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The discursive and social practices of actors in Benin involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education in the context of the 2010 decentralisation policy



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Thesis submitted for PhD examination

At the University of Sussex

February 2020

Declaration

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

Signature:

Acknowledgements

First, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Professor Yusuf Sayed and Professor Kwame Akyeampong. In particular, I am grateful to them for the extraordinary amount of time they made available to share their long experience and for the detailed, thorough and thoughtful feedback to the thesis drafts throughout my PhD. They supported and guided me on my way to become an academic, and always encouraged me to go further in the process. I whole-heartedly appreciate their insightful advice during my studies, which proved crucial for the success of this study.

Second, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the institutions and individuals in Benin without whose contribution this research would not have been possible. I am indebted to the research participants from the following institutions for offering their time and sharing their valuable expertise and experience with me.

- MEMP, MDGL, MDP and sub-units
- Municipalities of Porto Novo and N'Dali

I also wish to express my gratitude to Mr Semedeton Sylvain Vankpinmede, who assisted the fieldwork process in Benin. His commitment was vital for data collection and transcriptions. Similarly, I wish to say a big thank you to Mr Maurice Aristide Athindehou for his generous and continuous availability to provide guidance, particularly for accessing key informants.

Third, I would like to give special thanks to the support structure for doctoral students of the School of Education and Social Work, notably the Director of doctoral studies, Professor Charles Watters, and Dr Linda Morrice (former), as well as the PhD coordinators, Dr Jo Westbrook and Dr Louise Gazeley (former). The professional support of Dr Deeptima Massey and Mr Mike Davy were of equal importance for navigating and completing the PhD project.

Moreover, the reading groups (GIC and Pondlife) and the writing-into-meaning groups were critical spaces and of particular inspiration on my way to become an academic. My sincere thanks go to those who initiated and led these spaces, Professor Máiréad Dunne, Dr Barbara Crossouard and Dr Sean Higgins; and Dr Emily Danvers, Dr Tamsin Hinton-Smith and Dr Rebecca Webb, respectively.

Fourth, I wish to thank friends, peers and mentors whose assistance helped me pass the milestones on the path to the completion of this project. In particular, I would like to thank

- Dr Fawzia Haeri Mazanderani
- Dr Gunjan Wadhwa
- Dr Rebecca Webb
- Mr Adam Kreimeia

...for their precious feedback on some of my chapters and

- Ms Sarah-Jane Phelan
- Ms Leva Rouhani

...for checking the coherence of the translated data in light of their experience researching in francophone African contexts.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the support and great love of my family, my husband, Tôkpéou, and my son, Luca, for their empathy and patience throughout my PhD; also, my parents, Anne and Klaus, and my sister, Janna, for their emotional and financial support. This work would not have been possible or completed without their assistance and confidence in me.

Executive summary

The study explores how the policy of decentralisation emerged and how actors involved in the provision of pre- and primary education in Benin (West Africa) mediate this policy. This is an important topic reflected in the national education strategy in Benin and much debated amongst scholars and practitioners in the field of international education and development since the emergence of the global ‘good governance’ agenda in the 1990s. The contestation about the emergence and implementation of the policy of education decentralisation in Benin in the context of a highly centralised pre- and primary education system provides fertile ground for closely investigating this policy.

The conceptual framework draws on literature about the concept of decentralisation (Rondinelli, 1980, 1990; Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007) and policy analysis (Ball, 1993, 1997, 2015; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). This framework provides a spatial and temporal dimension about the policy of education decentralisation ranging from the local to the global level over a period of nearly 30 years from 1990 onwards. The ideas of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2013; Fairclough 2010) and actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) inform the study of the policy tensions and mediation of the process of decentralising education in Benin.

This is a qualitatively oriented, in-depth study about how policy is generated and mediated by different actors in Benin. It is guided by one main research question which is how the decentralisation policy in Benin is discursively and socially constructed, and how actors involved in the provision of pre- and primary education mediate this policy, and three specific sub-questions: How is the policy of decentralisation discursively constituted, and how does it relate to the broader policy ensemble? How do the actors involved in the provision of pre- and primary education mediate the current decentralisation policy from a relational perspective? How did actors connect to bring about the agenda setting of education decentralisation in 1990 as a complex web of assemblages?

The empirical research draws on qualitative data including semi-structured interviews carried out in 2017 with high and middle-ranking officials from the Ministry of Pre- and Primary Education, from the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Governance, and the State Ministry in charge of Planning and Development as well as their sub-units. It also includes focus groups with head teachers, teachers, parents and members of teacher unions in a Northern and a Southern field site in Benin. In total, the sample consisted of more than 80 research participants.

The study of the policy of education decentralisation finds that it is underpinned by the discourses of development and modernisation and reflects Benin's colonial and post-colonial legacies and development trajectory. Further, the study reports that the policy as enacted results in a multiplicity of social practices of actors at the national, regional and local levels in Benin. Further the findings suggest that the construction of the policy of education decentralisation in 1990 was influenced by exogenous factors, including the global world events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, as well as endogenous factors such as the experiences of policy-makers and citizens of local community forms of participation initiated under the Marxism-Leninist government that was in power in Benin between 1974 and 1989 as well as during the pre-colonial period prior to 1894.

This research contributes to the understanding of education governance in the Global South, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, and provides insights into how the policy of education decentralisation in Benin is influenced by local, national and global factors. As such, this study offers a holistic understanding of the emergence and implementation of decentralisation reforms in Benin contributing to a deeper understanding of how local policy knowledge is discounted by policymakers. This study is of interest to the government of Benin, international organisations, scholars and practitioners working on large-scale education reforms.

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List of abbreviations

- ANCB : National Association of Mayors in Benin (*Association Nationale des Maires du Bénin*)
- ANT: Actor-Network Theory
- APE: Association of Students' Parents (*Association des Parents d'Elèves*)
- CAP: Coordination of Students' Parents (*Coordination des Parents' d'Elèves*)
- CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis
- CONAFIL: National Commission of Local Finances (*Commission Nationale des Finances Locales*)
- CS : Local school authority (*Circonscription Scolaire*)
- DDEC : Department of Education Decentralisation (*Département de la Décentralisation dans l'Education, DDEC*)
- DDEMP: Provincial school authority (*Direction Départementale des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire*)
- DDPD : Provincial planning and development authority (*Direction Départementale du Plan et du Développement*)
- EC : European Commission (*Commission Européenne*)
- FADeC: Municipal Development Support Fund (*Fonds d'Appui au Développement des Communes*)
- FENAPEB: National Federation of the Students' Parents (*Fédération Nationale des Associations des Parents d'Elèves et d'Etudiants du Bénin*)
- FGD: Focus Group Discussion
- GDI : Gender Development Index
- GDP: Gross Domestic Product
- GEMR: Global Education Monitoring Report
- GER: Gross Enrolment Rates
- GII: Gender Inequality Index
- GNI: Gross National Income
- HDI: Human Development Index
- HPI: Human Poverty Index
- IIAG: Ibrahim Index of African Governance
- INSAE : Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (*Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique, INSAE*)
- IOs : International Organisations
- JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

MDGL : Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Governance (*Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Gouvernance Locale*)

MEMP : Ministry of Pre-school and Primary Education (*Ministère des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire*)

MPD : State Ministry in charge of Planning and Development (*Ministère d'Etat chargé du Plan et du Développement*)

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

UEMOA : West African Economic and Monetary Union (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine*)

OSD : Strategic Development Orientations (*Orientations Stratégiques de Développement*)

PDDI: Intra-sectoral Development Plan (*Plan de Développement Intra-sectoriel*)

PDDSE : Ten Year Education Sector Strategy (*Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur de l'Education*)

PISA : Programme for International Student Assessment

Plan2D: Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation (*Plan de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire*)

PONADEC : National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration (*Politique Nationale de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration*)

SAP: Structural Adjustment Programmes

SCRIP: Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (*Stratégie de Croissance pour la Réduction de Pauvreté*)

SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

STP : Permanent Technical Office (*Secrétariat Technique Permanent*)

USA: United States of America

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1 Introduction

This research examined how the decentralisation policy in Benin was discursively and socially constructed, and how the actors involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education¹ have mediated this policy. First, the dominant discourses in the National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration (*Politique Nationale de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration, PONADEC*) in 2010 are deconstructed to unpack the underlying values and ideologies. Second, the discursive and social practices used by the actors involved in the mediation of education decentralisation in 2017 are identified in the form of a multiplicity of networks which negotiate the power and responsibilities of individuals, groups and institutions. Third, this thesis traces how lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups and social formations linked together around 1990 to bring about the decentralisation reform.

This chapter presents the rationale and context of this study as well as the research questions, delineates the material and data gathered for this research, describes the methods used and provides an overview of each of the chapters. The next section introduces the rationale.

1.1 The rationale

The topic of education governance is a highly discussed issue among both academics and development practitioners internationally. The ‘good governance’ agenda emerged in response to the insufficiencies of the Washington Consensus development model in the 1990s (Robertson et al. 2007). Decentralisation is part of the new global governance reforms calling for participatory governance through legal and policy frameworks. A whole set of new global governance reforms emerged out of the good governance agenda, such as market liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation and public-private-partnerships. These new governance reforms contribute to the dynamics and complexities that result from embracing increased economic development, political accountability, and public participation (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007).

