] However, this disbursement of ESSP funding continued until 2005.

[53] There was conflict over the appointment of the director general. Associated with this power struggle, there was an intense argument between the deputy director general and the WSD national coordinator, which contributed to the loss of the directorate's support for WSD.

As though reflecting this indifference towards WSD at the highest level, "there was [a] massive transfer of district directors and accountants without consultation with WSD, which created a new vacuum for capacity building and sustainability of the initiatives set in motion through WSD" (Seidu, 2003 p.25). This in turn cast doubt on GES ownership of WSD as a national framework. In the end, it may not have been sufficiently assimilated into the GES structure.

Internal sidelining of WSD at senior GES level was to some extent accelerated by a change of DFID policy in its aid delivery, which shifted from sector assistance to wider financial assistance, for example, sector budget support. Consequently, the DFID Ghana office did not exercise any strong influence or put pressure on the MoE/GES to sustain WSD as a national framework when the ESSP came to an end (interview DW1). Things might have been different if DFID had demonstrated commitment and leadership to WSD. However, if WSD could not be sustained without applying external pressure on the GES, then the degree of ownership the GES had over WSD was questionable.

6.3.1.2   *Dissolution of WSD Coordinators*

When the ESSP came to an end, all WSD coordination positions (six zonal coordinators, headed by a national coordinator) were dissolved and their incumbents were reassigned to other positions (interview G1; G2; G4). Consequently, there was no one at HQ to act in the interests of WSD, especially with regard to the initiation of new activities to facilitate the programme. Accordingly, former coordinators were deeply pessimistic about the continuation of WSD (interview G1; G2; G4). One of them described their role as a driving force to move the programme forwards (interview G4). Thus, it was generally agreed that a fatal blow had been dealt to WSD with the dissolution of their positions.

6.3.1.3   *Assimilation into GES Operations*

However, the views of implementation officials that emerged through the interviews diverged from those of the WSD coordinators. Unlike the latter, the officials involved in WSD in the individual divisions – e.g. TED and the Inspectorate – saw themselves as continuing their work as usual, regardless of any politically initiated changes at a higher level. They did not believe that there was any difference between the time of the WSD intervention and the so-called 'post-WSD' era.

The implementation officials did not interpret the dissolution of WSD Coordination positions as a symbolic gesture indicating that the GES was abandoning the programme. The deputy director of TED confirmed:

> [Because] a particular office named Whole School Development doesn't exist, [that] doesn't mean that Whole School doesn't exist at HQ anymore. It is not true. What we are doing is what we did under the Whole School. There is no difference (interview G13).

As a result of the coordinated efforts of various divisions, WSD itself was considered to have been assimilated or become embedded in daily GES operations regardless of whether or not there were any WSD coordinators. Another deputy director emphasised:

> Whole School Development was an integrated effort. Within Whole School, all divisions were on board…. It was a concerted effort. We may not call it WSD anymore, but it doesn't matter what it's called. Whatever we call it, what we are doing is what we did under the Whole School (interview G9).

With WSD, individual divisions formulated their own activities and carried them out. GES regulations and procedures were transformed in order to implement WSD and it became a GES operation (interview G11). Thus, it did not matter to the implementation officials whether there were still WSD advocates in senior positions at HQ or not (interview G3). Rather, the dissolution of the WSD coordination positions was seen as a sign that one of the main aims of the coordinators had been successfully accomplished: to reflect the WSD framework in the activities of various divisions.

6.3.1.4   *A Process rather than an Event*

One of the contributory factors to the sense of the incorporation of WSD into GES operations was the conception of the programme as a process rather than an event. The former WSD national coordinator explained this point:

> The implementation of FCUBE initially started with projects. When you have a project unit, it creates problems. We find out that as soon as funding for the project finishes, the project collapse. So, we tried to use the existing structure…. I integrated it into the system, for people to get used to and for them to use. It was being made to be part of the GES normal functions. That is the only reason why WSD is still there (interview G4).

In utilising the existing GES structure, WSD officials were able to develop their sense of ownership and also blur the boundary between a donor-related intervention and their own work (interview G5; G11). Thus, their views on the continuation of WSD as an element of GES operations did not primarily concern the situation at HQ, but were more concerned with the DEO. This was echoed by WSD coordinators.

> [The DEO] do not even know that the Whole School does not exist anymore at headquarters. The Whole Schools was virtually based in the district office. They continue doing the Whole School (interview G2).

Although it was generally considered that the DEOs were continuing to work within the WSD framework, it was also acknowledged that whether WSD-related activities were effectively implemented ultimately depended heavily on the character and leadership of the individual district directors (interview G3).

Moreover, the sense of the continuation of WSD among officials was perhaps related to budgetary security, i.e. financial assistance from DFID continued to flow into the GES regardless of the termination of the ESSP; hence, their sense of being part of a process that was still being enhanced as support from DFID continued.

6.3.1.5 Extent of DFID Involvement

As has already been seen, the degree to which DFID was involved in the implementation of WSD was considered to be limited. Similarly, according to the officials, WSD planning was not led by DFID, but by the GES. Many officials raised this point as a specific feature of WSD in comparison to other donor-related programmes (interview G5; G6). The former implementing coordinator of FCUBE recalled the inception of the WSD programme:

> GES asked DFID to help them, but not [to] be told to start the project... You [other donors] came and brought projects, told us what you wanted to do and told us what you wanted us to do. But DFID asked us what we wanted to do first. And then they [DFID] sent us Paul (DFID consultant, pseudonym) to help us to form the plan. But you [other donors] came without invitation. That is very different (interview G5).

Whether the above view reflected the actual process is arguable, as it is recalled elsewhere that the process under FCUBE tended to be driven by the donors (Casely-Hayford et al., 2007). However, the important thing is that senior GES officers held that the GES had taken the lead (e.g. interview G3; G6; G9; G15).

6.3.1.6   Extent of Consultants' Involvement

Six Ghanaian long-term technical assistants – mostly former or current GES officials – were posted to key line management positions in GES HQ, including the WSD national coordinator and the coordinator of FCUBE (GoG/DFID 2003). This was not poaching in the strictest sense, as they had been simply transferred within the GES system, wherein the expertise remained; yet, some officials saw these appointments as controversial.

These contracted officials exercised strong leadership to orchestrate activities during the implementation of WSD. Yet, given their prominence at HQ, which enjoyed the substantial patronage of DFID, some officials imagined them to be linked to the donor rather than their being merely ordinary GES colleagues, as they were ultimately "consultants paid by DFID" (interview G12).

The salary gap between these technical assistants and the other GES officials had an inevitable psychological impact, causing the latter to feel that the consultant staff should work harder as they were paid more (interview G4). During my time at the MoE, grievances over salary and the perceived imbalance in workload were mentioned repeatedly on both sides.

At the time, their leadership seemed to me to be indispensable in moving the programme forward; yet, it is undeniable that in some cases the atmosphere of mistrust hampered team spirit and the development of a stronger sense of GES ownership of the WSD programme.

6.3.1.7   Summary of Findings at the Macro Level

In general, WSD was assimilated into GES operations at various divisional levels as a result of employing existing frameworks; and officials had strong senses of both the continuity and ownership of WSD. However, lack of commitment and leadership at senior level was a cause for concern and also cast doubt on GES ownership of WSD.

6.3.2 Meso Level

This section explores how district education officers regarded the sustainability of the WSD programme.

6.3.2.1 *The Continuation of WSD in Each District*

As GES officials at HQ confirmed, the degree to which WSD was effectively implemented depended on the competency of each DEO and the leadership of its directorate. However, Lower Denkyira DEO asserted that it continued to implement WSD (interview L1; L10), while officials in Upper Denkyira declared WSD to have been completed, as the budget for it was no longer dispatched from HQ.

However, the reality was rather the other way round. In Lower Denkyira DEO, WSD was theoretically a district framework for facilitating activities. In practice, only part of the budget was handed over to implementation officials to enable them to conduct planned and approved activities.

For example, the DTST had ceased to function. In spite of the fact that it was said to be very active in the early stages of the WSD intervention, latterly, the DTST budget had not been allocated and no work had been carried out (interview L1; L13). Moreover, it seems that operations had generally become less effective and WSD virtually existed in name only (interview L3). Meanwhile, services that had been carried out before the intervention, for example the work of the circuit supervisors, continued as usual.

In Upper Denkyira DEO, in spite of the official assertion that the WSD programme had been completed along with the withdrawal of funds, the office made certain that it continued WSD activities with the use of the continued DFID funding. A district training officer elaborated:

> WSD money is not coming anymore… About two weeks ago, training was organised with funds of DFID. We are doing the same work. We use the funds of DFID to do our activities now. There is no difference between activities using WSD money and activities using DFID money (interview U8).

Accordingly, in the *District Education Work Plan* (2005/06), there is a category listing 'benchmark activities' instead of WSD activities; yet, activities categorised as benchmark activities were virtually the same as those that used to be known as WSD activities.[54]

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[54] According to the *2002/03 District Education Work Plan*, WSD activities comprised school/cluster in-service training and the operations of DTST; the Girl Child Education Unit; the District Education Planning Team; the Needy Children operation; and the School Health Education Project. These six operations plus CPC activities were the 'benchmark activities' listed in the 2005/06 plan.

This implies that Upper Denkyira DEO continued to implement WSD activities with the funds they received from HQ regardless of the line item on the budget or the names of the activities in the work plan. It did not matter to DEO officials where the funds originated from, whether the government, DFID or any other agency; all that mattered to them was that they should be able to carry out their activities as efficiently as possible (interview L7). Theoretically, this was what GES HQ officials expected to happen in all districts, but I only observed it in Upper Denkyira DEO.

6.3.2.2   Supervision from HQ

A key consideration in the sustainment of WSD innovations at the district level was whether HQ provided the DEO with adequate support and supervision. DEO officials acknowledged that the level of supervision they received from HQ – e.g. through the zonal coordinator and the district support team – had decreased. This in turn affected the quality and frequency of support the DEO was able to provide to the schools, and the extent of in-service training it was able to facilitate (interview L1; L7; U8; U9).

Officials were in agreement that HQ needed to monitor the DEO and provide it with much more supervision if it were to regain the level of efficiency it had attained at the height of WSD. Indeed, there were signs that old management practices were already eroding some of the gains the intervention had made: "Old habits can slip back any time…people slip back to the easy way" (interview U7).

The need for stricter supervision from HQ was particularly voiced in Lower Denkyira where budgeting and expenditure processes did not appear to be transparent to the officials. Under circumstance in which an internal monitoring mechanism was not evident, supervision from HQ was seen as key to any chance of sustaining the intervention.

6.3.2.3   Summary of Findings at the Meso Level

It appeared that to some extent WSD had been assimilated into daily DEO operations, although the degree to which this had been achieved differed markedly between the two DEOs. However, this did not mean that the officials considered WSD to be sustainable in the district. Rather, sustainability depended mainly on whether training, supervision, support and monitoring were continuously provided by HQ in the long term. This was considered to be the only way of enabling the DEO to maintain the

initiations brought about by WSD. However, success also depended on the commitment and leadership of the district directorate. Without such commitment and supervision, it could not be guaranteed that funds would be spent transparently and efficiently in the districts.

6.3.3 Micro Level

This section explores how the sustainability of the WSD programme was seen at the school level.

The exact manner in which those in the schools regarded the sustainability of WSD was unclear. As seen in the previous section on WSD impact, the implementation of the programme was not highly visible in the schools, and its impact and outcomes could not be easily gauged. The imprest and the resources it procured, including desks, chairs and books, which became available to the schools with the introduction of WSD were noticeable (interview L/W3/HT); but they were not sufficiently substantial for those in the schools to recognise the tangible and/or immediate impact of such improvements, much less the outcomes. Consequently, opinions on the sustainability of WSD at the school level were inevitably ambivalent.

Consequently, head teachers and their staff could perceive no clear dividing line between conditions before and after the advent of WSD (e.g. interview L/W2/HT; U/W1/HT). Instead of regarding the intervention as some kind of event, there was a sense of continuity or it being part of a process. It did not matter much to teachers if the government programme had officially concluded or not – they simply continued teaching. WSD was part of their life and work; it was not something they could extract from their day-to-day teaching and scrutinise.

The views of head teachers on WSD sustainability varied. Their attitude depended solely on how much support the school had received from the DEO, for example the imprest; teaching materials; invitations to a cluster-based training course; and visits from DEO officials such as the circuit supervisor and the DTST.

As far as the heads were concerned, the question of whether they could conduct on-site training, provide supervision to their teachers or check lesson plans – and ultimately ensure that their pupils were well taught – depended on whether the DEO

could provide the necessary support and supervision. But this was seen as something beyond their ability to influence.

During the interviews, there were occasions when head teachers expressed some mistrust of the DEO. This was particularly evident in circumstances in which head teachers had not received the imprest as often as they had initially been assured they would. One head teacher, who claimed his school had only received the imprest once, seriously questioned what the DEO expected him to do without having been provided with the promised money (interview U/W1/HT3). He suspected that the reason it had not arrived could be attributed to the DEO's misapplication of funds, leading him to form the opinion that incompetence or malpractice in the office was the reason that WSD did not function properly.

In contrast, head teachers whose schools had received the imprest regularly and had enjoyed a high level of support from the DEO considered that in the end, it was the only agency that the schools could depend on:

> WSD is good because [the] District Office is doing [working well]. People come and go; NGOs come and go. But whatever happens, they [the DEO] are with us (interview L/W3/HT).

Another head teacher attested:

> WSD will, if the government continues to be committed to support [it], last. It is up to the government. Any kind of programme can last as long as the DEO works hard and resources are available to capable head teachers (interview U/W2/HT).

The head teachers believed that their staff could easily slip back into old and undesirable teaching habits without constant support and periodic training (interview U/W2/HT; L/W1/HT). Therefore, sustaining innovations such as those WSD had brought into the schools essentially depended on the commitment and substantial support of the DEO.

Finally, as discussed in the earlier section on WSD impact, WSD outcomes were not tangible as far as the teachers and the SMC were concerned. Therefore, the question of whether the impact of WSD was sustainable was not uppermost in their minds.