Currently, decentralisation remains not only a core tool of International Organisations (IOs) for promoting democracy, good governance and economic development, but its advocates consider decentralisation a requirement for achieving the United Nation’s (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). While the SDG 4 - promoting inclusive and equitable quality education - does not explicitly mention participatory governance as a key target, this concern is reflected in the framework for action. For example, the Incheon

¹ This term is a translation from the French expression *enseignement maternel et primaire*, covering three years of pre-school (from the age of 3) and five years of primary education.

Declaration of the World Education Forum 2015 (UNESCO, 2015, p. 9) points out the importance of ‘legal and policy frameworks that promote accountability and transparency as well as participatory governance’ (cf. also UNESCO, 2015, p. 60).

In the context of globalisation, governments around the world have attempted to adjust to new perceptions of governance (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). Decentralisation has been on the national agenda of Benin for nearly 20 years. The current president, Talon, announced at the beginning of his mandate in 2016, his aim of strengthening the devolution and de-concentration reforms (Erlecke, 2016). In addition, this is a prominent theme in Beninese education reviews and its national education strategy² (Ministeres en charge de l’Education, 2012). This study is relevant to the operations of the Beninese government as well as illuminating the dynamics of governance reforms globally. It throws into sharp relief how far education decentralisation, as a global governance reform, using the national context of Benin as an example, informs policy and practice.

Finally, the study has also personal significance. My interest in education decentralisation emerged from my previous work experience in Benin. I worked on the education project of the German development agency (*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ*) in Benin between 2011 and 2014. The project aimed at strengthening the capacities of the local school authorities through the Ministry of Pre-school and Primary Education (*Ministère des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire, MEMP*).³ My particular role consisted in advising how the local school authorities could improve their collaboration with those elected in their municipalities. Although I had firmly believed in the principle of subsidiarity, I observed hesitancy if not reluctance and contestation by local education officials regarding the decentralisation of pre-school and primary education. This raised my interest in exploring how actors understand and enact devolved and de-concentrated responsibilities for pre-school and primary education in a period of great resistance and controversy.

² *La nécessité de renforcer la déconcentration et la décentralisation est clairement ressortie à travers les diverses évaluations et diagnostic. Pour pallier les dysfonctionnements constatés, le gouvernement est dans un processus d’élaboration et de validation d’un plan de décentralisation/déconcentration de l’administration scolaire avec un système de communication* (Ministeres En Charge De L’éducation, 2012, p. 74).

³ Henceforth, I will use the abbreviation MEMP and the term Education Ministry interchangeably to denominate the same institution.

1.2 The problem statement

The changing landscape brought about by globalisation requires a reassessment of decentralisation. Governments in the Global South continue to experience difficulties in implementing decentralisation reforms effectively (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, p. 10), which raises questions about why and how this relates to their post-colonial legacies and their current context-specific particularities. Tikly (2019) points out, for example, that global discourses, such as good governance, often fail to address the relative newness of African states in light of their colonial experience.

Although the Beninese government decided to decentralise parts of its education system in 1990 (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994), it struggled with effectively transferring resources to the municipal level. Despite the commitment of the government and the technical and financial support of IOs, the results have been rather tentative, as the evaluation report of PONADEC shows (MDGLAAT, MEF and MERPMEDER, 2014). The various and controversial discursive and social practices contrast with the policy text of PONADEC, claiming decentralisation enhances participation, improves access to social services at the local level, and supports the socio-economic development of the municipality (MDGLAAT, 2008).

1.3 The context of this study

Decentralisation, power, and participation are the key concepts of this study. Decentralisation is a global governance reform that aims to redistribute power within a governance institution, alias government (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). I understand decentralisation as the transfer of power to a lower level in the context of an education governance system (Lauglo, 1995). In the Beninese context, I suggest that PONADEC consists of multiple sub-types of decentralisation, whereby the sub-concepts of devolution and de-concentration as administrative forms of decentralisation are of particular importance (Rondinelli, 1980).

Power is inherently contained within the concepts of policy and decentralisation. Power is not only built into policy, as in Bell and Stevenson's (2006, p. 9) definition of policy as the 'power to determine what is done', but also in the concept of decentralisation, when the latter is understood as a transfer of power to lower levels (Lauglo, 1995). As regards power, I predominantly adopt a Foucauldian (1978, 1988, 2003a, 2003b) informed understanding, which considers power as relational, productive and normative; power relations are dynamic, multi-directional, fluid and open to change. Moreover, this study is informed by the concept of participation, which intersects with power in that different degrees of participation are associated

with different degrees of power. Participation can be considered as the corner-stone of democracy (Arnstein, 1969) and is also key to the concept of decentralisation if it is understood as the re-distribution of power.

Scholarly literature on education decentralisation shows that there is comparatively little research on education decentralisation in the francophone region of West Africa, and in Benin, in particular. For example, White's (2011) review of scholarly papers, articles, and books of the U.S. government, the World Bank, national and international think tanks, and academic papers from 1956 to 2011, found only three studies out of the 33 scholarly papers, articles, and books on education decentralisation refer to the African continent.⁴ Edwards and DeMatthews (2014) reviewed 127 studies on education decentralisation from four continents between 1945 and 2014 and found a similar trend: 13 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have been listed with at least one reference, compared to Southeast Asia and the Pacific with 16 and Latin America with 11. Benin is not referenced once, but Ghana and Tanzania are referenced four times, and Malawi and Nigeria are referenced five times each. This meta-analysis reveals the lack of research on education decentralisation in francophone SSA and the particular context of Benin.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions, inspired by Ball's (1993, 2015) policy trajectory studies, consist of one main question and three sub-questions. The main research question goes as follows: How is the decentralisation policy in Benin discursively and socially constructed, and how do the actors involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education mediate this policy? Before introducing the sub-questions, I clarify how I understand the discursive and social practices. My understanding of discursive practices involves the process of (spoken or written) text production, distribution, and consumption (Fairclough, 2010) and 'addresses the structures and rules that constitute discourse rather than the texts and utterances produced within it' (2015, p. 311). I extend this understanding by drawing on Foucault (1990, p. 101) that everyday life in modern societies is composed of discourses: 'discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy'. Foucault's theorisation of discourse is useful for unpacking decentralisation as an inherently structural concept to shed light on some of the complex and unstable dimensions of the

⁴ White (2011) examined more theoretical than empirical literature, which can partially explain the absence of empirical references to the African continent.

enactment of education decentralisation. In contrast, the social practices point to the varying interpretations of the policy by the actors involved in the enactment of the policy.

Starting with the assumption that policies are co-constructed knowledge, offering a mediated account of multiple realities, this understanding prompts the following sub-questions:

- a) How was the policy of decentralisation discursively constituted, and how does it relate to the broader policy ensemble?
- b) How did the actors⁵ involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education mediate the current decentralisation policy from a relational perspective?
- c) How did the actors connect to bring about the agenda setting of education decentralisation in 1990 as a complex web of assemblages?

Although Ball's (1993, 2015) policy trajectory studies served as the first point of reference for developing the research questions, some modifications occurred in the writing-up of the thesis. First, I structured the questions in accordance with the three moments of the policy cycle, namely the context of influence (agenda setting), the context of policy text production and the context of social practice(s). Second, I decided to privilege the local, implying a bottom-up understanding of policy, starting with the context of social practice(s) informed by ANT (Latour, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) and the spatial lens (Massey, 1994a). Third, I rearranged the questions and findings chapters in light of my use of these two distinct analytical approaches. As I indicate later, chapter 5 relates to Ball's second dimension, the context of the policy formulation process, chapter 6 to the context of social practices and chapter 7 to the context of influence.

This thesis is the first study that focuses on education decentralisation across all levels of the Beninese governance system by adopting a holistic account to explore the emergence, the formulation and the mediation of the PONADEC in the context of pre-school and primary education in Benin. The research design provides a multi-layered perspective on education decentralisation, contributing to a deepened understanding of education governance in francophone SSA through its discursive de-construction of the policy of decentralisation and the analysis of the contestations of local, national and international actors. The divergent and contested mediation of education decentralisation in Benin questions the relevance of decentralisation in historically centralised contexts, such as that of Benin, and the legitimacy of IOs in the Global South more broadly. It also points out that the governance systems and policies

⁵ I use assemblage and actor/actant interchangeably, whereby I understand assemblage as an analytical focus on 'how disparate material and discursive practices come together to form dynamic associations' (Koyama and Varenne, 2012, p. 157).

in the African continent are often intertwined with their colonial legacies. As such, this study offers a full understanding of the dynamics of decentralisation reforms in a globalised space and contributes to policy knowledge as unaccounted for by policymakers.

1.5 Method

This study is a qualitatively oriented in-depth study of how policy is generated and mediated using policy trajectory studies (Ball, 1993, 2015). I decided to conduct this research to understand the temporal and spatial dimensions of the emergence, formulation and the mediation of policy in two local field sites in Benin for two reasons: first, I believe that policies have a significant impact on their targeted ‘beneficiaries’, and second, I benefit from having access and networks to education and decentralisation officials through my previous work. Drawing on Ball (1993, 2015), Rizvi and Lingard (2010) and Bell and Stevenson (2006), among others, I understand policy as implying questions of authority and power, text, discourse and values, hence the analysis sheds light on these dimensions.

I use policy trajectory studies as the framework, incorporating three different contexts: the context of influence, the context of policy text production, and the context(s) of practices. These different contexts link the discursive origins of the policy, the responses to and the belongings of the policy (Ball, 1993, 2015). Moreover, I draw on Massey’s (1994b) theorisation of space, exploring the relations between space and place as social constructions. Spatial thinking is vital in policy analysis as the local and the global overlap as spatial relations in the education policy cycle (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). This work uses a temporal and spatial lens, beginning with research in two local field sites in 2017, then extending the analysis to the national and global influences on policy formulation and mediation around 1990. Finally, I position this study in a post-development framework which I understand as being critical of the very idea of ‘development’ as Eurocentric and which serves the global development industry and the West more broadly (Sachs, 2010; Escobar, 2012; Ziai, 2017).

For the analysis of the data, I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013) and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). I consider these as contributing to a more in-depth analysis: CDA helps to show how power is exercised through language, namely the discursive and social practices, while ANT weaves together the historical and lived events of individuals, groups and concepts to demonstrate how power is achieved or enacted. For the research paradigm, I distance myself from categorising this study within a single research philosophy. Instead, I look at the data from two different angles,

informed by CDA and ANT, which are anchored in different theoretical paradigms. In doing so, I loosely draw on post-structural and critical paradigms. The critical paradigm foregrounds issues of power and how discourse is embedded in political purpose, whereas the post-(structural) paradigm considers discourse as inseparable from its subject and reality remains unknowable (Samuel, 2016).

1.6 Delineation of the material

As outlined, this study is a qualitatively oriented policy study on the emergence and mediation of education decentralisation in Benin. Due to the study design and the resulting data, it describes the diverse geographies of the Northern and Southern field site, rather than elaborating the urban/ rural divide in detail. The study privileges the perspectives of the officials involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of education decentralisation rather than those of IOs, although the latter played a significant role. I draw only loosely on interviews with IOs to complement or nuance the main body of data because I believe that IOs voices are already adequately represented. Moreover, the data may have advantaged the views of administrators, mostly senior and male, over those of school actors, particularly female teachers and parents, due to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the education administration, schools and parents' associations. Further research to explore those underrepresented groups may be beneficial as the further implications of the research suggests (cf. chapter 8). The last section of the introduction provides an overview of the chapters.

1.7 Overview of the chapters

Chapter II outlines the politico-administrative, socio-economic, and cultural context of Benin with a particular focus on the governance of pre-school and primary education. It describes the historical origins of education governance, dividing it into its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The historical context is key to explaining why Benin adopted a democratic system, including the decentralisation of 1990, and how the socio-cultural profile of citizens has affected the enactment of the policy in particular ways. This chapter also provides a thick description of the Northern and Southern field sites. In this chapter, I show how N'Dali (Northeast) and Porto Novo (Southeast) have been shaped by different histories, ethnicities, and language characteristics and diverging access to educational provision. The particular geographies have implications on how to understand and theorise the data, particularly in light of the spatial turn (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010; St. Pierre, 2011).

Chapter III is the literature review of education decentralisation from three perspectives. First, I introduce and discuss the framework of policy trajectory studies, and how ideas of different theoretical lenses inform this work. It provides a fuller exploration of this theoretical challenge and its contribution to this research. Second, I provide an overview of the main concepts - decentralisation, power, and participation - all of which are vital for understanding the trajectory of education decentralisation in Benin. Third, I review the empirical literature on education decentralisation in general in order to situate this study within the wider context of education governance reforms. Finally, this chapter outlines the conceptual framework, mainly based on Ball's (1993, 2015) policy trajectory studies and informed by the reviewed concepts.

Chapter IV introduces the research methodology of this study. After introducing the research paradigms, it provides a detailed outline of how I proceeded from the design to the collection and analysis of the data and then the writing-up of the thesis. In this chapter, I describe the sampling strategy, justify the field sites selected, and describe which research participants I selected to capture their perspectives, and which policy documents I used to complement their perspectives. This chapter is also about data production, including methods and processes as well as the analysis, to shed light on how the theoretical approaches inform the analysis. I explain how I addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and outline the ethical concerns, particularly questions of confidentiality and anonymity. Towards the end, I reflect on questions of power and positionality in getting access, producing data, and analysing it.

Chapter V is a deconstruction of the discursive nature of the PONADEC, its philosophical underpinnings, and its internal and external co-authors. It explores how this policy is discursively constituted, and how it relates to pre-school and primary education. CDA informs this chapter through the analysis of the textual and discursive features of the decentralisation policy, whereby I understand discourse in a historicised sense and extending to the process of policy formulation. The first part analyses the devolution and education laws; the second part de-constructs PONADEC, and the third part discusses the implementation plans and strategies. For the legal framework, I suggest that the devolved responsibilities are limited, vague and are not translated into a regulatory or clear guidance framework. In the second part, I consider PONADEC as a bricolage of local and global formations because it is interwoven with international strategies, influenced by global actors, and re-inscribes the colonial legacy, to some extent. In the third part, I not only discuss the relative absence of devolution in the Ten Year Education Sector Strategy (*Plan Décennal de Développement du Secteur de l'Education, PDDSE*)⁶, but also the non-

⁶ The Education Sector Strategy 2016-2025 was not available during the analysis stage of the thesis. Therefore, I decided to take into account the preceding version 2006 - 2015.

adoption of the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation (*Plan de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire, Plan2D*) as a form of resistance.

Chapter VI outlines an understanding of the enactment of the decentralisation policy in what is still a rather centralised context. It explores how the actors involved in providing pre-school and primary education mediate the decentralisation policy at the provincial, municipal and school levels. This chapter draws on ideas from ANT, considering the school settings in the Southern and Northern field sites as small-scale networks (Law, 2009; Gorur, 2015) which serve as a starting point to develop the analysis of this chapter. First, I consider the mediation of the decentralisation policy as a social arena allowing for institutional and relational pluralism or, in Ball's (1994a) terms, for a wild profusion of social practices. Second, I discuss the reconfiguration of relationships between government and non-government actors as well as central and municipal government entities. Following from this, I argue that the decentralisation policy reinforces the role of the central and municipal government actors, whereas parents and teachers report feelings of disempowerment, drawing attention to the unstable nature of discourses and practices.

Chapter VII is about the agenda setting for education decentralisation in Benin exemplified in the National Conference of the Active Forces held in 1990. It explores how actors connected to bring about education decentralisation, tracing the origins of the PONADEC. Relying on ANT makes visible how lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, and social formations connected to understand how education decentralisation had become institutionalised in the 1990 constitution as an interplay between global and national forces. In this chapter, I first argue that the 1990 Conference has been discursively presented as the event marking a political transition leading to decentralisation. The second part unpacks the roles of different groups of actors, suggesting that policy elites and IOs played a significant role in the agenda setting. Third, the agenda setting of education decentralisation has to be considered within broader events, such as the global world shift and the democratisation discourse. Fourth, this chapter explores the endogenous precursors of decentralisation. More precisely, I suggest that the political representative democracy system, including decentralisation, has been built up incrementally on previous political regimes.

Chapter VIII presents the conclusion of this thesis. I synthesise the main findings of this study, present the contribution to knowledge, and the political and practical implications as well as implications for further research. The following chapter outlines the historical and current context of Benin, notably education governance.

2 Context

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the context of Benin, where this research took place. The first part is the chronological evolution of the political and administrative, socio-economic, and education experiences from pre-colonial to the democratic renewal in 1990. The second part outlines the contemporary politico-administrative, socio-economic and education situation in more detail with particular emphasis on the organisation of the governance of education. The chapter finishes by outlining the unique situation of both field sites: the capital, Porto Novo in the South, and the semi-urban municipality, N'Dali in the North, shaped by different histories, ethnic and language divisions, access to educational provision and outcomes, among other differences. The first part starts with the historical beginnings, the pre-colonial rule.

2.1 The historical beginnings from pre-colonial to contemporary times

It is essential to understand internal and external factors which shaped Benin's history to understand the current situation of education governance. Gifford & Weiskel (1971) categorise Benin's past into three historical periods: the pre-colonial rule until 1890, the colonial rule until 1960 and the post-war era of decolonisation from 1960 onwards. This part illuminates the relevant political periods, describing the dynamics of decentralising and centralising power that have influenced the form and content of the decentralisation policy today. It also sheds light on the education system of Benin within these different historical periods and how it influenced the current education system.

2.1.1 Pre-colonial rule: the kingdoms (16th century – 1894)

In the pre-colonial rule before 1890, local kingdoms organised how citizens co-existed. The current Beninese government denominates the local kingdoms as city-states (*cités-États*) and describes them as well-structured political entities with functional urban centres (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018). The organisation of the local kingdoms is relevant to the current decentralisation reform because I consider it as the first endogenous experience of power being distributed between the central state and these city-states.⁷ Particularly influential was the kingdom of Dahomey, a regional kingdom in the 17th century which lasted into the 19th century

⁷ The concept of city-state, which can imply sovereignty, may be understood in various ways. For example, it can refer to the city, its political status and its territorial limits and this raises questions about the state, its functions and the body politic that organises it (Glassner, 2004).

(One World - Nations Online, 2013). The city-states had local trade based from early 17th century on the slave trade, then on palm oil after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. These economic developments favoured the installation of commercial ports along the coast controlled by the British, the Danes, the Portuguese and some French, and led to the French protectorate of 1863, renewed in 1882 (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018).