6.3.3.1   Summary of Findings at the Micro Level

For those in the schools, the question of whether WSD was practiced depended on leadership and the commitment of the DEO. Without support and supervision from the DEO, it was literally impossible for head teachers to continue implementing WSD.

6.3.4 Summary of WSD Sustainability

To some extent, WSD became embedded in GES operations purely because the GES was entrusted with the implementation of WSD. However, there was a paradox to its sustainability as long as the GES treated WSD as a completed intervention, and as long as GES implementation officials considered WSD to have already been assimilated into GES operations.

There was a strong sense of sustainability and ownership of the WSD programme at GES HQ, and perhaps even in the DEOs. However, this view was not shared by those in the schools. The fact that the SMC members and teachers I met knew scarcely anything about WSD, and the head teachers themselves were barely kept informed about the programme, had serious implications for state ownership of the WSD process.

Ownership did not reside merely with GES HQ and/or the state. Ideally, ownership, should have involved a range of stakeholders, not only at different levels of government but also – and most importantly – in the schools. Yet, the sense of ownership of the WSD intervention grew weaker as it percolated down from HQ towards the school level.

As far as teachers were concerned, and perhaps officials at the DEO as well, whether interventions such as WSD could be sustained in school and district, depended on how much they were able to receive continuous support and supervision from the higher authority. In this sense, the sustainability of WSD was regarded as depending on the commitment and leadership of MoE/GES HQ.

6.4. Conclusion

The DFID ESSP focused on basic education in support of FCUBE. By means of a sub-sectoral budget support approach, ESSP funds were disbursed via the GES to support the WSD programme, and concentrated on a district and school level intervention.

WSD employed existing GES institutions – including various divisions of HQ, the DEOs and the schools – entrusting funds to Ghanaian education actors, thus enabling them to take responsibility for a series of implementation activities. As a result, structures were put in place and the system was strengthened to some extent.

At HQ in particular, officials were confident that WSD had made a significant impact in terms of providing more cost-efficient service delivery through direct support to GES structures. However, although there were noticeable innovations, they were not entirely successful in translating into tangible outcomes in schools.

WSD contributed to promoting Ghanaian ownership of education intervention, at least at the national and district levels, as the donor-initiated programme and GES operations were to a certain extent assimilated. As a consequence, the sense of a distinction between donor funding and the government budget could also have become blurred. In other words, the fungibility of WSD funds might have reached the same level as the national treasury itself. Indeed, the GES struggled to provide sufficient supervision and support to schools through its DEOs; and funds that were intended for the schools were not delivered, or else were not spent as they should have been.

As DFID control relaxed, the onus on the GES to deliver increased proportionately. As the GES took responsibility, the fungibility of WSD funds seemed to grow and the transparency of their expenditure was not ensured. However, although the impact had yet to be seen to any tangible extent at the school level, GES officials emphasised that strengthening the state education system by employing the GES to deliver funds and services was the most efficient approach to education development in the long term.

Since the conclusion of the ESSP programme, the UK has continued to support the Government of Ghana in its mission to achieve its FCUBE objectives, with particular emphasis on the enhancement of universal primary completion (UPE). DFID currently supports Ghana's Education Strategic Plan, having pledged GBP 105 million over ten years, from 2006 to 2015. This is sector earmarked budgetary support, the intention being to create a migratory path to general budget support.

Chapter 7 Cross-case Analysis of 'Whole School Development' and 'Quality Improvement in Primary Schools'

7.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the themes of aid absorption that emerged in the analyses of the Quality Improvements in Primary Schools (QUIPS) and Whole School Development (WSD) programmes in chapters 5 and 6 respectively, and answers the research questions set in chapter 4. These themes – namely, accountability, power, trust, ownership and sustainability – were established as the common and constant threads that ran through Ghanaian education actors' perceptions of international financial assistance.

This study is framed by an overarching question – What are Ghanaian actors' perceptions of international financial assistance to basic education? – and guided by the five specific questions set out in chapter 4, section 2. The present chapter revolves around the research questions, even as these themes interlink across the inquiry. Thus, here is a reminder of the specific questions that guided the study:

Q1   What are the differences in approach to the use of external funds in theory and in practice between WSD and QUIPS?

Q2   How do education actors perceive the contribution of WSD and QUIPS respectively, and what accounts for their perceptions?

Q3   What do they consider to be the constraints to the efficient use of external resources (in enhancing the quality of education)?

Q4   How do they perceive the efficiency of WSD and QUIPS respectively, and what factors explain differences in perception between the two programmes?

Q5   What are the implications of the findings of this study for an approach to education development in terms of making the most of the available external funds?

The following section discusses the approaches that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) each adopted, which aims to answer question 1. Next, the respective contributions of QUIPS and WSD are discussed in order to answer question 2. This is followed by an examination of monetary fungibility as a challenge to the effective expenditure of external funds, which is related to question 3. The themes of

accountability, power, trust and ownership are then discussed in order to answer question 4. Finally, the theme of sustainability is considered in order to examine the implications of this cross-case analysis, which addresses question 5.

7.2   Approaches to the Delivery of External Funding

As demonstrated in chapter 2, national education reform under the auspices of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FUCBE) programme was originally designed as a sector-wide approach in response to the realisation of both government and donors that sector coordination was necessary in order to avoid the duplication and proliferation of development efforts. However, although donors working in the Ghanaian basic education sector did so in the best interests of the FCUBE programme, they ended up failing to combine aid modalities and procurement procedures into a harmonised strategy.

USAID and DFID – the two bilateral donor agencies that concern this study – also designed programmes to complement the government's FCUBE initiative. DFID supported WSD, which was adopted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) as a framework for the achievement of FCUBE through the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP), by releasing funds for implementation to the GES. Alternatively, USAID launched its QUIPS intervention, setting up a programme office from which it directed assistance to the schools.

Both agencies aimed to address a shared national objective – namely, the enhancement of the quality of education – by strengthening the decentralised management system. Change was sought through pupil-centred teaching and learning, and wider participation in school improvement, in an attempt to change the professional and organisational culture of the school. This was to be achieved through capacity building at all levels.

The objectives of WSD and QUIPS were almost identical (van Donge et al., 2002). However, the further we move away from the overall objective, the more the differences become apparent. Since their respective preferences for the modality of aid delivery differed, the manner in which the two programmes transformed funds into practice was also fundamentally disparate. DFID opted for sectoral funding, whereas USAID went for the classic model of standalone project assistance.

In theory, USAID/QUIPS and the MoE/GES worked together as partners in the implementation of QUIPS (QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005). However, in practice, USAID/QUIPS took the lead in programme design and appraisal, determining input and using its own disbursement and accountability procedures. To facilitate QUIPS, USAID implemented a parallel system to that of the MoE/GES, contracting several international and national agencies to set up a programme office independent of the government.

The direct focal point of QUIPS was the school. Three schools in each district were selected and targeted with substantial support, for example, teacher training in pupil-centred instruction techniques; guidance for the SMC in school management; the construction of a school compound or teachers' quarters; and a micro grant awarded for the duration of the two-year intervention.

In parallel to this strategy, QUIPS aimed to strengthen capacity by providing district officials with administrative and financial training. It was also designed to influence national primary education development policy by providing funds to the District Education Office (DEO) in the form of a district grant, and to the MoE by means of non-project assistance (NPA). The rationale was that 'best practice' in the pilot schools was to be extended to a district-wide strategy by DEO officials and QUIPS-trained teachers, and incorporated into national policy.

On the other hand, DFID employed the existing GES structure at central, DEO and school levels. To facilitate WSD, DFID released funds to the GES, enabling it to implement the programme itself.

WSD aimed to deliver funds, resources and services at school level by releasing money to existing institutions within the state education system. Thus, the GES itself assumed control of delivery to schools through the DEO. In the process of so doing, it was intended that the WSD programme should strengthen the financial and administrative capacity of the GES.

Not only did various departments at GES HQ take charge of a series of implementation duties, but the DEO also budgeted for and implemented district activities, for example, the organisation of in-service training based on the cascade model, and the disbursal of the imprest to the schools. This was the first time the DEO had received a regular

budget for conducting its activities; and likewise, it was the first time the schools had received 'regular' funding from the DEO. In order to achieve the aims of the programme, all basic schools were targeted.

In summary, although WSD and QUIPS both aimed to achieve the same objective in targeting school improvement, their respective processes for delivering external funds to link money to development impact differed, since the former opted for system-wide funding while the latter took the form of project assistance. The next section examines the perceived outcomes of these disparate funding mechanisms.

7.3   The Respective Contributions of WSD and QUIPS

As discussed above, both programmes ultimately targeted school improvement. However, arrangements for delivering funds, resources and services to the end-user (the school) varied, as did the number of hands they passed through before reaching their destination. WSD funds trickled down through the GES structure from HQ to the school by way of the DEO, whereas QUIPS funds were literally handed over to the intended recipient from the programme office. In other words, whether the funds were actually delivered and how much of the original amount was received by the end-user already posed a challenge even before the question of how they were actually spent under WSD could be addressed, while this was not a concern in respect of QUIPS.

From the end-user's point of view, WSD struggled to link input at the national level with tangible impact at the grassroots level, and little of the benefit appeared to trickle down to the school. For example, the promised imprest, which should have been delivered to head teachers to enable them to engage in on-site training, was not received regularly from the DEO. This resulted in great challenges to – and sometimes the near impossibility of – the organisation of school-based in-service training; and the GES clearly struggled to provide effective training via the cascade model. Thus, the impact on school improvement and pupils' learning often seemed negligible to those in the schools, although some progress was noticed.

In this sense, the changes brought about by QUIPS were highly visible because the funds, resources and services, along with intensive training and supervision, were delivered directly by the QUIPS facilitators. As seen in chapter 3, advocates of project support claimed that one of its key merits was effectiveness of implementation. In fact,

QUIPS basically accomplished what it had set out to do within a two-year cycle. All teachers received intensive and regular training in pupil-centred teaching and learning from QUIPS trainers; while, headed by the school management committee (SMC), the community was encouraged to take an active role in school improvement. Thus, there were visible innovations in the pilot schools.

However, the impact can be seen from a different angle. From the point of view of the officials, the contribution of an intervention should not have been assessed purely in terms of immediate results, but with regard to the long-term impact as well. Although the GES might have still been so weak that funds and services were not delivered as planned, it was considered that GES capacity could not have improved at all if DFID had not taken a risk and entrusted it with the funds, allowing it to learn and build a system through independent practice. One of the high points was the delivery of the capitation grant, which was conducted quite smoothly due to the experience of WSD. Thus, WSD's biggest contribution was in installing institutions and strengthening the administrative capacity of the GES.

The GES system might have been strengthened; structures might have been put in place; a mechanism for providing in-service training might have been introduced; the SMC might have been legitimised; DEO officials might have become accustomed to budgeting and planning on their own; and the district teacher support team (DTST) and the circuit supervisors might have obtained regular funds to enable them to visit schools more often than before. Yet, all this input did not result in tangible impact at school level, at least not any that was visible enough for those on the ground to notice significant changes.

At the same time, QUIPS struggled to extend its intervention at district and school levels to nationwide practice, or even to districtwide practice. As seen in chapter 5, USAID/QUIPS failed to influence national primary education policy at state level, as its NPA was terminated. Some district education officials took an intensive training course. The training itself was considered to be useful but the intention behind the district grant, whereby the DEO was expected to extend the QUIPS programme to a districtwide intervention, appeared to officials to be overambitious and unrealistic. Thus, with no mechanism for linking QUIPS practice at district and school levels to the national education policy framework, its contribution would continue to be regarded as nothing more than "a stone in [a] massive sea" (interview G15).

Moreover, any indication of improved test results in the pilot schools, which QUIPS tried to gauge in a quantitative manner, turned out to be rather subtle in comparison with neighbouring schools. This resulted in a lack of conviction on the part of GES officials that QUIPS was an effective way of improving the quality of education.

Nevertheless, there are sharp contrasts in terms of the respective contributions of WSD and QUIPS. WSD arguably strengthened GES institutions in terms of service and funding delivery, but struggled to follow this through and make a tangible impact on the school itself, whereas QUIPS made a visible impact but failed to establish a mechanism for linking it to national policy.

A further contrast may be seen in the allocation of funds. WSD accommodated all 18,643[55] basic schools, which inevitably reduced the share of funding each one received, while QUIPS targeted just three schools in each district with substantial assistance. Therefore, it may be impossible to make a fair comparison of the respective impact at school level between the two programmes.

There is an inherent dilemma in these two types of development approach: attempt to strengthen capacity by releasing funds to the state system, even if it results in compromising the efficiency of delivery; or aim for direct results at the school level by bypassing the state system. The former may take some time to achieve tangible outcomes at the grassroots level, while the impact of the latter can be seen straight away but is open to criticism in that it only benefits a limited number of schools for a limited period.

This dilemma was reflected in a perception gap between GES officials and those at the school level with regard to what they thought needed to be done. GES officials considered the challenge from a macro and somewhat long-term perspective, while those in the schools were intent on enjoying the imminent benefits without delay.

Indeed, the manner in which the various actors regard the impact of a programme depends on the point of view of each individual. It is not that their priorities necessarily conflict, but the sense of urgency is likely to differ between suppliers and receivers.

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[55] http://www.ghana.gov.gh/studying/education/index.php (accessed on 28/06/10).

According to education officials, the biggest contribution made by WSD was in enhancing the capacity of the GES in terms of budgeting and administration, in allowing it to take charge of programme implementation. Structures were installed not only at the centre but also at the DEO. Officials with budgeting and related duties undertook financial and administrative training courses; and some new institutions – e.g. a budget committee – were established at the DEO. Likewise, a mechanism for providing the cascade model of in-service training was introduced, the imprest was brought in, and the SMC was legitimised. There were notable positive changes in some schools, for example, innovations in teaching methodology and an increase in enrolment; but any progress was restricted to certain schools. Nevertheless, it was hoped that with persistence, such promising results would be mirrored in national statistics.