The creation of schools in Benin, like in other West African countries, goes back to the 1860s when missionaries created schools along the coastline. In Benin, regular missionary schools were first established in the South, whereas the North of Benin had to wait 40 more years (Decalo, 1987), which may contribute to the geographical disparities between the South and the North and between urban and rural areas today. School education aimed not only to transfer knowledge and skills but also to transmit a way of life, explicitly defined as Christian, implicitly implying European *habitus* (Bierschenk, 2006). Belgium and later, Spanish missionaries had to hand over the missionary schools to France in the 1890s when the kingdom of Dahomey came under colonial rule. France secularised these missionary schools in 1903, which is the beginning of the colonial era of education (Fichtner, 2012).

2.1.2 Benin as a French colony (1894 to 1960)

The colonial rule divided Dahomey into *circles*, which had subdivisions and then *cantons*, covering several villages. The local royal families ruled these cantons under French supervision (Decalo, 1987; Ki-Zerbo and Holenstein, 2003). After World War II, Benin was divided into *départements*, governed by a central prefect, *sous-préfectures*, governed by assistant governors or *sous-préfets*, and their related necessary administrative area, the *arrondissement* (Decalo, 1987). The decentralisation reform in the Territorial Administration Act of 1993, mostly kept this administrative organisation, except for replacing the *sous-préfectures* with elected bodies, the municipalities (MISAT, 1993).

As previously indicated, the principles of secularisation and nationalisation informed the reorganisation of the education system at the beginning of the colonial rule, which mirrored France's conflict with the catholic church at that time (Gifford and Weiskel, 1971). In 1903, France replaced the integrative system, educating native and French children in the same schools, by separate schools. Moreover, schools were highly selective not only in terms of access, but also in terms of their functions. In 1938, only 3.3% of children, mostly boys, had access to schools, which had the purpose of serving the colonial administration (Bierschenk, 2006). Overall, current

disparities in terms of social status, sex and geographical location have their origins in colonial and pre-colonial rule.

Bierschenk (2006, p. 265) and Fichtner (2012, p. 41), referring to Corby (1990), argue that the colonial education discourse served the purpose of ‘educating Africans for inferiority’. This statement refers to the point that delivering the staffing requirements of colonial administrations was the primary aim of schools for native children, notably the training of a limited number of subaltern African civil servants in the service of the general colonial administration, schools and public health (Bierschenk, 2006). Tikly (2019) explains that the French approach to education was assimilative, implying a stronger emphasis on the ‘adoption’ of African elites into French culture. It was only in 1946 that the constitution of the Fifth Republic guaranteed all the citizens of French colonies equal access to public services (Fichtner, 2012).

Interestingly, Benin had the highest enrolment figure in all of French West Africa in 1938, with 3, 937 enrolled children in total (Bierschenk, 2006). This may have suggested to Decalo (1987) that Benin had a relatively more advanced educational system within Francophone Africa. Moreover, Benin gained recognition as the Latin Quarter of Africa (*Quartier Latin de l’Afrique*) through a large number of Dahomean intellectuals and professionals (Decalo, 1987) in the post-World War years. Decalo suggests that the term *Latin Quarter of Africa* has two implications:

The former referring to the large number of intellectuals, authors, and professionals produced by the small but upwardly mobile southern populations, and the latter a testimony to the extremely high turnover of French governors in Cotonou—partly a consequence of the rapid pace of events in Dahomey and the country’s social vibrancy and turbulence (Decalo, 1987, p. 4).

The idea of the ‘*quartier latin*’ contrasts with the relatively low development and achievement in schooling today, as I will outline later. Beginning in the 1950s, there was a general trend in former French African colonies that expanded the demand for education. Notably, General Councils and Territorial Assemblies made education a priority, but the construction of the school system remained under the financial control of France (Bierschenk, 2006).

Proclaimed a Republic on December 4, 1958, Benin acceded to international sovereignty on August 1, 1960, under the name of Dahomey. Although Dahomey aimed for a radical re-definition of the education system, the first education reform launched in 1964 to ‘ruralise’ the school system and expand primary education (*La ruralisation de l’école*), in fact, re-produced the colonial system of ‘applied’ education (Fichtner, 2012). In spite of a short experience of democratisation in 1960, when Dahomey proceeded to general elections, it overall experienced a period of political instability: six coup d’états between 1963 and 1972, and two constitutions were

adopted (1960 and 1964) before Kérékou seized power in 1972 (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018), as explained in the next section.

2.1.3 Benin under the Military-Marxist regime (1974 to 1989)

In 1975, Major Mathieu Kérékou⁸ of the military government renamed Dahomey as the People's Republic of Benin (*République Populaire du Bénin*) and proclaimed a socialist economy of Marxist-Leninist orientation. Gisselquist (2008, p. 795) suggests that the Beninese 'government borrowed from Soviet models selectively as other 'Afro-Marxist' States did' as Benin had to rely economically on neighbouring countries like Nigeria. During this political regime, several opponents were murdered, tortured and exiled (Decalo, 1987). Despite an assault by a French mercenary, Kérékou remained in power until 1990 (Houngnikpo and Decalo, 2013).

Kérékou re-organised the colonial territorial division, similar to the administrative organisation that exists today, which resulted in 'a change of the nomenclature of the various regional and local structures' (Decalo, 1987, p. 19). The previous *départements* were named provinces, and the *sous-départements* were called districts at that time. Kérékou aimed at 'revitalising government and bringing it closer to the masses' (Decalo, 1987, p. 19), an aim currently associated with de-concentration (Jarroux, 2017). Decalo claimed that several new structures had either advisory or executive powers. He considered local government - at least - as partially decentralised. In particular, Kérékou introduced community participation mechanisms with the Municipal Revolutionary Commissions and the Provincial State Committee of Administration. These organs were elected, but elections took place within the political party in power (Decalo, 1987). Thus, this regime could be considered as a limited form of socialist democracy (Lauglo, 1995).

In 1975, Kérékou undertook a fairly innovative educational reform. While the previous 'Ruralisation of the school' reform of 1964 was a continuation of the colonial system, a further reform, termed 'New School' (*Ecole Nouvelle*) aimed to decolonise the education system and hence the Beninese citizen. This new programme, incorporating the international education discourse of the 1970s on the one hand and the Marxist-Leninist orientation on the other, adapted the education system to national needs (Fichtner, 2012). Notably, it changed the academic

⁸ Kérékou was President of Benin under a Marxist-Leninist regime from 1972 to 1991 and again under a democracy from 1996 to 2006 (Houngnikpo and Decalo, 2013).

calendar to the agricultural cycle and introduced industrial and technical education at the post-secondary level.

In the mid-80s, the military government of Kérékou experienced a significant economic recession ending in bankruptcy, and hence the loss of political power. Bierschenk and de Sardan (2003) claim responsible the financial crisis as well as the global 'de-ideologisation' and the relaxation of the Marxist underpinnings as rationales for the unfolding of the democratic renewal. Even though Kérékou's academic reform had increased school attendance from 41.5% to 61.3% by 1983, it resulted in several negative consequences, such as the decline in academic standards and the exodus of qualified teachers (Decalo, 1987). The recruitment of the civil service was disrupted, and consequently, school and university diplomas were devalued. Since the State was unable to pay its civil servants, it began to lay off permanent post-holders, which led to an urban exodus (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003).

In December 1989, after 17 years of Marxist-Leninism, President Kérékou announced it was to be abandoned, and Benin was renamed the Republic of Benin three months later (One World - Nations Online, 2013). The next section outlines the current situation of Benin as a democracy.

2.1.4 The democratic renewal (1990 –)

After the socialist government, Benin transitioned into a multi-party western-style political system in 1990. This conference, a major event for political transition, gave rise to two main decisions: the first introduced economic and political liberalism, democracy and the rule of law; the second appointed a Prime Minister to assist General Mathieu Kérékou who retained the presidency, losing, however, most of his former prerogatives (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018). The National Conference of the Active Forces held in Cotonou in February 1990 assembled more than 500 delegates across social groups (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994; Gisselquist, 2008; Bierschenk, 2009; Hounnikpo and Decalo, 2013).

The 1990 conference and the relatively smooth transition of presidents⁹ through fair elections heralded Benin as a democratic model in francophone West Africa (Mathurin & Decalo, 2013). The liberalisation and democratisation process in the 90s and the subsequent partial withdrawal of the state had several effects. It not only re-empowered some traditional chiefdoms but also created space for Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Bierschenk and Olivier de

⁹ Nicephore Soglo in 1991, Mathieu Kérékou in 1996, Boni Yayi in 2006 and Patrice Talon in 2016

Sardan, 2003). Gisselquist (2008) suggests that the political transition to democracy was able to succeed because of the support of external actors and a wide variety of domestic groups. She considers Benin's democracy as a 'deviant case' compared to other countries in West Africa, in particular francophone countries, because despite Benin's low level of development, the country transitioned to democracy before its neighbours. Bierschenk (2009) situates the reasons for this in internal rather than - as often argued - external factors, suggesting the neo-patrimonialism, personalisation, authoritarianism, regionalism and generationalism of the previous government as the constituent factors of the political dynamic (cf. also chapter 7).

Since 1989, Benin has peacefully organised six presidential, seven legislative, and three municipal elections (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018). The regimes under Kérékou and Yayi Boni evidence significant decentralisation efforts with the development of the devolution laws in the 90s and the policy of devolution and de-concentration in 2010, as the documentary analysis indicates (cf. also chapter 5). In particular, the government under Yayi Boni (2006 to 2016) pushed education decentralisation even further. For example, the Education Ministry created the Department of Education Decentralisation in 2006. In 2007, it founded the technical committee to support education decentralisation (*Comité Technique d'Appui à la Décentralisation dans l'Education*) and extended the Plan for the De-concentration of the School Administration (*Schéma de Déconcentration dans l'Administration Scolaire*). In 2010, the Ministry organised a National Forum on Decentralising Education. Finally, in 2014, it extended the Implementation Plan of the decentralisation policy for the pre-school and primary education sector, and created services for education decentralisation at the provincial level. In 2016, however, the decentralisation department at national level, and the decentralisation services at provincial level, closed following a reform by incoming president, Talon, to 'slim down' the state bureaucracy. The peaks in education decentralisation in 2007, 2010 and 2013 correlate with the financial and technical support of IOs, notably Danish and later, German development aid.¹⁰

The next part of this chapter outlines the contemporary politico-administrative and socio-economic situation as well as the organisation of education governance.

¹⁰ This paragraph draws on documentary data from the Department of Decentralisation of the Education Ministry (*Département de la Décentralisation dans l'Education, DDEC*) (cf. chapter 4).

2.2 Contemporary politico-administrative, socio-economic and education conditions

This part introduces Benin's period as a democratic republic from 1990 onwards. It explains first, the administrative and political organisation of governance and second, the socio-economic background that framed the education system. The last section outlines the steering structure of education at different levels, and provides data about access to and the quality of education.

2.2.1 Politico-administrative conditions

The contemporary political system is derived from the 1990 Constitution of Benin. Benin follows a Western model of a presidential, representative, democratic republic. It has a multi-party system, with separation of the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary (cf. Law of the Fifth Republic on 11 December 1990). The government exercises executive power, whereas the national assembly has legislative power. The judiciary is independent of both the executive and the legislature (République du Bénin, 1990a).

Benin has 12 major political parties and approximately 20 additional minor parties. The legal system consists of a civil law system modelled largely on the French design and some customary law with a unicameral National Assembly (*Assemblée Nationale*). The population reacted angrily to the last legislative election in April 2019 because the president passed a law which ruled out all opposition parties (BBC, 2019). With regard to the executive branch, President Patrice Talon has been both head of state and head of the government since 6 April 2016; the prime ministerial position has been abolished (CIA, 2018). Currently, there are 22 ministries (Gouvernement de la République du Bénin, 2018). In the judicial branch, Benin's highest courts are the Supreme Court (*Cour Suprême*), the Constitutional Court (*Cour Constitutionnelle*) and the High Court of Justice (CIA, 2018). More than 50 IOs are present in the country, and currently supporting the decentralisation reform are the World Bank, the European Commission (EC), and bilateral agencies from Switzerland and Germany.

In terms of constitutional law, Benin is a unitary state, as opposed to a federal state. This means the state is the ultimate and supreme power and that any administrative divisions exercise only those powers that the central government chooses to delegate, devolve or privatise that is, the laws defining the responsibilities of the devolved and de-concentrated units (as well as any shared and delegated responsibilities). All other responsibilities fall within the sphere of control

of the central state (Dafflon and Madiès, 2008; MDGLAAT, 2010). Today, Benin has one de-concentrated level, the province, notably the prefecture and the sectoral authorities, and one devolved level, which is the municipality. Overall, Benin has 12 provinces (de-concentrated) and 77 municipalities (devolved), which are subdivided into 569 districts and 3,743 villages. Three municipalities have a special status¹¹ - Cotonou, Porto Novo and Parakou (MDGLAAT, 2010).

In terms of de-concentration, the Council of Ministers appoints a governor to run the prefecture. The governor is the only representative of the government (and all its ministers) at provincial level. Governors coordinate the de-concentrated services, ensure the preservation of order and the guardianship of the municipalities. The de-concentration of the ministries means power is transferred to the sectoral authorities at provincial level (MDGLAAT, 2008). In terms of devolution, the people elect the town council, which chooses a mayor to govern a municipality. The function of the municipality is based on: (i) a deliberative body - the municipal or municipal council - which has three permanent committees, (ii) an executive body with the mayor and his deputies, (iii) an administration and (iv) local advisory councils: borough councils and village or town councils (MDGLAAT, 2008). Article 2 of devolution law 97-029 states the mayor is a legal entity with financial autonomy.

Devolution law 97-029: The municipality is a territorial collective endowed with a legal personality and financial autonomy (article 1) [...] It constitutes the institutional framework for the exercise of democracy at grassroots level (article 2).¹²

In contrast, article 14 of devolution law 97-028 articulates the role of the governor as the 'supervisor' of the town council.

Devolution law 97-028: Under the conditions fixed by law, the governor supervises the territorial collectives and the control of the legality of their acts (article 14).¹³

As the fifth and sixth chapters will show (cf. chapter 5 and 6), these two paragraphs create many battles centred around the themes of autonomy versus control. The following table (cf. *Table 1*) summarises the key features of both de-concentration and devolution in the Beninese context.

¹¹ Three of 77 municipalities have special status (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 19). Municipalities with special status have the responsibility to construct, equip and repair secondary schools, as well (article 99).

¹² *La commune est une collectivité territoriale dotée de la personnalité juridique et de l'autonomie financière (art. 1) [...] Elle constitue le cadre institutionnel pour l'exercice de la démocratie à la base.*

¹³ *Dans les conditions fixées par la loi, le préfet exerce la tutelle des collectivités territoriales et le contrôle de la légalité de leurs actes.*

<i>Administrative Forms of Decentralisation</i>	De-concentration (Sectoral authority)	Devolution (Municipality)
Individual	Appointed	Elected
Responsibility/ power	Delegated	Transferred or shared
Financial resources	De-concentrated/ assigned funds (<i>crédits délégués</i>)	Devolved/ transferred funds (<i>crédits transférés</i>)
Accountability	Accountable upwards to the hierarchy	Legal and financial autonomy

Table 1 Subtypes of decentralisation in the context of Benin (author's compilation based on PONADEC, 2008)

Benin demonstrates a rather low governance score but stands out in the categories of Participation & Human Rights, and Safety & Rule of Law, according to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG). The 2016 IIAG, which measures the state of governance across the continent, ranks Benin 16th with an overall governance score of 57.5% out of 100 African countries (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020). I suggest the high Participation & Human Rights score of 68.6% could be due to the decentralisation reform, which started in 1990. Olsen (2007) points out state reforms' potential to foster participation and the rule of law for the peaceful management of the state.

Having outlined the politico-administrative context, I now move on to the socio-economic background informing the education system.

2.2.2 Socio-economic conditions

Benin has a population of approximately 10.9 million (2016), 46.7% of which was under the age of 15 in 2013. There are at least 52 ethnic groups with their respective languages (UNDP, 2020). The forecasts of the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (*Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique, INSAE*) suggest lower population growth in the coming years than in the past (INSAE, 2018). However, the population could reach about 15.8 million by 2030 (MEMP, 2018).

Although below the average for African countries, the human development of Benin has improved by 4.5 points (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data shows that Benin's Human Development Index (HDI) was about 0.515 in 2017 (ranked 163) compared to the worldwide average, which shows an increase since 1990, at 0.348. The trends in Benin's HDI components show significant increases in life expectancy

and education, and moderate increases in Gross National Income (GNI) per capita and the HDI. Benin scores less well when taking account the criteria for inequality in the HDI. In this context, the HDI falls to 0.326, a drop of 36.6% from 0.515 in 2017.

In 2017, the Gender Development Index (GDI)¹⁴ had a value of 0.479 for women in contrast to 0.547 for men, giving an overall value of 0.875. In contrast, the Gender Inequality Index (GII)¹⁵ at 0.611 ranked Benin at 146 out of 160 countries in 2017 worldwide. Even though female-headed households experience lower levels of poverty, women lack economic opportunities and are under-represented in high-level decision-making positions (The World Bank Group, 2020). For example, only 7.2% of women hold parliamentary seats, and only 18.2% of adult females have reached at least secondary education compared to 32.7% of adult males (UNDP, 2019). In addition, the administration of education in Benin is male-dominated: in 2016, only 18% of women were in leading positions¹⁶ in the MEMP, 0% at the provincial level, 3% at the municipal level, and 2% of mayors were female (informal data from MEMP, 2012 and GIZ, 2016).

In 2015, 49.6% of the population lived on under US\$ 1.90 per day (with higher rates in rural areas and some provinces). World Bank data shows that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the GNI have slightly increased in the last 25 years. The current GDP averages to 8.573 Billion US\$ with a GNI of 820 US\$ (2016) compared to the 1989 GDP of 1.502 Billion US\$ and a GNI of 340 US\$. The agricultural sector, especially cotton production as well as an increase in public, particularly infrastructure investment, can help explain the moderate rise in Benin's economy level (The World Bank Group, 2019). According to the IIAG (2016), Benin shows minimal progress in Sustainable Economic Opportunity (+0.1), mainly based on Infrastructure (+5.6), and remains overall a relatively low ranking country in this sub-category (37th) (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020). The economy remains mainly informal (>90%), whereas the formal sector is divided into primary services (41.5%), secondary (19.2%) and tertiary (39.3%) (MEMP, 2018).

In 2016, the Trading Economics (2020) reported a total of 3.9947% of GDP public spending on education. More specifically, national public spending on education represented, on

¹⁴ The GDI is based on the sex-disaggregated HDI, defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI.

¹⁵ The GII reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions –reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity.