7.4　　Fungibility: Constraints to the Efficient Use of Funds

Money alone does not lead to development. Rather, the crucial point is the way in which it is absorbed in order to make a given impact. The biggest challenge in terms of the efficient use of external resources is the monetary fungibility that seems to be embedded in the system. This section compares WSD and QUIPS in the light of their respective susceptibility to monetary fungibility, thus addressing question 3.

One of the potential merits of the sector-wide approach is the cost efficiency that results from the use of government systems (Riddell, 2007b). Accordingly, Ghanaian officials claimed that WSD exhibited a cost-efficient approach in releasing funds to the GES, thus enabling it to take charge of programme implementation.

Using existing structures should be relatively cost efficient in comparison to a situation in which structures for the delivery of aid have to be initiated on an ad hoc basis. However, in respect of the present study, such a precept becomes open to question if we consider the fact that the potential fungibility of WSD funds was high and their leakage from the system could often be observed.

QUIPS programme funds were far less fungible as the money was delivered directly to the end-user; thus, the only possible point at which fungibility could occur was when the funds were in the end-user's hands. Indeed, one of the reasons why USAID adhered to the project approach was to enable it to track its funding closely.

Accordingly, the donor awarded contracts to organisations with which it was familiar and let the office take charge of the project budget. As the office was answerable to USAID, the level of accountability that those in receipt of the grant (i.e. the pilot schools and the DEO) were required to maintain was higher than in the case of WSD (aspects of accountability are discussed in greater detail in section 7.5).

Consequently, monitoring was stricter and more frequent under QUIPS than it was with WSD. Moreover, QUIPS also introduced an internal monitoring mechanism in the case of the micro grant whereby a multiple checking procedure was used in its management in the pilot schools and their communities. This not only helped ensure that the funds were used properly but also avoided the arousal of suspicion of improper usage among actors by making expenditure quite transparent.

In contrast, there was no such scrutiny or monitoring system employed by WSD. The DEO checking mechanism (e.g. as utilised by the budget committee, the district education oversight committee (DEOC), and DEO officials) did not function fully either, the imprest not being delivered to the school as it should have been. As Xiao Ye and Canagarajah (2002) note in their survey of Ghana, there was a serious lack of synergy throughout the system. Indeed, the present study found that this disconnection between the measurement of resource flow from the centre to the DEO and down to the school level rendered financial management unclear, which resulted in leading actors becoming suspicious of each other and, consequently, deterioration in the efficiency of their work.

Even when the WSD imprest did reach the school, information about it was not widely shared. In many cases, the way in which it was spent was unknown, or only known to a very limited number of actors. As a result, the transparency of its management was in serious doubt. It is obvious that a multiple checking system seldom operated in most WSD schools as it did in QUIPS schools; although the introduction of participatory management to a wider circle of actors – the SMC in particular – was one of the core components of WSD (GES 1998).

One of the factors that prevented the effective functioning of the WSD checking mechanism was a bureaucratic environment permeated by what Fobih et al. (1995) term the 'culture of silence' at school and district levels, in which little information percolated through the system. Head teachers did not usually challenge the authorities if the imprest was 'lost' somewhere between the DEO and the school. DEO officials

themselves did not challenge the directorate with regard to the flow or leakage of funds at district level; and did not usually take steps to expose to HQ or the regional office (RO) any monetary misapplication or misappropriation. Finally, it was unusual for the DEO directorate to challenge the authority of the centre.

All this inertia meant that little information about the problems of basic education at district or local levels was channelled to GES HQ. This in turn resulted in the disengagement and alienation of district officials and teachers. Under such a prevailing culture of silence, it was perceived that the more money that passed through the various levels of the GES system, the greater its fungibility was likely to be.

The key to the reversal of such a situation was the internal monitoring mechanism, which, however, often failed to function. Nevertheless, the same officials' attitude towards accountability varied between WSD and QUIPS; in other words, with or without the presence of an external or internal monitoring system. DEO officials were somewhat cavalier when working with WSD funds, while the same people grew more alert when they turned their attention to the QUIPS grant. This suggests that the GES was able to increase the financial efficiency of its operation when a strict monitoring mechanism was put in place.

As demonstrated in this section, the factor that affects the level of fungibility is the requisite degree of accountability. Variation in the extent of accountability assumed by WSD and QUIPS had a direct bearing on how their respective aid funds were absorbed. The theme of accountability is also directly linked to issues of power relationships, trust and ownership. For this reason, the next four sections discuss accountability, power, trust and ownership in relation to question 4.

7.5   Accountability: The Efficient Use of Funds

This section addresses the type of accountability in each of the two case studies. First, it analyses accountability relations between donor and implementing agency; and second, it examines other accountability relations under WSD and QUIPS.

7.5.1   Accountability: The Relationship with the Donors

According to Eraut et al.'s (1978) 'dimensions of accountability' – termed 'patterns of accountability' by Cornwall et al. (2000 p.3) – there are three elements that constitute the concept of accountability: accountability to whom; accountability for what; and a mechanism for passing judgement.

Accountability to whom depends on the "type of accountability relationship" (Becher et al., 1981 p.20), that is, the relationship between those who are held accountable and those who seek accountability. Such a relationship may take the form of moral accountability (to a client); professional accountability (to oneself or one's colleagues); or contractual accountability (to one's employer/master).

Accountability for what concerns the subject for which accountability is required, for example, a result or process.

The mechanism for passing judgement on accountability is assembled from the following elements: dissemination of information prerequisite to judgment; the criteria to be used; and communication of the judgement to those who are held accountable.

In an application of these accountability relationship criteria to QUIPS, the programme office was exclusively accountable to USAID Ghana, which was the programme's 'employer/master' (Becher et al., 1981 p.20). Such an accountability relationship is regarded as 'contractual accountability'.

To illustrate this, the QUIPS office was held accountable to USAID Ghana for programme funds. USAID made judgements based on financial requirements determined by US policy and the performance of the QUIPS office. In this case, the relationship was one of accountability for results to one's employer/master through an external, formal and collective mechanism of judgement.

In a contractual relationship, the contract may include the application of rewards or sanctions in return for the respective accomplishment or non-accomplishment of the envisaged action. As Chapman (2006) points out, in the case of USAID, the ultimate sanction was that a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that had been awarded the QUIPS contract might be omitted from the next bid if it failed to ensure the accountability of funds to USAID and meet the donor's financial requirements.

Such contractual accountability cannot be so readily applied to the relationship between DFID and the GES. Since the management of the funds was delegated from DFID to the GES, the relationship between the two can be seen as lying somewhere between moral and contractual accountability.

For example, applying Becher et al. (1981), GES HQ was held accountable to DFID Ghana for WSD funds; and DFID made judgements based on the WSD plans that it had agreed to. Thus, in this case, the relationship was rather accountability for progress to the client through an external, formal and collective mechanism of judgement.

Unlike a contractual relationship, with moral accountability, those who seek it do not have recourse to effective sanctions. It was occasionally reported that DFID did not release funds to GES on schedule. However, this was not regarded as the application of a sanction by DFID. Rather, the principal accountant saw it as being merely because the GES had not managed to spend the previous quarterly budget by the date that the next release was due (interview G10).

Considering that the donor field office is often under pressure to disburse allocated funds; is monitored in so doing by its head office (Ostrom et al., 2002a p.xxiv); and that one of the merits raised by advocates of the sector-wide approach is that the budget can be absorbed quickly (Al-Samarrai et al., 2002 p.4), suspending funds to the GES would not have been a practical measure for DFID to take as a sanction.

7.5.2 Accountability: Relationships under WSD and QUIPS

According to Kogan (1986 p.25), A is accountable to B when A is obliged to act on behalf of B; and A is subject to the application of a sanction or reward by B for his or her action. In this definition, if B cannot impose an effective sanction against A, he or she is not accountable to B but can still be responsible to B. Fearon (1999 p.55) terms such a relationship 'moral responsibility'.

The central premise of Kogan's (op.cit.) definition is the application of the sanction. Similarly, Stewart (1984) stresses the potential to impose a sanction as an important element of accountability; and distinguishes an accountability relationship from a relationship in which A is obliged to give information (an account) to B, yet B does not have the capacity to take action on the basis of that information.

When Stewart's (op, cit) definition is applied to the different types of accountability relationship, it is clear that a contractual relationship may easily fall within this narrow concept of accountability, whereas moral and professional types of accountability do not. In a contractual relationship, the contract can include rewards and sanctions. However, in moral and professional accountability relationships, those who seek accountability do not have recourse to effective sanction measures. This is where the difficulty arises in seeking to make actors accountable for their actions.

Under the contractual accountability relationship between USAID Ghana and the QUIPS office, any further accountability relationship formed by the latter could be viewed as contractual accountability. Both the DEO and the pilot schools were ultimately accountable to the QUIPS office. What the DEO and the schools were accountable for – i.e. in terms of degree and detail – had been predefined by QUIPS.

There was also a mechanism for passing judgement through the application of rewards and sanctions. If a DEO did not complete activities planned for the first tranche of the grant by a preset deadline, or failed to send a report to the QUIPS office on time, it was not awarded the second tranche of the grant. Similarly, a given tranche was not disbursed to any school whose SMC had failed to collect matching funds in compliance with QUIPS prerequisites. Conversely, the first school in the district to complete its building project was rewarded with extra funds. All the strands of this accountability relationship converged at the USAID/QUIPS office.

Eyben (Eyben, 2006a; 2006c; 2008) identifies three categories of accountability in terms of power relationship: downwards, upwards and mutual accountability; arguing that the last is the way forward in terms of international development. However, while the DEO and the pilot schools were held accountable to the QUIPS office, the donor did not hold a correspondingly high level of accountability to either institution. Thus, all these accountability relationships under QUIPS were single-headed arrows, which would seem to make them skewed.

Moreover, since the centre was excluded from it, such a relationship had the potential to undermine the capacity of the GES, and entailed a potential risk – it might fail to capture the complete picture of the financial situation at district level. HQ officials were criticised by QUIPS personnel for being ignorant of events taking place at district and school levels, but the officials challenged this, claiming that they were deliberately kept

out of the loop. Thus, in the process of ensuring the greater accountability of QUIPS funds to the US side, USAID accountability to the Ghanaian side was undeniably neglected.

According to Kogan's (1986) definition, the DEO was contractually accountable to GES HQ. However, there were no direct sanctions that those in the schools could impose in the event of misconduct by DEO officials. The DEO had a contracted 'responsibility' to the schools, but there was no mechanism whereby the latter could voice their discontent or transform it into an internal sanction mechanism. Rather, similar to the findings of a Ugandan case study (Suzuki, 2003), those in the schools were kept in ignorance of the 'responsibility' of the DEO.

Similarly, Kogan (op.cit.) argues that teachers are contractually accountable to the local authority, but are only responsible to pupils and their parents. Yet, Lello (1979) contends that education entails more of a moral sense of duty. In fact, a University of Sussex study (1981) shows that teachers perceive themselves as being accountable to pupils and parents, but less so to the local education authority. In respect of the present study, this implies that the accountability concept embedded in the system conferred a strong moral responsibility. However, in the case of WSD schools, accountability was seldom ensured in either direction.

The difficulty of ensuring accountability questions whether it was possible for an effective rewards and sanctions mechanism to operate within the state education system. There were cases in which the GES HQ financial controller suspended the quarterly disbursement to a DEO in retribution for its unaccountable failure to return or delayed submission of a report. The disbursement to a whole region was also sometimes suspended if one or more of its DEOs did not meet the deadline. This was undoubtedly a sanction – which may have even had the desired effect – but it was of course the teachers and their pupils who suffered the most from such measures, not the DEO officials.

Moreover, the ostensible accountability relationship between the DEO and the schools was extremely ineffectual. Schools were not under any strict obligation to account to the DEO for the imprest because there was no sanction for failing to do so. On the other hand, some schools were not even aware of how much the imprest should have been or how often they were entitled to receive it. Furthermore, once a head teacher had received the imprest, he or she was supposed to draw up an action plan in

collaboration with his or her staff and the SMC, but this rarely occurred. Thus, such arrangements could hardly be said to have constituted an accountability relationship.

In short, contractual relationships that were subject to effective rewards and sanctions ensured a high level of accountability, resulting in the 'efficient' expenditure of funds (as in the case of QUIPS). In contrast, accountability relationships were more complex within the bureaucratic system of the GES; and since it did not utilise an effective sanctions and rewards mechanism, the potential for fungibility remained high.

Stewart (1984) contends that the dynamics surrounding accountability are intrinsically a power relationship. Accordingly, it emerged that the power relationship behind the notion of accountability with regard to both WSD and QUIPS affected the manner in which aid funds were absorbed. Therefore, in the next section, question 4 is further discussed in terms of the respective power relationships behind the implementation of the two programmes.

7.6   Power Relationships: The Efficient Use of Funds

This section examines the locus of power and the asymmetrical relationship it forms; power within the GES; power over actors in schools; and power relations between WSD and QUIPS.

7.6.1   The Locus of Power

GES officials at HQ in particular regarded aid funds – termed 'resources power' (Keohane and Nye, 1998) – as representative of power. Technically, both USAID and DFID were the providers of aid, while the Ghanaian side was the recipient. However, as far as the Ghanaian officials were concerned, the seat of power was very different under WSD and QUIPS respectively. As DFID delegated the management of WSD funds to the GES, power over WSD was to a large extent considered to have been transferred from DFID to the GES in order for it to be exercised within the state education system.

On the other hand, USAID did not delegate and the locus of power thus remained external to the GES. USAID lacked confidence in the capacity of the GES to take on the mandate of managing funds for project implementation; and, therefore, awarding

contracts to organisations that had a good knowledge of USAID requirements and financial procedures was a reasonable second best choice for the US. For its part, the GES argued that such concerns were simply designs to control and maintain the balance of power in the relationship.

7.6.2   An Asymmetrical Power Relationship

GES HQ officials did not share in the management of the QUIPS programme or regard the achievement of its objectives as a common goal. The GES considered that USAID/QUIPS exercised power over the MoE in order to obtain the cooperation of its officials in the interests of the smooth implementation of the programme.

According to Keohane and Nye's (1998 p.86) definition, either sanctions or rewards must be applied in order to get 'ABC' to do what 'X' wants to obtain.

NPA funds constituted a sanction and reward mechanism to get the GES engaged in QUIPS. However, the mechanism failed to work in this instance. This implies that a form of uncompromising power – 'hard power' (op.cit.) – in which the dominant actor 'calls all the shots', does not always achieve the desired outcome.

In their treatise *Ownership and Donorship*, Cramer et al. (2006) argue that a relationship shaped by caveats cannot give the recipient government any real sense of power. In fact, the relationship between the MoE/GES and USAID/QUIPS was regarded by the Ghanaian officials to be distorted, which caused friction between them.

Unlike the relationship with GES HQ, resource power was used to get the DEOs to engage in QUIPS; and, with access to the funds, DEOs planned their own activities. Thus, power might in theory appear to have been handed over to the district. However, in practice, plans had to be approved before the disbursement was received. If QUIPS did not approve an activity, the DEO had to reorganise its schedule in order to meet the donor's requirements.

QUIPS also set deadlines for the DEOs to complete a set of activities. However, if a DEO failed to meet its target, it was required to make capital purchases instead of continuing to attempt to deliver the service, in order to spend the funds immediately. This arrangement was obviously driven by QUIPS so that it could obtain the desired outcome. As corroborated by Cramer et al. (2006) in their Tanzanian case study, the

DEO felt that power resided with the QUIPS office alone, clearly rendering the relationship asymmetrical.

In contrast to QUIPS, once the programme outline had been agreed, DFID entrusted WSD implementation to the GES. In fact, it did not appear to the officials that DFID had exercised its power over GES in setting WSD objectives in line with DFID goals; or exercised power over the GES to obtain the outcomes DFID desired.

According to the officials, it was the GES that determined WSD outcomes rather than DFID. Nevertheless, the officials believed that if DFID had exercised its power to 'coerce' the GES, DFID would have actually been doing it in order to urge the Ghanaians to pursue what they already wanted to do, or what DFID and the GES had agreed they both wanted to do. In this respect, DFID and USAID were perceived to have very different approaches.

7.6.3   Power within the GES

Since the implementation of WSD was subject to the various power relationships within the GES, irregularity in the delivery of funds and resources to the schools was sporadically observed. And given that no external power was applied to the GES, the power dynamic within the GES affected the distribution of funds.

Corroborated by tracking surveys of government spending on education in Uganda (Reinikka and Svensson, 2001) and Ghana (Xiao Ye and Canagarajah, 2002), the present study found that schools used their bargaining power to secure a greater share of funding. For example, head teachers who exercised strong leadership were prepared to acquire the WSD imprest from the DEO by any means, while their less forthright peers failed to do so. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a head teacher's relationship with district officials was an important factor in obtaining funding from the DEO.

Similarly, high performing schools were favoured by district officials because they projected a positive image of the school and the district as a whole, as well as attracting fact-finding delegations from the centre. In return, local officials rewarded these schools with a larger imprest. Moreover, district budgets were not always fairly executed as the power relationship within the DEO influenced financial allocation. In

other words, funds were not allocated according to the rules underpinning government spending, which had substantial equity and efficiency implications.

The identification of factors that affect financial flow to schools is beyond the scope of this study, though an important area for future research. However, the crucial point here is that funds were very fungible en route from the DEO to the schools, and also within DEOs and schools. Thus, central budget allocation of funds to all end-users was seriously compromised by local power dynamics.

The literature on power dynamics in international aid generally regards the asymmetry between donor and recipient to be negative (e.g. Clarke-Okha, 2003). Indeed, the imbalance of power between the Ghanaians and the donors was largely considered to be unfair by the officials, for example, in the case of USAID/QUIPS. Therefore, the power transfer from DFID to the GES in terms of the implementation of WSD was regarded as a positive shift that redressed the imbalance somewhat.

Nevertheless, the present study found that not all officials considered the power asymmetry between the principal actors to be negative, or necessarily welcomed a shift in the balance of power. At the district level, it was questionable whether relinquishing power to the Ghanaian side increased the efficiency of service delivery or achieved the optimum outcome with the available funds. Since DFID did not have power over the GES, WSD funds were spent in a similar manner to the government budget, which left the funds fungible. In other words, some thought that the GES should not have been granted full power over WSD funds because there was a risk of high monetary fungibility, which prevented the funds from being used to their greatest efficiency.

The voices proclaiming the potentially positive aspects of an imbalance of power became louder at district and school levels. At the DEO, it was perceived that the GES (at both central and district levels) required close supervision and monitoring by an external agency (preferably the donor) in order to prevent any misuse or misappropriation of funds. Likewise, some teachers wished that donors would exercise more power and apply greater pressure on the GES to deliver funds and services to schools promptly and efficiently without leakage from the system.

There seemed to be a perception gap between HQ officials and those in the districts and schools with regard to the capacity of the GES. Unlike the perception of those at HQ, at district and school levels, it was considered that in the interests of good

governance, the donors would do better to exercise asymmetrical power over the GES until such time that it could be trusted to operate efficiently without outside pressure.

7.6.4   Power over Teachers and the SMC

Most teachers in the pilot schools found QUIPS pedagogic methodology to be effective and rewarding, but many also complained that the necessary preparation was more time-consuming than with their usual teaching methods. Moreover, while appreciating how much their pupils benefited from the new style of lessons, many also struggled to continue to maintain the high quality of teaching QUIPS expected them to deliver.

Teachers emphasised that financial reward was crucial if they were to continue to work under QUIPS, but such remuneration was not available to them. This implies that they might have been convinced to participate fully in the programme at the introductory stage, which could be regarded as the exercise of 'soft power' (Keohane and Nye, 1998 p.86); but that this might not have been enough to sustain the initial eagerness and willingness of the teachers in the long term without reward.

There were some cases in which teachers considered that they had been forced to comply with QUIPS facilitators – the exercise of 'hard power'. With the threat of sanctions but no promise of reward, the situation often seemed most unfair to teachers. Moreover, an in-service training course completion certificate, which was expected to enhance career opportunities, was promised to pilot school teachers at the end of the intervention; but it was not issued after all. Many teachers regarded this as a breach of contract or abuse of power, damaging their trust in QUIPS and leading to a feeling of exploitation.

Unlike the teachers, the SMC had a 'reward' in the shape of the micro grant. Thus, they might have been more highly motivated than the teachers. However, before the grant could be accessed, QUIPS facilitators spent sufficient time in a pilot school and its community to convince the SMC and other community members to follow QUIPS practices, and agree to the innovations that would produce the desired results and behaviour. The persuasion that the QUIPS facilitators exercised to obtain the initial consent and involvement of the SMC can therefore again be regarded as soft power.

Once the SMC had agreed to the terms and started engaging in the initiative, it was awarded the micro grant to help it achieve the programme goals as quickly as possible.

It may thus be said that QUIPS facilitators employed soft power at the entry point to attract the SMC. However, according to Keohane and Nye (1998), soft power is not associated with a reward. Accordingly, the power that QUIPS exercised over the SMC perhaps cannot strictly be termed 'soft' as there was a precondition (the collection of matching funds) imposed on it in order to earn the reward (the grant).

The obvious imbalance of power notwithstanding, unlike GES officials or teachers, SMC members did not generally complain about such asymmetry; rather, they often referred to QUIPS facilitators as 'partners'. Therefore, it seems that the use of 'soft' power at the entry point helped develop cordial relations between the facilitators and the SMC. In addition, the SMC was a direct beneficiary, unlike the officials or teachers.

7.6.5   Confusion over Who Has Power

In spite of the original intention behind the launch of FCUBE, whose aim was to coordinate various development efforts, as evaluated in USAID (2005) and World Bank (2004a) reports, the present study found that a lack of coordination between WSD and QUIPS sometimes caused confusion or competition at district level. When this occurred, the power relationship that officials were subject to dictated work priorities and QUIPS work took precedence over WSD work.

When the district grant was disbursed, DEO officials were inclined to attend first to QUIPS business, putting aside other work. This meant that the QUIPS programme was implemented quite efficiently due to the power exercised over the officials; meanwhile, causing other work to be suspended. However, this would not have been an issue if the QUIPS programme had been recognised as part of the DEO's portfolio.

Correspondingly, USAID was considered to have enjoyed considerable advantage over the GES in the field. QUIPS was well organised locally and had staff who were able to travel to sites that GES officials often could not reach due to lack of transport or fuel – or both. To invoke an old dictum, 'knowledge is power': the QUIPS programme gathered information that was frequently unavailable to the GES. State officials simply did not have access to the kind of data the QUIPS office routinely gathered (e.g. individual school/community statistics and school assessment histories). QUIPS staff made exploratory visits from which they developed strategies and implementation plans that facilitated the running of the programme; and they subsequently conducted follow-up and evaluation.

Accordingly, QUIPS personnel – and thus USAID – were generally better informed about the Ghanaian education sector than many GES officials themselves, which further tipped the balance of power in favour of USAID/QUIPS. Such were the shadows that this power asymmetry between them cast on their day-to-day interactions in the field.

The GES and those in the schools perceived both the QUIPS office and QUIPS facilitators as donors. However, the reality could be rather different. As Girgis (2007) points out, the QUIPS programme office, which was composed of various USAID-associated organisations, was also a recipient of funds and might have perceived itself as an intermediary rather than a donor. This confusing mix of role interpretations complicated the situation and demonstrates that the perception of power – not necessarily actual power – affected the relationships between various individuals and, ultimately, between the Ghanaians and USAID.

While GES HQ might have been almost completely excluded from playing a meaningful role in QUIPS implementation, QUIPS worked closely with the pilot schools and their communities, as well as the DEO. The teachers and other actors in the pilot schools were actively engaged in the programme, and came to play key roles in school improvement. Similarly, the DEO took charge of the management of the district grant.

However, if we consider how they came to be assigned to QUIPS, it can be concluded that the level of the Ghanaian actors' engagement was actually determined by USAID/QUIPS. The manner in which they were engaged; the extent to which they were engaged; all their roles; and what they were expected to do and achieve had been predetermined, even before they became involved. In other words, the degree to which the Ghanaian actors were engaged was determined by the degree to which QUIPS wished them to be engaged.

Under this asymmetrical power dynamic, the questions of whether Ghanaian education actors felt they were trusted by the donors and whether the former trusted the latter emerged as the foundation for the fostering of ownership and sustainability (which are discussed in the following sections). For this reason, issues of trust in relation to WSD and QUIPS respectively are discussed in the next section, which aims to further answer question 4.

7.7   Trust

Mohiddin (1998 p.6) argues that trust is not something that can be created by the force of law, or the contractual or conventional requirements of a job, but is a product of the collective experiences of people living and working together, of mutual expectations, and of sharing common values and commitment.

However, in reality, such trust is not easy to achieve, especially in the context of a donor–recipient relationship in which the recipient does not constitute a single group of beneficiaries, but various actors working at various levels, from the most senior position at HQ down to the most junior basic school teacher. Moreover, donor–recipient relations are often couched in terms implying that organisations in and of themselves can speak and act independently of the people who run or represent them. They do not; at least not in an interactive psychosocial sense. It is the interaction between individuals that makes or breaks relationships in donor–recipient dynamics.

Thus, the level of trust nurtured by its diverse actors can also vary throughout an intervention. Expectations may be different; there can be disparate levels of commitment; and the extent to which values and objectives are shared may also differ. All these factors affected the level of trust that the Ghanaian actors in this study developed.

In terms of a comparison between WSD and QUIPS, the question of whether the Ghanaian actors themselves felt entrusted seemed to be crucial as a basis for them to develop trust in the donor. Their sense of entrustment was seemingly a prerequisite to trusting the other. In other words, without such a perception, there seemed to be scarcely any chance that trust might develop in the Ghanaian education sector.

USAID (2001; 2003) states that trust is fundamental to an effective working relationship. Indeed, USAID identifies the establishment of trust as one of the most important stages in the evolution of the partnership through which QUIPS was intended to operate (Academy for Educational Development, 2004). At the same time, concern about accountability was at the heart of the matter as far as USAID was concerned. Under the circumstances, retaining control of the funds was a reasonable second best choice for USAID. For their part, Ghanaian officials argued that USAID did not trust the MoE/GES, and that the donor's priority was its responsibility to the US taxpayer. The

fact that some donors – notably DFID – put their concerns about accountability to one side and took a chance on strengthening GES administrative capacity, only prompted the officials – those at HQ in particular – to distrust USAID all the more.

In contrast, the fact that DFID took a huge risk in entrusting the GES with its funds appears to have heightened the officials' sense of entrustment. However, as seen in chapter 6, this did not mean that it delivered the funds efficiently. Rather, USAID's concerns seemed to have been well founded, considering the extent to which the funds became fungible. Yet, being considered reliable enough to be entrusted with DFID funds helped the Ghanaian actors to develop trust in the British donor.

As a result, HQ officials were deliberately less than cooperative whenever they were asked to participate in the QUIPS programme, except in accepting lucrative consultancies.

Pasteur and Scott-Villiers' (2006) study of the transformation of learning at the organisational level in Uganda describes the intersection of a 'push culture' and a 'yes culture' – the donor drives the initiative forward (the push) and the Ugandan tendency is to say 'yes', but then quietly yet effectively to resist (ibid p.95). In her study of development projects, Leach (1996 p.470) describes this negative use of power as a blocking mechanism employed by nationals.

Likewise, GES HQ officials tended to say 'yes' to any request made by the QUIPS office. However, they would then deliberately not meet QUIPS' expectations and/or requests, for example, by using delaying tactics; arriving late for a meeting; failing to adhere to the deadlines for signing documents; or withholding information, all of which inevitably served to reduce project effectiveness. Nevertheless, the officials at the centre claimed that this kind of eventuality was often inevitable, since QUIPS work was not part of their job descriptions.

On the other hand, the QUIPS side became frustrated with the officials' uncooperative attitude and lack of commitment to its programme. Thus, the mutual mistrust between HQ officials and the donor was generally felt by both parties to varying degrees of intensity.