¹⁶ Leading position is defined as

- Ministry: director of a department; advisor of the minister: cabinet director; secretary of the minister
- Regional school authority: director; head of the section
- Local School Authority: head

average, 28% of total public expenditure by the state between 2010 and 2015. This amount is well above the 20% recommended by the international community as the point to aim for by countries lagging behind in education (MEMP, 2018). The government invested a total of 226 billion francs CFA in 2015, equivalent to US\$392,833,000. 46% went into pre-school and primary education, where the teacher salaries are the most expensive item (MEMP, 2018).

Having outlined the politico-administrative and the socio-economic conditions, I now outline how education is organised, notably its administrative structure, education as a shared responsibility, and issues of access and quality in the context of pre-school and primary education.

2.2.3 Education

2.2.3.1 Administrative structure

The steering structure of the education system at national level, as shown in Figure 1, below, has three elements: the steering committee, the coordination committee and the Permanent Technical Office (*Secrétariat Technique Permanent, STP*). The steering committee, constituted of the ministers, the head of the National Education Board, and leading IOs, is in charge of providing political and strategic orientations. The coordination committee is at the centre, consisting of key people from each ministry, e.g. the cabinet director and the head of the department for planning and development. The STP ensures that decisions are put into practice at the operational level, and is in charge of implementing the Ten Year Education Sector.¹⁷

¹⁷ The study took into account the views of people from the strategic and political level as well as the operational level.

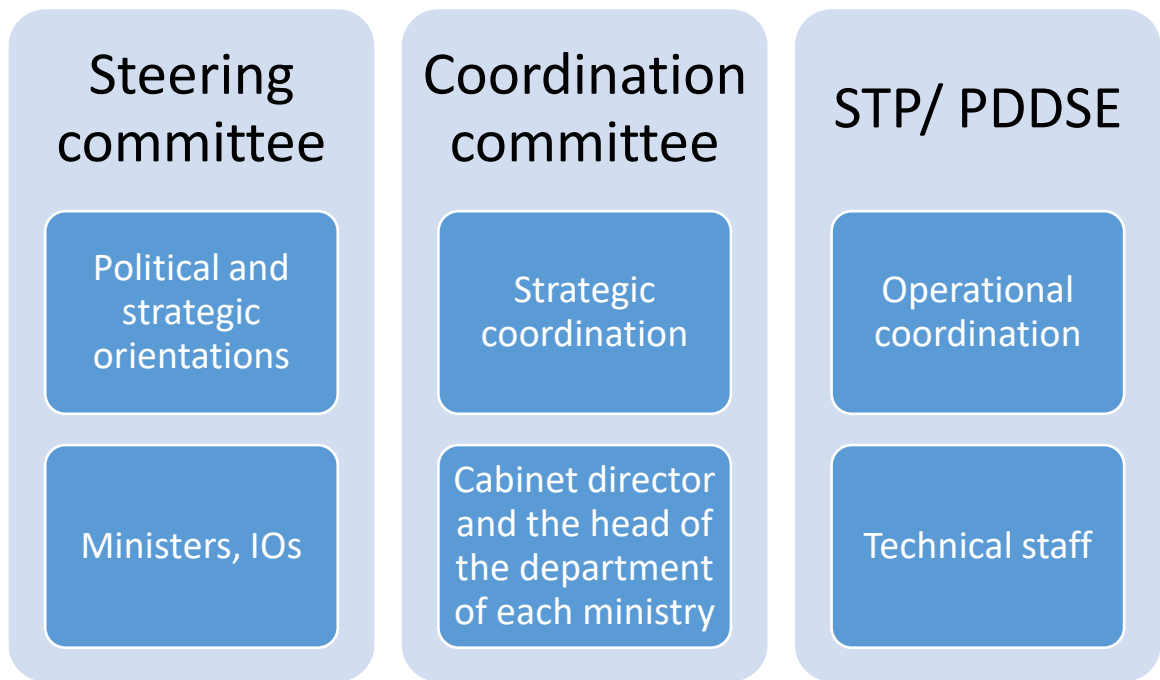


Figure 1 Steering structure at the national level (author's compilation based on MEMP, 2018)

In 2017, three different ministries were in charge of education: Pre-school and Primary Education came under the MEMP; Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Training - including Literacy - came under the MESTFP; and Higher Education and Scientific Research came under the MESRS (MEMP, 2018), but this study only focuses on the MEMP among the Education Ministries. Although the devolution laws stipulate that Benin has only one de-concentrated level, this ministry has sectoral authority at the provincial level (*Direction Départementale des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire, DDEMP*) and at the municipal level (*Circonscription Scolaire, CS*).¹⁸ In fact, education has historically been de-concentrated since the 1970s, which is 20 years before Benin decided to introduce decentralisation within its governance system. This temporal divergence may explain the discrepancies within the governance structure.

Figure 2 represents the organisation of the Beninese administration of the institutions involved in pre-school and primary education. The governance of education is as follows:

- The Association of Students' Parents (*Association des Parents d'Elèves, APE*) exists from the national to the school level. Their duty is to promote equal education for all without any exclusion (Conseil d'Administration de la FENAPEB, 2011).

¹⁸ Mawhood (1983) explains that de-concentration systems, especially on the Africa continent, differ considerably from conventional British concepts of de-concentration.

- The MEMP has 12 authorities at provincial level and approximately 45 local school authorities responsible for the provision of pre-school and primary education (MEMP, 2016c).¹⁹
- The Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Governance (*Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Gouvernance Locale, MDGL*)²⁰ is in charge of issues relating to decentralisation and spatial planning; it oversees the 12 prefectures and 77 municipalities (MDGL, 2016).
- The State Ministry in charge of Planning and Development (*Ministère d'Etat chargé du Plan et du Développement, MPD*)²¹ has 12 sectoral authorities at provincial level to ensure the coherence of the development and planning processes at national and sub-national levels (MPD, 2016).
- Finally, the National Association of Mayors in Benin (*Association Nationale des Maires du Bénin, ANCB*) unites all the mayors of the country (MDGLAAT, 2008).

This section has discussed the administrative structure of education. Vital to the concept of education decentralisation here is the fact that education is considered a shared responsibility between the central and municipal government entities. The next section outlines which institution is responsible for which domain concerning pre-school and primary education.

¹⁹ In 2017, the MEMP introduced several reforms to re-organise its local school authorities. These reforms replaced the previous 85 local school authorities by approximately 45 ‘pedagogical regions’ (*régions pédagogiques*). They now combine three to four local school authorities, geographically situated in between the municipalities and the provinces. The reason to reduce the number was the lack of teachers, and consequently, pedagogical advisors and school inspectors. Neither the General States of Territorial Administration from 1993 nor the PONADEC from 2008 defines these pedagogical regions, however. They are only legitimised through a decree from the Ministry itself. Before 2017, every municipality had at least one Local School Authority, whereby every Local School Authority oversaw around 50 public and private pre-schools and primary schools in their catchment area. Up to four local school authorities could be found in municipalities with large populations (e.g. Cotonou).

²⁰ Henceforth, I will use the abbreviation MDGL and the term Decentralisation Ministry interchangeably to denominate the same institution.

²¹ Henceforth, I will use the abbreviation MPD and the term Planning and Development Ministry interchangeably to denominate the same institution.