Leach (1991; 1997) explains the confusion and misunderstanding among actors in host institutes by using Handy's notion of organisational culture (Handy, 1999). Accordingly,

QUIPS brought diverse cultural and organisational values into its host institutes, notably DEOs and schools. Leach (op. cit.) points out that actors in host institutes are accustomed to working in a hierarchical bureaucracy (Handy's 'role culture') and tend to be ill-prepared for the pressurised atmosphere of managing a project (Handy's 'task culture'). This results in different perceptions of how the project should be run and what its purposes are (Leach, 1999 p.383), which inevitably lead to a deterioration in the effectiveness of aid programmes.

The fact that QUIPS was not fully committed to fostering a solid relationship with the GES led to a climate of doubt, suspicion and mistrust towards the donor at GES HQ. To compound the problem, the subtle human interaction that informed the relationship clearly grew in complexity and communication between the two parties was often at cross purposes.

In contrast, it was considered that a high level of trust was built up in the pilot schools, especially between QUIPS and the SMC (CSA 2004). Collins and Higgins (2000 p.22) argue that trust fosters the expectation that reciprocal obligations will be met. In this sense, the SMC knew that QUIPS facilitators' promises were not merely empty words but would be honoured. This prompted the SMC to regard QUIPS facilitators as reliable actors.

This kind of intense relationship was not usually observed in the WSD schools. Rather, the teachers and SMC even reconciled themselves to a lack of capacity on the part of the GES. In other words, they did not place much trust in the DEO in terms of efficiency of resources or service delivery; although the actual level of trust was dependent on how frequently schools received funds and services from the DEO. In return, the officials did not entirely trust those in the schools to spend their funds efficiently.

Regardless of this lack of mutual trust, those in the schools believed that in the end, it was only the DEO that was and always would be with them. They argued that a donor-related programme vanished from the site on its completion but that this was not the case with the DEO. Actors in the schools emphasised that there was nothing other than the DEO for them to rely on, as was the case even for those in the QUIPS pilot schools. There was no great trust observed between QUIPS and the SMC in the pilot schools; indeed, the DEO was the only agency that both WSD and QUIPS schools could work with in the long term.

In its pursuit of tangible outcomes, QUIPS opted to focus on building up trust with the pilot schools, which was deemed to be a great success (CSA 2004; QUIPS Programme Evaluation Team, 2005). Indeed, the quality of relationships within and between organisations in the aid world is crucial, especially if there is to be a chance of long-term sustainability (Eyben, 2006b).

However, if trust is one of the key factors that leads to ownership of innovations (Clarke-Okha, 2003), and one that also affects efficiency in any working relationship (Takahashi, 2002a; 2006), putting collaborative effort into fostering a new partnership that is only designed to last for a limited period may be regarded as a waste of limited resources. As those in the schools considered GES institutions to be the only agencies that would ultimately stand by and support them in the long term, it can be argued that helping to strengthen a relationship that already exists might be more productive in the end (Akyeampong, 2004b).

7.8   Ownership

The working relationship under WSD and QUIPS respectively has been discussed in terms of trust. This section considers the two programmes in relation to ownership. It examines how different views of the ownership of the programme were formed, and discusses the level of involvement of each actor in implementation. This contributes further discussion with regard to question 4.

7.8.1   Donor Control

One of the differences between WSD and QUIPS was the level of donor control. DFID gave the GES full control of the funds, which enabled the Ghanaian actors to perceive the funds as being connected to the programme. Moreover, as the WSD initiative was assimilated into daily GES operations, the sense of a boundary between the donor-related intervention and its own work began to blur.

Thus, the approach DFID adopted was considered to be ownership enhancing. In fact, being entrusted with the funds for implementation seems to be one of the decisive factors that increased the sense of ownership among GES officials. If strict conditions for implementation had been imposed, ownership would have not been enhanced (Cramer et al., 2006); but this was not the case with WSD.

On the other hand, funds that bypassed the MoE/GES budget led to less national ownership – at least at central level – of the intervention. It thus appears that the close proximity of funds and resources was ownership enhancing; and vice versa. In general, as the level of donor involvement increased, the level of recipient ownership correspondingly decreased, since implementation was controlled more by the donor than the recipient.

7.8.2 The Involvement of Ghanaian Actors

Ostrom et al. (2002b p.15) identify four criteria that determine recipient ownership: demand, contribution, benefit and responsibility. DFID and USAID contributions to the FCUBE programme were officially made in response to a request from the Government of Ghana (Bonner et al., 2001). However, GES officials recalled events differently. One Teacher Education Division (TED) budget officer claimed that the GES had asked DFID for help in developing the WSD programme, while USAID had come up with the concept of QUIPS without being invited to do so by the MoE (interview G6).

A former basic education officer who was then serving as district director recalled:

> You know, USAID hired some consultants who were developing a programme, developing concepts and sending the GES what they wanted to do. So, GES personnel went along with what QUIPS had planned for basic education. So, the basic difference was that WSD was internally, you know, organised by the GES itself… QUIPS was stimulated from the outside and brought into the GES (interview G11).

Accordingly, the level of involvement of MoE HQ officials in QUIPS in terms of Ostrom et al.'s (2002b) remaining three criteria was considered to be either low or actually non-existent; except in the contribution of 'manual labour', that is, simple routine tasks such as signing invitations to QUIPS-organised workshops (interview G12), or attending meetings organised by QUIPS, which were regarded as a burden rather than integral parts of the job description (interview G8). Thus, such forms of participation and engagement did not contribute to the officials' sense of ownership and only had a negative effect.

On the other hand, the four criteria were mostly met in the pilot schools, especially by the SMC. Although teachers generally did not consider that they had benefited from QUIPS, they admitted that they had contributed to and taken responsibility for

innovations. Indeed, QUIPS personnel played a crucial facilitative role in ensuring that ownership of activities was anchored primarily with the beneficiaries. What is clear is that QUIPS facilitators had a greater ability to act as initiators of ownership on this level than did GES officials, as a programme office such as that which QUIPS operated was able to work closer to the schools than the DEO could (Edwards, 1997, 1999).

The four criteria were also met - to some degree - at the DEO. However, it should be borne in mind that although the demand was always there in the districts, QUIPS was not an intervention that the DEO had requested but one that had been brought in by an external agency.

In fact, district education officials who were required for QUIPS implementation service were seconded without necessarily informing the district director of education (interview U7). District directors were initially not even considered for or consulted about any training course or workshop, and only became involved during the organisation of training for district management implementation teams (DMITs), of which they were automatically members. Thus, it was considered that QUIPS had been imposed on the districts. Yet, due to the bureaucratic structure of the GES, district directors of education could not object to the secondment of their staff. Consequently, many DEOs became seriously understaffed but they did not complain to GES HQ (interviews G11; G15).

Such non-involvement of the directorate at the planning stage led to a fatal flaw in the sustainability of the programme – there was a lack of support from the GES after the completion of the intervention. Therefore, the QUIPS approach, which had led to such positive changes in the pilot schools, signally failed to link this initial success with ownership of the programme at the district and national levels.

This was ironic. USAID cautions that concentration on national ownership alone is to overemphasise the current aid trend towards sector-wide assistance, which tends to be top down (USAID, 1996). This concern was precisely the reason why it continued to direct some funding to NGO actors who had the advantage of working at the grassroots level (Riddell, 2002).

However, the present study shows that without national ownership of the programme, there was no reason for local officials or those in the schools to believe that innovations could be sustained in their district. They did not possess the will to continue the new

practices; nor would they feel responsible for the task unless extra resources were made available to them, or if GES HQ did not opt to take over the programme.

DEO officials were of the opinion that the question of whether or not QUIPS practices continued lay either with the Government of Ghana (GoG) and GES HQ, or depended on negotiation between the government and USAID; in any event, it was not something that could be influenced at district level.

This was a limitation that could have been addressed at the programme design stage. However, as a result of this oversight, although the DEO met Ostrom et al.'s (2002b) criteria, it cannot be said that the DEO ultimately gained ownership of the QUIPS programme.

In contrast, the involvement of GES officials in the WSD intervention basically satisfied all four criteria. However, this was not the case at the beneficiary level. Demand was always there in the schools, but this did not necessarily mean that the four criteria were met; WSD philosophy was not universally shared by the teachers, let alone the SMC.

One interpretation is that perhaps it was too early to reach any conclusions on the effects of ownership at the school level, given that sector-wide assistance tends to focus its power, funds and capacity building at the central government level.

Another reading is that such inertia at school level originated from the difficulty in defining ownership under circumstances in which the concepts of 'recipient' and 'beneficiary' differed. In cases such as QUIPS, recipients are targeted beneficiaries, whereas in those like WSD, beneficiaries have little or no voice. The latter were passive participants in the sense that the official owner of the intervention was the central government, or its ministry in the form of the GES, which might have had little knowledge of the real problems facing targeted beneficiaries in the schools (Casely-Hayford, 2000).

As Smith (2005) argues, in order to improve the quality of education, ownership at school level should not be neglected. In this regard, the fact that SMC members and teachers I met knew scarcely anything about WSD, and that head teachers themselves were barely kept in the loop, had serious implications for national ownership of the WSD programme. Such Ownership does not just reside at the central level (DANIDA, 1998a); most importantly, it should also include those at the grass roots. Nevertheless,

the present study found that ownership of the WSD programme became weaker as its implementation percolated down from the centre to school level.

7.8.3   The Driving Seat

The literature on ownership generally comes down firmly in favour of involving the recipient in problem diagnosis and solution designs if follow-through in implementation is to be assured (Brinkerhoff, 1996). The rationale for emphasising the importance of fostering ownership in the recipient is that, through conferment of leadership, it puts the host country, institute or side firmly in the proverbial driving seat; that is, in full control of the series of stages in the development process – from developing an agenda, to setting priorities, making decisions, allocating resources, implementing the programme, and evaluating it. Therefore, ownership should not be limited to a particular level or institution but applicable to all actors involved on the host or recipient side.

In respect of the present study, officials generally agreed that the GES had come to own the WSD programme. Among the advantages they counted was the fact that leadership and accountability had been delegated to the DEO, although this view did not generally extend to the DEO officials themselves, given that activities and funds were still largely controlled by GES HQ.

Similarly, during the two-year intervention, the DEO and pilot schools worked closely with QUIPS and met the set 'targets'; but the process was considered to have been led by the QUIPS facilitators. Admittedly, USAID/QUIPS staff frequently referred to the beneficiaries as partners, with the GES in the driving seat, but this notion was strongly rejected by its officials (interview G12).

'Driving seat' is used as a metaphor to describe ownership of an initiative by the recipient. However, if this image is extended to allude to relationships at various levels under WSD and QUIPS, the nature of the association appears to depend on whether the context is that of a chauffeur-driven or an owner-driven vehicle.

In the chauffeur-driven model of ownership, the driver is an afterthought. He or she does not have a chance or right to decide what type of vehicle is bought, its intended purpose, how it is to be used, or the nature of its maintenance. The driver cannot decide when to drive the vehicle or where to take it, unless he or she is merely being sent on an errand. Such decisions are the prerogative of the owner of the vehicle. At

the end of the day, the vehicle stays with its rightful owner and the driver walks or takes a bus home. In many cases, the driver is simply tolerated, knowing that his or her service is not really essential or irreplaceable.

If this hypothesis is applied to the present study, the degree of ownership that could have been nurtured in either case is debatable, given that GES HQ did not actually delegate full power over WSD implementation to the DEO; and that the details of the QUIPS programme had already been decided before either the DEO or the pilot schools became involved.

In their hurry to get the project off the ground and meet their disbursement targets within the financial cycle, QUIPS facilitators tended to fall into the trap of making decisions and undertaking duties that should rightly have been the preserve of the DEO, undermining or betraying the idea of local ownership in the process. A senior officer in Upper Denkyira described the relationship between QUIPS and the director as being "like an adult walking with a toddler – the toddler cannot keep up but the parent is in a hurry" (interview U7). Similarly, the former district director of education argued that USAID wanted "to lead in everything, when the District Education Office should actually be taking the lead" (interview G15).

It was ambiguous as to what kind of ownership model was really expected to be developed when Ghanaian officials at neither central nor DEO level were consulted before USAID/QUIPS decided exactly how the programme was to be implemented in the districts and schools. Moreover, it was also unclear whether 'actual ownership' (Mackin, 1996) could have been fostered in even a QUIPS pilot school and community when all the decisions on the application of QUIPS practices had already been taken before the schools engaged in the programme. Thus, those in the schools were twice removed from actual ownership; and ultimately, the beneficiaries may have been merely hitchhikers in a chauffeur-driven car.

In summary, there is invariably a trade-off between ownership on different levels, which means it is difficult to achieve a high degree of ownership on all levels at the same time. WSD clearly enhanced ownership at ministerial and district levels, but failed to develop any real sense of ownership at the local beneficiary level; while QUIPS cultivated ownership at the school level but failed to link local ownership to national ownership. However difficult it may be, it is still necessary to achieve a balance

between all levels, since they are all crucial to the achievement of effective implementation and sustainability.

7.9   Sustainability

Thus far in this chapter, the themes of fungibility, accountability, power relationships, trust and ownership have been discussed in relation to research questions 1 to 4. All these issues seem to be woven into the question of whether the innovation and impact brought by the absorption of external funds can be sustained after the conclusion of the intervention. This fundamental theme is discussed in this section with the aim of answering research question 5.

Rogers (2003) describes the sustainability of an aid-related intervention in the following terms:

> Sustainability is the degree to which a program of change is continued after the initial resources provided by a change agency are ended… Unless an innovation is highly compatible with clients' needs and resources, and unless clients feel so involved with the innovation that they regard it as "theirs", it will not be continued over the long term (ibid p.376 emphasis in original).

In Rogers' conceptualisation, a high degree of ownership over the intervention on the part of the host is one of the most significant criteria for sustainability; although other factors – e.g. financial autonomy – are also crucial to the achievement of this end. In this regard, it would hardly be worth considering the possibility of sustainability if the actors involved in the implementation of the programme did not feel that they owned it (Catterson and Lindahl, 1999).

The following sections examine the theme of sustainability in terms of the three aspects reviewed in chapter 3: sustainability of organisation, of individual capacity, and of institutional capacity. This is followed by a discussion of factors affecting the issues of sustainability under WSD and QUIPS respectively.

7.9.1   Organisational Sustainability

One way of addressing the topic is in terms of organisational sustainability, which is concerned with the question of whether the specific organisational structures established by a programme continue to function after funding is withdrawn.

In this regard, the study shows that any institutions introduced at the district level by either QUIPS or WSD were seldom sustained. The DMIT was dissolved when the QUIPS district grant was terminated. The DTST, the DEOC and the post of community participation coordinator (CPC) might have continued to function but in the event, they all lapsed into dormancy. Meanwhile, the institutions and positions that had been in place before the interventions – such as the circuit supervisors – continued to operate as usual.

Financial maintenance is a crucial element of sustainability (which was negatively exemplified in the case of the DMIT). However, it is not sufficient to perpetuate operation by itself. Budgetary allocation to the DTST, DOCE and CPC notwithstanding, the incumbents lost their initial industrious work ethic. What differed between the early stages of the interventions and the time of my fieldwork was the level of supervision and technical support from the centre to the DEO. This was originally facilitated through the DST and zonal coordinators, both of which had been abolished by the time of the study.

In this sense, political will, leadership and champions of the programme at the highest level of the administration were crucial. Without such long-term commitment and assurance, it is difficult to see how any programme can be sustained.

QUIPS operated outside the jurisdiction of the MoE. Thus, it was understandable that the GES did not demonstrate any particular persistence in attempting to sustain this programme. On the other hand, WSD was incorporated into the ministerial framework; but the fact that it was allowed to fade away casts doubt on whether the programme had actually been owned by the GES. A lack of support at the highest level indicates that ultimately, WSD might not have synchronised fully with national education policy after all.

7.9.2 Individual Capacity

Sustainability can be seen in terms of capacity building at an individual level, that is, whether the capacity of education actors (GES officials, teachers and SMC members) was enhanced through the programme, and whether they continued to work with increased capacity.

Education personnel who had received instruction were confident of incorporating some of the gains of the two interventions into their daily work, for example, skills gained through financial and administrative training; in-service training through the cascade model; and intensive training at QUIPS pilot schools.

The assertion that work continued with enhanced capacity notwithstanding, as Huberman and Miles (1984) stress, whether the capacity of an individual can be sustained depends on whether or not he or she is provided with continuous support and training, especially those who have been newly assigned. In this regard, the input associated with QUIPS was regarded as a one-off event. Under WSD, such supervision took the form of a series of processes. Nevertheless, the level of training that GES HQ offered to DEO officials and DEO officials to teachers was said to have gradually waned.

If the continuous support of individuals is the key to maintaining the gains made from WSD and QUIPS, and since the initial interventions were implemented for the same purpose, the programmes should be synchronised so that they operate in harmony. A lack of continuous support may undermine the impact of WSD and QUIPS, and make it easy for officials and teachers to slip back to their old ways of working. This is especially serious as the turnover of officials and teachers is high. A long-term mechanism should have been taken into consideration at the planning stage and embedded in the system; indeed, the needless duplication of innovations could have been reduced if there had been better coordination within the overall FCUBE initiative.

7.9.3   Institutionalisation

Yin (1979) observes that some projects might seem to disappear but continue to survive by becoming assimilated into a larger organisation, that is, 'institutionalising' all or some of their practices into an existing system. The fact that installed structures may not survive does not always signify the end of sustainability; it is not merely a simple dichotomy consisting of the survival or collapse of a programme.

The Ghanaian officials appeared confident of institutionalising some of the gains of both programmes. This was especially the case with WSD. In their study of organisational change, Berman and McLaughlin (1978) provide a relevant clue to the description of the trajectory of a project: institutionalisation involves at least one and perhaps a cycle of decisions taken by managers in order to reutilise the implemented

practice so that it becomes incorporated into organisational procedures. Indeed, in the case of WSD, cycles were established in which practices could be repeated; and the GES could assimilate and internalise the programme into its operations as a result of such repetition.

On the other hand, Fullan (2007) argues that the total period from initiation to institutionalisation may be lengthy: moderately complex changes take from two to four years, while larger-scale efforts can take five to ten years. Indeed, Ghanaian actors considered that a project-type intervention like QUIPS, which offered participants a one-off event or a couple of repetitions, was not long enough for innovations to be institutionalised.

7.9.4   Factors Affecting Sustainability

7.9.4.1   Financial Sustainability

One of the key factors affecting sustainability is whether the host has sufficient available funds to enable it to assume control of the intervention and/or continue to support it. In this sense, one of the negative effects of sustainability, which is especially applicable to QUIPS, is the absence of the necessary financial sustainability of supported institutions.

Yin et al. (1977) caution that the recipient at district level is unlikely to be in a position to incorporate recurrent expenditure into its regular budget once external funds are withdrawn. Due to the substantial input of external resources, good practice in the pilot schools could be regarded as a 'success story'; yet, the GES was unable to shoulder the financial burden of sustaining it. This was not only attributed to its lack of ownership but also the fact that there was a gap between what the donor agency (USAID) and the government could afford.

With regard to WSD, the fact that support from DFID through the ESSP came to an end could have been equally disruptive. However, DFID considered its continued involvement in service delivery to be of vital importance (Berry et al., 2004). To demonstrate its commitment, DFID Ghana explicitly expressed its intention of continuing to support the country's education sector through multi-donor and sector budgetary support (DFID 2009b). Thus, the officials were assured of the continuation of funding from DFID. This enabled the MoE/GES to make better long-term plans and

commitments, and to perceive the intervention as a process rather than an event of finite duration.

7.9.4.2   Poaching and Capacity

As discussed earlier, another influence on sustainability is the problem of fungibility. One way of dealing with this weakness is to delegate task management to hand-picked staff hired from outside the administration, which was what QUIPS did. Indeed, external facilitators were seen to be highly capable of and instrumental in implementing QUIPS interventions.

However, poaching capable staff from the system and bypassing official organisations in order to maximise the success of a programme undermines the capacity of local institutions; and the benefit of such expertise is lost once the programme comes to an end. Akyeampong (2004a p.46) argues that the skills of exemplary project facilitators can be incorporated into the state system if there is an appropriate mechanism for so doing, thus ensuring that acquired capital is not completely lost. However, as the author (ibid) further observes in the case of an NGO project in Northern Ghana, there was no such arrangement in respect of QUIPS, a shortcoming that added to the challenges of sustainability.

Another way that fungibility was dealt with was to post technical assistants or advisors with the MoE/GES in order to fill capacity gaps. This included the deployment of GES officials in donor-related programmes and the assignment of consultancy staff to MoE/GES positions. In the case of WSD, there was no direct poaching, as all implementers were GES officials; thus, theoretically their expertise remained within the system. Nevertheless, not only did the transfer of such parastatal personnel – e.g. the WSD national coordinator – and other administrators, hardly ever occur, but the prospective salary gap also had a negative effect on GES officials' sense of ownership, and therefore on the sustainability of programme.

7.9.4.3   Conviction and Commitment

Another fundamental challenge to the sustainability of education development that emerged from this study is the question of whether the recipient was convinced that the approach or intervention was sufficiently effective, efficient and relevant for the Ghanaian government to adopt and continue to support it, the aim being to achieve a nationwide improvement in the quality of education.

If the host government/sector is to be the real owner of innovations brought about by an initiative, and if the state is expected to assume control of any donor-related intervention and take the lead in the development of, for example, the basic education sector, without its conviction and commitment it is difficult to see how any intervention can be sustained in the long term.

This study shows that the MoE/GES was not certain of the efficacy of the project approach. While some QUIPS innovations were considered worth adopting as 'best practice', the question remained as to how to deliver such a strategy to all schools in Ghana, and how the MoE/GES could achieve this unaided. Accordingly, the study found that The MoE/GES ultimately remained unconvinced that this approach was a cost-effective way of achieving nationwide education development.

Moreover, if the host government/sector was to take responsibility for realising the long-term aims and outcomes of donor assistance, the understandable position of the MoE/GES officials was to inquire why USAID did not contribute to strengthening the capacity of the existing system but expected the ministry, which USAID had turned its back on, to take over and even scale up the intervention. Naturally, such an expectation was seen as hypocritical and unrealistic.

For these reasons, the MoE/GES opted for the system-wide model of assistance. In their study of international aid to Namibia, Bandstein and Dietrichson (2004) found that ministry officials generally preferred project support rather than budgetary assistance, mainly due to the fear of increased fungibility, bureaucracy and even corruption; as well as the lack of human resources experienced in many sectors.

In contrast to the above-mentioned study, their overt recognition of the high potential for fungibility notwithstanding, the Ghanaian officials in the present study did not opt for project support, such as QUIPS, over budgetary assistance, such as that provided through the ESSP.

Having observed and experienced various attempts to overcome the capacity gap, the officials eventually conceded that putting the persistent problem of weak capacity aside for the time being in order to achieve short-term aims did not contribute effectively to education development in the long run. It appears that they believed that tackling

capacity weaknesses by strengthening the existing structure was the only way to overcome such a challenge.

In this regard, support for the state system has the potential to obtain sustainable impact and bring about development in the long term. After the donor phases out its assistance, the project will in all probability have to rely on the government or the MoE/GES for sustainability. Indeed, even if all objectives are otherwise met, programmes that are implemented outside the jurisdiction of the government or GES structure without addressing the fundamental problem of capacity are more likely to end in merely looking wistfully back on past success.

7.10   Conclusion

This chapter discussed themes that reveal the complex nature of the absorption of international assistance, drawing from two very different aid interventions that aimed to achieve the same objectives. The goals of WSD and QUIPS were almost identical, sharing the same principles of education development and placing the school at the centre of innovation. However, moving away from their overall principles, significant differences become apparent. Indeed, the approaches adopted by WSD and QUIPS respectively – how external funding was transformed into practice and absorbed into the sector – differed markedly between the two programmes.

I observed numerous trade-offs with regard to how external funds were absorbed in both project and system-wide models of assistance, for example, in terms of capacity building and accountability; ownership and donor control; and immediate impact and sustainability. External funding was absorbed in the context in which the programmes were implemented, balancing these themes in accordance with the aid principles the donors had formulated.

Funds could be absorbed in an 'efficient' manner under the close supervision of the programme office, which resulted in the project fulfilling its goals and making a visible impact on the targeted groups. Accountability was ensured under the tight control of USAID/QUIPS. However, such a project approach faces the difficulty of linking good practice at school level with national ownership and commitment.

On the other hand, the weak capacity of the system could hamper the effective use of funds in respect of the programme model of assistance. Indeed, in the context of WSD, funds leaked substantially within the system before reaching the end-user. Consequently, system-wide funding such as that advocated by DFID may seriously struggle to link money to tangible impact at the school level. Accordingly, not all actors welcomed a strategy whereby the donor reduced its influence on the host government/sector, as this was considered to have affected service delivery. This view was especially expressed by actors at the grass roots.

Nevertheless, the fact that the MoE was convinced that the system-wide model of assistance had strengthened capacity by releasing funds to allow the GES to take charge of programme implementation on its own has important implications in terms of the ownership and sustainability of donor assistance.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This study explored the perception of international assistance under the Ghanaian national Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) programme. In particular, it examined the ways in which external funds utilised in different aid approaches were absorbed for the purpose of reaching sustainable outcomes, and revealed the complexity and challenges of putting the principles of the various programmes into action. The multilevel analysis involved several actors at different levels, all of whom had different experiences of aid absorption.

This concluding chapter digests the implications of the study for international assistance to the Ghanaian education sector by summarising the main findings of the study. The chapter concludes with suggestions for areas for further research and reflections.

8.1   The Relationship between Fungibility, Accountability and Power

In corroboration with the literature on fungibility, chapter 3 reveals the finding of this study that there was a high probability of the funds being fungible. The biggest bottleneck in the appropriate processing of external funds was the weak capacity of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and funds were leaked at various levels of the system. Even when funds were delivered to the intended users, this did not always mean that they were spent in accordance with HQ and/or District Education Office (DEO) plans; rather, usage depended on the circumstances in which the users found themselves.

The field data identify several factors that affect the use of external funds: (1) availability of information; (2) availability of monitoring and supervision; (3) availability of training; (4) relationships among officials at the DEO; (5) relationships between district officials and head teachers; (5) relationships within schools and communities; (6) relationships within HQ (e.g. the account of infighting at HQ); (7) relationships between HQ and the DEO; and (6) relationships between recipient and donors. These factors are intertwined and together they affect the level of monetary fungibility.

The study revealed a negative correlation between the degree of donor control over funds and the degree of monetary fungibility. USAID exercised a high level of control

over the accountability of its funds, by means of awarding contracts to organisations that were familiar with the donor's financial requirements. Power over the QUIPS programme remained with USAID and the funds were said to have been efficiently spent in accordance with the plan QUIPS had mapped out.

In contrast, on the WSD programme DFID overlooked the issue of accountability to some extent by entrusting the GES with control the disbursement of funds. The lack of GES institutional capacity over the disbursement of funds, however, led to a higher degree of monetary fungibility (leakage) than under QUIPS. The WSD funds leaked somewhere along the GES pipeline.

The literature on sector-wide assistance reviewed in chapter 3 indicates that one of the merits of the approach is its cost-efficiency due to its use of existing structures. This view was particularly affirmed by officials at MoE HQ. However, it was not fully endorsed by those closer to the grassroots level since the benefits do not trickle down from above due to leakage throughout the system.

This study also found that by channelling external funding into the government system, the WSD programme did not lead to the expected development outcomes in the short term; or at least not in a way that was sufficiently visible to convince those in the schools that they were benefiting from the intervention. Weak GES capacity hampered the delivery of funds, resources and services to the end-users in an efficient and effective manner. It may thus be concluded that GES capacity was not believed to be strong enough to deliver funds and resources to schools, much less to do so efficiently.