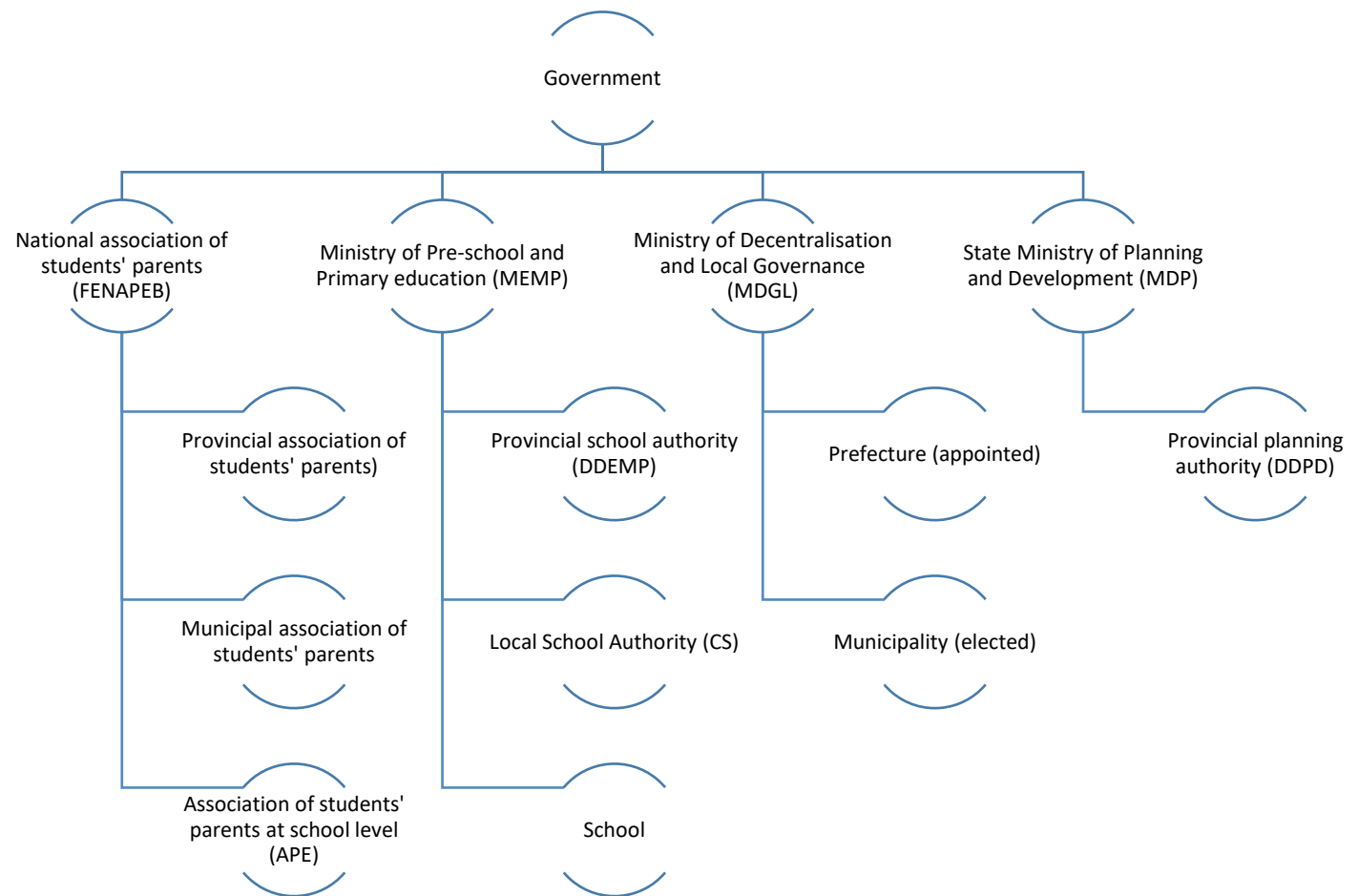


Figure 2 Organisational chart of the Beninese administration (author's compilation)

2.2.3.2 Education as a shared responsibility

The MEMP is one of five pilot ministries involved in sectoral decentralisation in Benin (MDGLAAT, 2008). PONADEC states that education remains a shared responsibility²² between the government and the municipality: the municipality is mainly in charge of providing pre-school and primary education infrastructure and the central level as well as its de-concentrated sub-units manage education otherwise, as outlined in the appendix 9.1.

The municipality is responsible for school infrastructure and youth activities in the domain of education, as defined in articles 97 and 98 of the devolution acts. Article 97 in the devolution act refers to all municipalities, whether ordinary or with special status, concerning pre-school and primary education.

The municipality is responsible for the construction, equipment and repair of public institutions of pre-school and primary education. It also ensures the maintenance of these institutions. To this end, *the State transfers the necessary resources* (MDGLAAT, 2010, p. 29, own translation, italics added).²³

Article 97 is explicit about the mandatory transfer of funds from the State to the municipalities. Moreover, the municipality may delegate, be assisted, grant, lease, sub-contract or contract out any necessary repair, support or construction work, as defined by the devolution act 1999-029, article 108 (MDGLAAT, 2010).

The devolution laws and education law cohere in that the education law (2003, revised in 2005) also refers to school buildings and equipment needs.

To effectively fulfil its mission, the school must have the infrastructure that meets the standards of school architecture and be equipped with the appropriate furniture and equipment (Assemblée Nationale, 2003, article 13, own translation).²⁴

The DDEMP and CS are de-concentrated actors and depend largely on the MEMP, above them. School authorities at the provincial and local level are mainly in charge of ongoing education (*formation continue*) and of pedagogical activities. The order 289 defines the role and responsibilities of DDEMPs as follows:

²² The devolved responsibilities of the municipality can be categorised as ‘own responsibilities’, ‘shared responsibilities’, and ‘delegated responsibilities’. More precisely, the shared responsibility requires the intervention of the central government and of the municipalities (Republic du Benin, 2010).

²³ *La commune a la charge de la construction, de l'équipement et des réparations des établissements publics d'enseignements primaire et maternel. Elle assure en outre l'entretien de ces établissements. A cet effet, l'Etat lui transfère les ressources nécessaires.*

²⁴ *Pour remplir efficacement sa mission, l'école doit avoir pour cadre des infrastructures répondant aux normes de l'architecture scolaire et être dotée du mobilier et du matériel adéquat.*

The DDEMPs are responsible for the implementation of pre-school and primary education policy at provincial level. In addition, they are responsible in their area of expertise for technical assistance and advisory support to municipalities following the laws and regulations in force (MEMP, 2016b, article 1, own translation).²⁵

Vital in this excerpt is the statement that DDEMPs offer technical assistance and advisory support to the municipalities under the laws and regulations in force. This article is an expression of the mixed form of de-concentration (DDEMP and CS) and devolution (municipality), notably how education is conceptualised as a shared responsibility.

In accordance with the devolution laws, it also states that

in the province, the head of the provincial authority is placed under the authority of the governor of the province and takes part in the administrative conferences for the coherence of the interventions of the State in the province (MEMP, 2016b, article 3, own translation).²⁶

The emphasis of the ‘subordinate’ position of the sectoral head to that of the governor is recent, compared to a previous decree from 2012. In other words, the head of the provincial authority is no longer accountable to the General Secretary of the Ministry, but to the prefect, who is accountable to the MDGL. This article is a vital step towards the idea of education as a shared responsibility, but discursively and socially, not mirrored yet, as the analytical chapters will show.

Some areas, such as the support and control of pedagogical activities are further de-concentrated to the local school authorities. The same order also defines their role and responsibilities as follows:

Each school district (CS) in its territory is responsible for the implementation of the pre-school and primary education policy defined by the state. It is specifically responsible for the support and pedagogical control [...] as well as the further training of teachers (MEMP, 2016b, article 22, own translation).²⁷

²⁵ *Les Directions Départementale des Enseignement Maternel et Primaire (DDEMP) sont responsable de la mise en œuvre au niveau des départements, de la politique des enseignements maternel et primaire. En outre, ils sont chargé dans leur domaine de compétence de l'assistance technique et de l'appui conseil aux communes conformément aux lois et règlements en vigueur.*

²⁶ *Dans le département, le directeur départemental est placé sous l'autorité du préfet du département et participe à la conférence administrative pour la mise en cohérence des interventions de l'Etat dans le département.*

²⁷ *Chaque Circonscription Scolaire (CS) est, dans son ressort territorial, chargée de la mise en œuvre, au niveau des enseignements maternel et primaire, de la politique définie par l'Etat. Elle est spécialement chargée de l'animation et du contrôle pédagogiques, des établissements maternels, primaires, publics et privés, ainsi que de la formation continue des enseignants. Elle rend compte régulièrement à son Directeur Départemental des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire de l'exécution de sa tâche.*

Hence, the CS is primarily in charge of aligning with and implementing the national education policy and its head is accountable to the head of the regional authority and to the delegated educational inspector (from the central level).

This section explained how education is organised as a shared responsibility. The last section briefly discusses issues of access to and quality of education based on some statistics of the MEMP.

2.2.3.3 Access to and quality of education

Most children in Benin can access primary schooling, but they do not all complete the primary education cycle. The Gross Enrolment Rates (GER) for primary school in 2014/15 stood at 124.82% (126.6% boys and 123.37 girls).²⁸ In comparison, the completion rate for primary schooling was 79.22% (82.03% boys and 76.18% girls) (MEMP, 2016a). Even if Benin meets its aim of universal primary education, issues of quality and equity remain questionable (The World Bank Group, 2020). For example, Garnier (2012, p. 35) stated that only one-third of students in the first class of primary school achieved the minimum level in French and Mathematics.

The figures below, based on the statistical yearbook 2014/15 (MEMP, 2016a), provide an overview of equity in relation to gender and inequity in terms of the economic, urban/ rural divide and regional disparities. Figure 3 shows that there is little variance between boys and girls regarding access and completion of primary schooling. However, inequality can be observed in family backgrounds (Figure 4) as well as between urban and rural areas (Figure 5). Furthermore, the education situation in Benin depends on the financial situation of the municipality as well as its geographical location (Figure 6). For example, the Southern field site in Ouémè is at the top level, whereas the Northern field site in Borgou ranks in the centre. This observation leads to the last part of this chapter, which is a detailed description of both field sites.

²⁸ Definition GER: Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year (UNESCO, 2009a, p. 9). In this case, the GER exceeds 100%, as some younger children attend school, while others retake a school year.