In this regard, the power shift from the donor to the GES was not unanimously welcomed at all levels of the sector. Rather, under circumstances in which the weak capacity of the GES was a bottleneck in service delivery, there were voices that argued that the donor should apply more power over the GES in order to make certain that the funds were delivered; and that such supervision was necessary at least until such time that the GES grew competent enough perform the task on its own.

Under the circumstances, bypassing the government system might be the more pragmatic way of spending external funds, since there is a lower risk of monetary fungibility in the process of disbursal to the end-users. Until GES can develop sufficient capacity, the cost of monitoring funds disbursed through GES to the equivalent level of accountability might be prohibitive. However, this method of delivering funds raises

questions about the cost-efficiency of establishing systems parallel to existing structures. This area requires further investigation.

8.2   Trust, Ownership and Sustainability

In accordance with the literature review of the relative merits of the sector-wide and project approaches, WSD enhanced ownership at the ministerial level while QUIPS facilitated ownership among the beneficiaries at the grassroots level. In contrast, the further the implementation of WSD moved away from HQ, the more the sense of local ownership of the programme receded; QUIPS, on the other hand, simply failed to make a significant impact at GES HQ or DEO levels.

This study found that behind these different levels of possession, there was a trade-off between an increase in ownership and a decrease in donor control, even if this correlation was by no means invariable. However, the difficulty lies in the use of concrete criteria to measure an abstract concept. Thus, the study showed that even when the criteria such as Ostrom et al.'s (2002a) are met there might still be a lack of ownership.

The study also found that entrusting recipients with implementation was a fundamental prerequisite to developing a sense of trust towards the donor. This also helped MoE/GES officials to accelerate their sense of ownership of the programme, since ownership facilitated a better overview of the sector and long-term planning.

The officials at HQ were disengaged from the implementation of QUIPS, which hampered the development of a working relationship between the USAID programme office and the GES. In turn, this undermined ownership of the QUIPS programme among MoE HQ officials.

If a sense of recipient ownership is an important precondition for sustainability, an intervention should be owned at various levels. The study revealed the difficulty in achieving a high degree of ownership at all levels simultaneously. However, QUIPS case demonstrated the notion that national (governmental and ministerial) ownership is crucial because any initiative that is owned at the grassroots level cannot be sustained for long if there is no national ownership to support it in the field. The project approach can bring about swift and tangible changes in target areas (e.g. in schools), but any

programme ultimately faces the fundamental issue of sustainability at the end of the intervention.

Indeed, the standalone project approach was seriously questioned by the officials in terms of its sustainability. Bypassing the existing system that was ultimately responsible for national education development because of its inefficiency just displaces the fundamental problem. Programmes and projects can succeed in establishing an exciting, innovative and effective school in the short term only to find that it will not last long if the system and management that are supposed to take over the intervention do not have the capacity to do so (Akyeampong, 2004b).

Unless capacity is strengthened sufficiently to sustain changes brought about by projects, they will result in wasted effort. It is better to tackle capacity building early on than to put it aside in favour of a standalone project that achieves immediate outcomes; as such projects do not have a chance of being sustained for long if the capacity of the system is weak.

This implies that any education improvement initiative should be in the business of institutionalising the long-term capacity of the system in the interests of continuous improvement. In this regard, utilising the GES structure seems to be a step in the right direction since existing state systems may thus remain effectual throughout the intervention. Conversely, newly installed organisations might become dormant along with the end of the project. As Akyeampong (2004a; 2004b) emphasises, it is better to strengthen the capacity of existing structures within the education system to support large-scale whole school improvement initiatives than to set up new structures that are intended to bypass ineffective ones.

QUIPS facilitated high quality education to a small target population, but at a cost that was neither replicable nor sustainable. The programme was of considerable value in addressing the objectives of FCUBE, but it may be argued that a project that is not strictly included and implemented within a comprehensive national plan is not in principle good value for the money it costs to execute. Moreover, the GES believed that it could have operated more efficiently and achieved better results if the same amount of money had been released to the MoE. Although USAID/QUIPS countered such an argument, this was the prevailing belief among GES HQ officials.

However, this is not to deny the potential advantages that project assistance offer, as the impact of the project approach is likely to be more tangible and immediate than that of programme type assistance. This study shows that the project can reduce the risk of fungibility by tightening the monitoring system. This implies that there is a possibility that the system can more effectively work if the monitoring function is more strictly put in place. This positive aspect can be incorporated into the system-wide assistance. Indeed, the project can complement the efforts of a sector-wide approach initiative, as it has the means for a more accurate delivery of funds and resources to places the programme approach takes time to reach.

8.3   Policy Implications

As found in the literature review in chapter 3, international assistance has largely moved away from project assistance towards a more coherent, holistic, sector-wide approach to supporting the education sector. This trend is highlighted in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) as an international commitment to aid effectiveness.

The best intentions of this declaration notwithstanding, together with the case of the Quality Improvements in Primary Schools (QUIPS) project in the present study, other investigations also show that weak capacity or failings of local systems – especially in terms of financial management – often prompt donors to bypass state apparatus and set up special accounts or separate project implementation units (NORRAG NEWS 40, 2008; Prospects 39, 2009). This in turn creates a downward spiral by further draining local capacity and demoralising the sense of national ownership of the development process.

The Accra Action Agenda notes a surprising lack of correlation between improvements to national systems and the use of those systems by donors (AAA 2008). As this study shows, unless the attitude of the donors changes, they run the risk of sending the message to recipients that it is not worth making the effort to improve state systems, as the donors will continue to use their own procedures in any case.

The findings of this study imply that the two different approaches to aid delivery may complement each other in different phases of a development intervention. For example, both the project assistance and the sector-wide approach could be used

simultaneously when the state system does not have sufficient capacity or individual qualified members of staff are in short supply. A sector-wide approach would allow the government to find a long-term solution to the capacity problem; meanwhile, gaps in human resources and weakness in the system could be filled by targeted projects.

However, emphasis should be placed on designing activities within a broader development framework as part of national level support. Project support should employ state systems and designate funds to a specific set of activities within its state structure. Donor support projects may then be integrated into the government/ministry budget and resources can be disbursed and accounted for with the use of state systems. However, as this study shows, there is a high risk of fungibility. Therefore, such a strategy should be accompanied by capacity building in terms of reducing fungibility, which can be facilitated by the kind of project assistance investigated in this study. Thus, focusing capacity building on financial management at all levels of any intervention needs to be continually accentuated.

As governments have become more dependent on external funding to support the sector, planning has acquired an increasingly external focus (King and Rose, 2005a; 2005b). Arguably, shifting project assistance to sector funding means that the government becomes more dependent on aid and international policy. In this sense, adopting a sector-wide approach or broader funding mechanism does not make the donors less responsible. Rather, it requires persistent and orchestrated efforts from both donors and recipients in assuming greater responsibility and ensuring that aid is more effectively absorbed in a given context.

It is particularly important that progress is made and the system strengthened in the education sector, as it has the largest budget and is the principal national employer in many developing countries; thus, it can be assumed that by so doing there will be a positive effect on public financial management as a whole.

If the premise of international assistance is to strengthen the capacity of the recipient government and enable it to take the lead in sustainable development, donors should adopt an approach that will enable the achievement of this end in the long term, even if they run the risk of failing to meet their objectives in the short term. Doubtless, this is preferable to adopting an approach that maximises its own aid effectiveness but does not contribute to wider, sustainable development.

For example, the Government of Ghana already has a sector-wide strategic policy(GoG 2009) and urges donors to work within the state framework, both operationally and financially. Yet, DFID and the World Bank are the only two agencies that have adopted multi-donor and sector budget support, other donors to date having employed project assistance as their main approach to aid delivery (King et al., 2009).

If the premise of international assistance is that the recipient is to own the development process, and ownership of the development initiative is a decisive factor in making aid more effective, donors should not diverge from the path the Ghanaian state has chosen or the efforts the government and MoE are making.

8.4   Areas for Further Research

This study is based on field data collected in Lower Denkyira and Upper Denkyira districts in Central Region, and does not include other parts of the country. Nevertheless, my trips to other districts as well as the available statistics (MoE/EMIS 2009) suggest that the geographical areas in which the biggest challenges to education development persist are the three poorest regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern). Yet, different levels of poverty subject to varying socio-economic conditions can affect the results of development efforts, especially in terms of the impact of an intervention and its sustainability. Moreover, the two DEOs chosen for this study were classified by the GES as non-ready and partially ready respectively. In ready districts, the DEO's capacity to control funds and implement activities may differ. Therefore, in order to capture a more comprehensive picture of how aid-related interventions are implemented and perceived, similar studies in other geographic regions and districts with different local capacity would be useful.

Another area for further study is the reasons for and implications of the failure to achieve FCUBE. The question is whether the disappointing development outcome was due to a lack of funding; problems in sourcing and securing funding; MoE/GES incapacity to use and implement any given level of funding; or a lack of coordination of development approaches.

This question is related to another fundamental challenge: whether there has been adequate funding to allow the Ghanaian education sector to attain the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education. The fact that the sector has

not achieved FCUBE might be attributed to either a lack of funding or the incapacity to utilise the available funds. However, the issue should be fully investigated in order to determine the future direction of donor assistance to education.

This study reveals the possibility that the system-wide or sector-wide approach can promote institutional capacity in the long term. However, at the same time, the weak capacity of the current system is a huge bottleneck to the efficient utilisation of aid funds. Therefore, further study is necessary to determine how to incorporate the advantages of the project approach into sector-wide mechanisms in order to mitigate the weaknesses of the latter approach.

Moreover, some donors – including the World Bank and DFID – have opted for a more flexible and fungible input, i.e. general budgetary support and sector-wide mechanisms channelled through the Ministry of Finance. However, the study of the WSD programme did not show measurable quantitative or huge qualitative education improvements in its linking of funding at the ministerial level with development outcomes at the grassroots level. Empirical evidence of this new trend is so far limited and is an obvious area for further research. Indeed, additional inquiry into the manner in which the shift towards these funding mechanisms can better improve implementation and impact at grassroots level is essential.

8.5   Reflections

Initially, I was interested in tracing the financial flow of aid funds to see how they were absorbed, and in assessing the level of monetary fungibility in the education sector. However, I soon realised that accurate detection was almost impossible due to several obstacles, one of them being the lack of distribution and record keeping systems. Having said this, I did not fully realise how financial information was left in a state of limbo or how weak Ghanaian education institutions actually were until I undertook the fieldwork.

The field study was a most enlightening experience. The view I got through the windscreen of a four by four land cruiser as an expatriate officer working at the Ghanaian Ministry of Education, and what I saw, heard, felt and smelt as a mere *oboroni* making good use of public transport or on foot was very different. I could not help but wonder if I had really seen the country and the dynamism of people's lives up

to that point. This apprehension scared me as well, as I came to realise that I was handling the JICA education aid policy to Ghana without having captured what was really going on outside of my office. This realisation humbled me deeply.

Now that I am nearing the end of my PhD study, I feel that this experience has simply been part of the processes of my search for better aid and not something I can leave behind once I leave Sussex. Rather, I feel that this study has become a map to help me navigate what I will do next. As a Japanese national whose country is one of the largest donors, I hope that my finings will contribute to making the approach to aid – notably Japanese aid policy – more effective; effective for the recipients in the long term rather than merely for the donors.

Appendix 1 A List of Interviewees and Reference Codes

The MoE/GES Headquarters

Code	Designation	Date
M1	Director, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation division (PBME) MoE	28/12/2005
M2	Budget officer, PBME MoE	16/01/2006
M3	Head of education management information statistics, MoE	22/01/2006
G1	Decentralisation coordinator Former WSD zonal coordinator	31/05/2005
G2	WSD desk officer for NGOs Former WSD zonal coordinator	14/06/2005
G3	Former director of curriculum research development division (CRDD) Former director of basic education division	10/08/2005
G4	Former WSD national coordinator	03/10/2005
G5	Former coordinator of FCUBE implementation coordinating unit	12/10/2005
G6	Budget officer of teacher education division (TED)	05/12/2005
G7	Chief internal auditor	08/12/2005
G8	Deputy director of pre-service, TED	12/12/2005
G9	District director, eastern region Former deputy director of in-service, TED	15/12/2005 29/12/2005
G10	Principle accountant	14/12/2005
G11	District director, central region Former officer of basic education division	22/12/2005
G12	Director of CRDD	28/12/2005
G13	Deputy director of in-service teacher training, TED	04/01/2006
G14	Budget officer	15/12/2005
G15	Former district director, Greater Accra region	15/08/2005 19/12/2005
G16	Deputy director general	14/12/2005
G17	Director general	31/05/2005

Donors

Code	Designation	Date
UQ1	Education development specialist, USAID Ghana office Deputy team leader of QUIPS	03/06/2005
UQI1	Director of Improvement Learning through Partnerships (ILP) project	21/06/2005 07/12/2005
UQI2	Consultant, ILP project	21/06/2005 07/12/2005
UQC1	Deputy director of Community School Alliance (CSA) project	27/06/2005
UQI3	Consultant, ILP project	13/12/2005
UQI4	Consultant, ILP project Consultant, BECCA project	14/12/2005 11/01/2006
UQC2	Team leader of CSA project Team leader of Education Quality For All project	20/12/2005
DW1	Senior advisor, DFID Ghana office	

Twifu Hemang Lower Denkyira District
District Education Office and District Assembly

Code	Designation	Date
L1	WSD coordinator District head teachers advisor Assistant director (finance and administration) Team Leader, District teacher support team (DTST)	17/10/2005 25/10/2005
L2	Circuit supervisor	17/10/2005
L3	Budget officer Former circuit supervisor	17/10/2005
L4	Assistant director (supervision) DTST member	18/10/2005
L5	Circuit supervisor Cultural officer	25/10/2005
L6	Chief accountant (district accountant)	27/10/2005 31/10/2005
L7	Assistant director (pre-school) Former DTST member Director of women and child affairs	31/10/2005
L8	Welfare officer	31/10/2005
L9	Accountant (donor funds)	01/11/2005
L10	District director of education	01/11/2005
L11	Budget officer	01/11/2005
L12	Former DTST member District girl child education officer	01/11/2005
L13	Assistant director (human resources and management) DTST member	01/11/2005
L14	Accountant (GoG funds)	02/11/2005
L/D1	District planning officer, District Assembly	19/10/2005

QUIPS schools

School code	Code	Designation	Date
L/Q1	SMC1	Assembly man	19/10/2005
	HT	Head teacher	19/10/2005
	SMC2	PTA chairperson Teacher	19/10/2005
	SMC3	KG teacher	19/10/2005
	SMC4	SMC vice-chairperson	19/10/2005
L/Q2	HT	Head teacher	25/10/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	25/10/2005
	SMC1	Unit committee chairperson	25/10/2005
L/Q3	SMC1	Chief	28/10/2005
	SMC2	SMC chairperson	28/10/2005
	SMC2	PTA chairperson	28/10/2005
	SMC2	Unit committee chairperson	28/10/2005
	SMC2	Unit committee member	28/10/2005
	SMC2	SMC, treasurer	28/10/2005
	SMC2	Unit committee secretary	28/10/2005
	HT	Head teacher	28/10/2005
	T1	Teacher	28/10/2005

WSD schools

School code	Code	Designation	Date
L/W1	HT	Head teacher	20/10/2005
	T	Teacher	20/10/2005
	T	Teacher	20/10/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	21/10/2005
L/W2	SMC1	SMC secretary	26/10/2005

	SMC1	PTA chairperson Queen mother	26/10/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	26/10/2005
	HT	Head teacher	26/10/2005
	T1	Assistant head teacher	26/10/2005
L/W3	HT	Head teacher	27/10/2005
	T1	Assistant head teacher	27/10/2005
	T2	Teacher	27/10/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	27/10/2005

Upper Denkyira District
DEO and DC

Code	Designation	Date
U1	Circuit supervisor	07/11/2005
U2	Community participation coordinator (CPC) Culture co-ordinator	07/11/2005
U3	Assistant director (administration and finance) Budget committee member District management implementation team (DMIT) member	08/11/2005 22/11/2005
U4	DTST member	10/11/2005
U5	Budget officer Budget committee member DMIT member	12/11/2005
U6	Circuit supervisor	12/11/2005
U7	QUIPS coordinator Assistant director (human resources and management) DTST member	12/11/2005
U8	District training officer DTST member QUIPS facilitator	21/11/2005
U9	WSD coordinator District head teachers advisor DTST member QUIPS facilitator	21/11/2005
U10	District girl child education officer	22/11/2005
U11	Assistant internal auditor	22/11/2005
U12	Chief accountant	22/11/2005
U13	District director	23/11/2005
U/D1	District coordinating director, District Assembly	07/11/2005 15/11/2005

QUIPS schools

School code	Code	Designation	Date
U/Q1	HT	Head teacher	09/11/2005
	T1	Teacher	09/11/2005
	T2	Teacher	09/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	09/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA chairperson	09/11/2005
	SMC1	Assembly man	09/11/2005
	SMC1	JSS head teacher	09/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA secretary	09/11/2005
	SMC1	Queen mother	09/11/2005
U/Q2	SMC1	PTA chairperson	11/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	11/11/2005
	HT	Head teacher	11/11/2005
	T1	Assistant head teacher	11/11/2005

	T2	Teacher	11/11/2005
	T3	Teacher	11/11/2005
U/Q3	SMC1	SMC chairperson	16/11/2005
	SMC1	Unit committee member	16/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA vice-chairperson	16/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA chairperson	16/11/2005
	SMC1	Women's representative	16/11/2005
	SMC1	Old students' representative	16/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC member	16/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA member	16/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA member	16/11/2005
	HT	Head teacher	16/11/2005
	T1	Teacher	16/11/2005

WSD schools

School code	Code	Designation	Date
U/W1	SMC1	SMC member	15/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC member	15/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA chairperson	15/11/2005
	SMC1	Chief	15/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC member	15/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC member	15/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA member	15/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA member	15/11/2005
	HT	Head teacher	15/11/2005
	T1	Teacher	15/11/2005
U/W2	HT	Head teacher	17/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	17/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC vice-chairperson	17/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC secretary	17/11/2005
	SMC1	Assembly lady	17/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC treasury	17/11/2005
	SMC1	Muslim representative	17/11/2005
	SMC1	JSS head teacher	17/11/2005
	SMC1	Primary school head teacher	17/11/2005
	T1	Assistant head teacher	17/11/2005
U/W3	SMC1	SMC chairperson	19/11/2005
	SMC1	PTA chairperson	19/11/2005
	SMC1	SMC chairperson	19/11/2005
	HT	Head teacher	19/11/2005
	T1	Assistant head teacher	19/11/2005
	T2	Teacher	19/11/2005
	T3	Teacher	19/11/2005

Appendix 2 Sample of Interview Schedules

Each interview was tailor-made according to each person's role based on the following basic interview schedules.

Ministry of Education and GES National Headquarters

Perceptions of	About WSD	About QUIPS
Mechanism of releasing and using foreign funds	➢ Could you explain your role in the WSD programme?	➢ Are you part of the QUIPS project? If so, could you explain your role in QUIPS?
The role of WSD/QUIPS in FCUBE	➢ What contributions do you think that DFID has made to basic education by supporting WSD? ➢ What do you think WSD's role has been in achieving GES's main objectives?	➢ What contributions do you think that USAID has made to basic education through the QUIPS project? ➢ What do you think QUIPS's role has been in achieving GES's main objectives?
Efficiency of WSD/ QUIPS	➢ How efficient do you think WSD is, in terms of the use of WSD funds?	➢ What do you think about the strategy and implementation of QUIPS?
Effectiveness of WSD/ QUIPS	➢ What impact do you think WSD has had on basic education (in terms of achieving the GES's main objectives)? ➢ What impact do you think WSD has had on the teaching and learning in this school? ➢ What effect do you think WSD has had on the enrolment and completion rates of pupils in the school? ➢ What effect do you think WSD has had on school management?	➢ What impact do you think QUIPS has had on the QUIPS schools? ➢ What impact do you think QUIPS on basic education (in terms of achieving the GES's main objectives)? ➢ What effect do you think QUIPS has had on the teaching and learning in this school? ➢ What effect do you think QUIPS has had on the enrolment and completion rates of pupils in the school? ➢ What effect do you think QUIPS has had on school management?
Constraints on the efficient use of the funds for WSD/ QUIPS	➢ Are there any difficulties for you in using funds and resources for WSD? If so, what and why? ➢ What do you think can be done to improve the use of funds for WSD?	
	➢ What do you think can be done to improve the efficiency of the use of foreign resources on the whole? ➢ What do you think about the situation where different projects or different approaches dedicated to basic education co-exist in the basic education system?	

GES District Office

Perceptions of	About WSD	About QUIPS
Mechanism of releasing and using foreign funds	➢ Could you explain your role in the WSD programme? ➢ Could you explain how the district budgets for WSD are planned? (Could you explain the planning and budgeting of WSD?) ➢ Could you explain how the funds for WSD are released from GES HQ to the District Office? ➢ Are t any WSD funds released from the district office to WSD schools? If so, could you explain how the funds for WSD are released from the district office to WSD schools? ➢ Has the mechanism for releasing and using WSD funds changed? Why?	➢ Did you take part in the QUIPS project? If yes, could you explain your role in the QUIPS project? ➢ If the interviewee knows about or plays a role in QUIPS, ask the following questions. ➢ Could you explain how the funds for QUIPS were released to Partnership schools /QUIPS schools?

Efficiency of WSD/ QUIPS	➢ What do you think of the WSD's strategy for school improvement? ➢ How efficient do you think WSD is in terms of using funds and resources for school improvement in this district?	➢ What do you think/is your view of the QUIPS's strategy for school improvement? ➢ What do you think of how funds are used to implement QUIPS? ➢ What is your assessment of the efficiency of the QUIPS project?
Effectiveness of WSD/ QUIPS	➢ What benefits do you think the district has gained from the WSD programme? ➢ What do you think the impact of WSD is on the quality of teaching and learning? ➢ What do you think the impact of WSD is on access and expansion? ➢ What do you think the impact of WSD is on educational management? ➢ What benefits do you think the schools have had from WSD? ➢ Do you satisfy the outcomes of WSD? ➢ Has the WSD met your initial expectation in terms of achieving the FCUBE? Why? ➢ Do you think WSD is effective enough to meet the needs in the district? (Do you think WSD is effective enough to have an impact on the quality of basic education?	➢ What benefits do you think the district has gained from QUIPS? ➢ What benefits do you think the pilot schools had from QUIPS? ➢ How do you think the QUIPS schools benefited? ➢ How long do you think the benefits from QUIPS will last in the district? (From the practical point of view, how long do you think the QUIPS activities will be practiced in the district?) ➢ What do you think the outcomes of QUIPS schools are? ➢ Did the QUIPS meet your initial expectation in terms of achieving the FCUBE? Why? (Do you think this is due to a lack of resources or due to any other reasons?) ➢ Do you think QUIPS is effective enough to meet the needs in the district? (Do you think QUIPS is effective enough to have an impact on the quality of basic education?)
Constraints on the efficient use of the funds for WSD/ QUIPS	➢ What do you think of the WSD's way of using funds? ➢ Has the district office faced any difficulties in using funds for WSD? If yes (no), why? ➢ What do you think can be done to improve the use of funds for WSD? ➢ What are the difficulties in implementing WSD?	➢ What do you think of the QUIPS's way of using funds and resources? ➢ What do you think can be done to improve the use of funds for QUIPS? ➢ What were the difficulties in implementing QUIPS or working with QUIPS?
The role of WSD/ QUIPS in FCUBE	➢ (What ole do you think WSD has played in expanding quality basic education (or: achieving the FCUBE objectives) in this district?)	➢ What role do you think QUIPS played in expanding quality primary education (or: achieving the FCUBE objectives) in this district?
	➢ If you could choose to expand QUIPS or WSD in your district, which would you prefer to adopt?	

School

Head Teacher

Perceptions of	With Head Teacher about WSD/QUIIPS
Mechanism for releasing and using foreign funds	➢ Could you explain your role in the WSD/QUIPS programme? ➢ Could you explain how the plans and budget are formulated in your school? ➢ (Could you explain the mechanism for receiving the funds for WSD/QUIPS?) ➢ Did the processes of planning and budgeting change with the introduction of WSD/QUIPS in your school? If so, how and why?
Efficiency of WSD/QUIPS	➢ What do you think of the strategy used by WSD/QUIPS? ➢ What do you think of the way the resources for WSD/QUIPS are used in this school? ➢ Do you think the resources for WSD/QUIPS could be used in a better way> more efficiently? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
Effectiveness of WSD/QUIPS	➢ What kinds of changes were brought about by the introduction of WSD/QUIPS in your school? ➢ What have been the benefits of QUIPS for your school? ➢ What impact has WSD/QUIPS had on teaching and learning? ➢ What has been the impact of WSD/QUIPS on the enrolment and completion rates of pupils? ➢ What do you think of the impact of WSD/QUIPS on school management has been? ➢ Do you think the resources for WSD/QUIPS are sufficient to meet the needs of the school? If yes (no), how and why?

Constraints on the efficient use of the funds for WSD/QUIPS	➤Have you faced any difficulties in using WSD/QUIPS resources in your school? If so (if not so), what and why? ➤What don't you like about WSD/QUIPS? ➤How do you think any difficulties could be overcome?
The role of WSD/QUIPS in FCUBE	➤If you are in a position to choose to do either WSD or QUIPS in your school in the future, which would you prefer? Why? ➤What do you think about the situation where different projects or different approaches co-exist in your school?

Teachers

Topics	**With Teachers about WSD/QUIPS**
Mechanism of releasing and using foreign funds	➤Could you explain your role in the WSD/QUIPS programme? ➤Do you participate in school planning and budgeting? ➤If yes, could you explain in what way? ➤If no, how do you think plans and budget are formulated in your school?
Efficiency of WSD/QUIPS	➤What do you think of how funds and resources are used in your school? ➤Do you think the resources can be used in a better way? If yes, how? If not, why not?
Effectiveness of WSD/QUIPS	➤What changes were brought about by WSD/QUIPS? ➤What have been the benefits of WSD/QUIPS for your school? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on teaching and learning? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on the enrolment and completion of pupils? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on school management? ➤Do you think WSD/QUIPS resources are sufficient to meet the needs of the school? If yes (no), why?
Constraints on the efficient use of WSD/QUIPS funds	➤Do you think there are difficulties in using WSD/QUIPS resources in your school? If so, why do you think that is the case? ➤How do you think difficulties could be overcome?
The role of WSD/QUIPS in FCUBE	➤If you were in a position to choose, and Ii you could or needed to choose to do either WSD or QUIPS in your school in the future, which would you prefer and why?

SMC Representatives

Topics	**With SMCs about WSD/QUIPS**
Mechanism for releasing and using foreign funds	➤Could you explain your role in (your school or the WSD/QUIPS programme)? ➤Do you participate in school planning and budgeting? ➤If yes, could you explain in what way? ➤If not, how do you think plans and budget are formulated in your school?
The efficiency of WSD/QUIPS	➤What do you think of how funds and resources are used in your school? ➤Do you think the resources could be used in a better way? If so, how? If not, why not?
Effectiveness of WSD/QUIPS	➤What changes have been brought by WSD/QUIPS (or FCUBE)? ➤What have been the benefits of WSD/QUIPS for your school? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on teaching and learning? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on the enrolment and completion of pupils? ➤What impact do you think WSD/QUIPS has had on school management? ➤Do you think the resources for WSD/QUIPS are sufficient to meet the needs of the school? Why/ Why not?
Constraints on the efficient use of the funds for WSD/QUIPS	➤Do you think there are difficulties in using WSD/QUIPS resources in your school? If so, why do you think that is? ➤How do you think difficulties could be overcome?
The role of WSD/QUIPS in FCUBE	➤If you were in a position to choose, and if you could or needed to choose to do either WSD or QUIPS in your school in the future, which would you prefer and why? ➤What do you think about the situation where different projects or different approaches co-exist in your school?

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