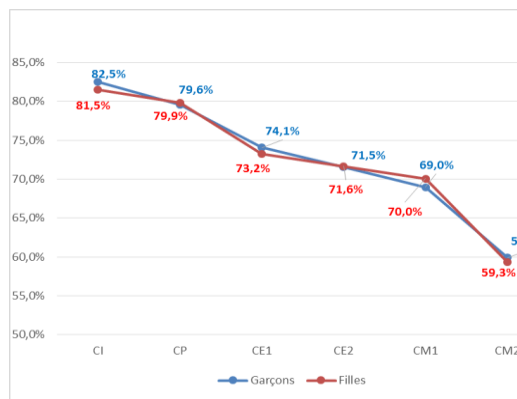


Figure 3 Relative gender equity

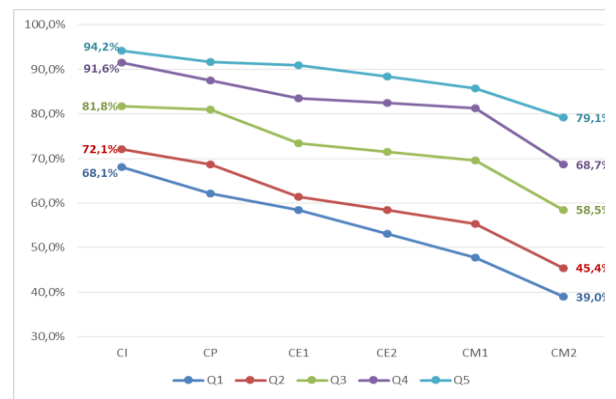


Figure 4 Income inequity

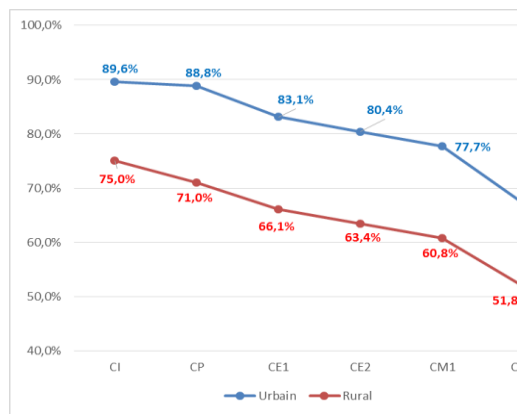


Figure 5 Urban/rural inequity

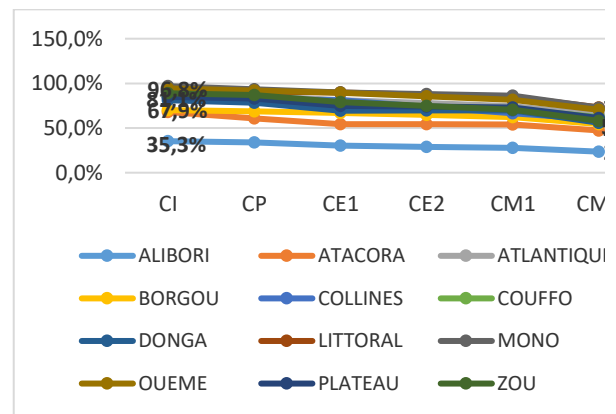


Figure 6 Regional inequity

2.3 The Northern and Southern field sites

The last part of this chapter describes the contrasting aspects of the Northern and the Southern research field sites: their different histories, ethnicity and language, their different access to educational provision and outcomes, among others. It starts first with introducing the Northern field site and moves on to the Southern field site, before summarising the main points of the chapter.

2.3.1 Northern field site

2.3.1.1 Administrative Organisation

N'Dali is situated in the province Borgou, 500 kilometres (km) away from Porto Novo, the capital. Its administrative centre (N'Dali-centre) is located about 56 km from Parakou, which is the administrative centre of the province of Borgou, where the provincial authorities (planning

and education), as well as the prefecture, are located. N'Dali covers an area of 3748 km² representing 14.50% of the area of the province and 3.27% of the total area of Benin. The municipality N'Dali covers five districts (*arrondissements*) and 24 villages or city districts (*quartiers de ville*) (Houngnihin, 2006).

2.3.1.2 Socio-economic situation

The population of N'Dali is estimated at 67, 379 inhabitants (*Atlas Monographique des Communes du Benin, 2010*). 70% of the population is under 45 years old (Houngnihin, 2006). The dominant ethnic group in N'Dali is the Bariba, followed by Pheul, which is a nomadic group. The principal religion in the municipality is Islam (49.5%), followed by traditional religion (14.6%). 13.7% claim to be Catholic and 3%, Protestant (Houngnihin, 2006).

The primary source of revenue is agriculture, followed by fishing, commercial activities, transforming raw material and tourism (Houngnihin, 2006). N'Dali has a relatively high poverty level. According to the INSAE (2018), the multidimensional poverty rate of 55% (i.e. health, education and living conditions), and the poverty impact on households at 50.4% (calculated from the household living condition variables) is particularly high (INSAE, 2018). The socio-economic situation of N'Dali has particular implications for education, as shown in the next section.

2.3.1.3 Education situation

N'Dali is one of the larger municipalities, with rural and semi-urban schools, which are a long way from each other. The GER in N'Dali is 124%, disaggregated to 116% for boys and 124% for girls, and corresponds to the country average; of interest here is the higher rate of girls compared to boys. However, the completion rate of 75%, disaggregated to 74% for boys and 77% for girls, is 4 points lower than the country average (MEMP, 2016a). In summary, it can be said that the Northern field site is semi-urban with significant socio-economic disparities and educational outcomes are slightly below the national average. The next section introduces the Southern field site.

2.3.2 Southern field site

Porto Novo, the capital of Benin since 1894, is located in the Southeast of the country at the centre of the axis between Nigeria and Togo. Although the presidency and most ministries transferred to Cotonou in the 60s and 70s, the democratic renewal in 1990 confirmed the status of Porto Novo as capital. The city of Porto Novo, consists of five districts and covers an area of 52 km² or 0.05% of the national territory (Gandonou and Guidibi, 2006).

2.3.2.1 Administrative organisation

Porto Novo is a site with a colonial history. From the 18th century, Portuguese, Dutch, British and French explorers organised intercontinental trade, which led to colonisation and the slave trade. The colonial rule goes back to the first treaty making the country a French protectorate in 1863. The second protectorate was established on April 14, 1882, marking the installation of the French colonial administration. They created the colony of Dahomey, and Porto Novo was decreed the capital on June 22, 1894 (Gandonou and Guidibi, 2006).

2.3.2.2 Socio-economic situation

The municipality of Porto -Novo has 264,320 inhabitants (RGPH3, 2002) and the current population density is estimated at 1,985/ km². The population is young, 40% aged under 14 years old (INSAE, 2018). Different ethnic group live together, mostly Goun and Fon (66%), followed by Yoruba (25%), and Adja, Mina and Toffin (4%). In the Southeast, the Christian religion is predominant (45,70%), followed by traditional beliefs (29,20%) and Islam (25,10%) (Gandonou and Guidibi, 2006).

Porto Novo's economy is mostly informal, favoured by the permeability with the Nigerian border. According to Gandonou and Guidibi (2006), the citizens of Porto Novo have not specialised in any particular area, but Porto-Novo remains a metropolis for large traders with a relatively large turnover. According to the INSAE, the town has relatively moderate poverty figures. The Human Poverty Index (HPI), that is, the percentage of the population without access to drinking water, the illiteracy rate of the population and the infant and child mortality rate, is low (21,4%) (INSAE, 2018).

2.3.2.3 Education situation

Porto Novo has a high density of both private pre-school and primary schools (>200) compared to ~160 public pre-school and primary schools (CS Porto Novo, 2017). The trend towards private schooling may have its roots in the relative wealth of families in the capital. The GER in Porto Novo of 125%, disaggregated to 127% for boys and 122% for girls, is the same as the country average, while the completion rate of 92%, disaggregated to 91% for boys and 92% for girls, is 12 points higher than the country average (MEMP, 2016a).

2.3.2.4 Summing-up

Historically, Porto Novo used to be where the colonial negotiations took place, whereas N'Dali does not have a particular colonial history and, hence, there is less stratification among

the population. As the table below shows (cf. Table 2), the Southern field sites are urban with a relatively high socio-economic status, whereas the Northern field sites are semi-urban and urban with medium socio-economic status. Consequently, the educational outcomes in the Southern field site are better than in the Northern field site.

Southern field site (urban; centre and periphery)	Northern field site (semi-urban and urban)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban (capital; central and provincial education administration) • Relatively high socio-economic status • Relatively high educational outcomes, not significant gender gap at the end of primary school • Historically the place where colonial negotiations took place • Mainly Catholics and Muslims, numerous private schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-urban (cross-road city) • Medium socio-economic status • Relatively low educational outcomes, slight gender gap at the end of primary school • No particular colonial history, less stratification • A majority of Muslims, Koranic schools

Table 2 Comparison of the Northern and the Southern field sites (author's compilation)

The last section of this chapter summarises the main characteristics of Benin, notably from its historical genesis, the current governance situation regarding education and the particularities of the field sites in the Northeast and the Southeast of the country.

2.4 Summary

The context chapter explored the origins of the political, economic, social and education background from pre-colonial to contemporary times, suggesting that the precursors of decentralisation pre-existed the decentralisation reform, installed by the 1990 constitution. The second part explained the political and administrative system and contemporary socio-economic conditions. Most importantly, it emphasised that education remains a shared responsibility between the recently created municipalities and the central state government. It also discussed concerns of access and quality based on education statistics at the national level, demonstrating that access and completion rates are relatively equitable between boys and girls, but not between students from different family backgrounds and in different geographical areas. The chapter ended by outlining the unique situation of both field sites, the capital Porto Novo in the South, and the semi-urban municipality N'Dali in the North, shaped by different histories, ethnic and language differences, and access to educational provision and outcomes.

3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a broader picture of education decentralisation within the global world setting relating to the overall aim of the research study. It aims to explore the discursive and social practices of actors involved in the delivery of pre-school and primary education in the context of the 2010 decentralisation policy in Benin. First, this chapter introduces the conceptual approach to policy analysis informed by ANT and CDA. The second part reviews the three main concepts of this study: decentralisation, power and participation. Education decentralisation is the focus of this study and power and participation are the related concepts. For each of these concepts, I provide a definition and conceptual discussion, informed by the empirical literature. The third part is a discussion of the empirical literature about the conditions for and effects of education decentralisation. More specifically, I discuss the necessary conditions for decentralisation reforms and the effects of these reforms referring to case studies from Africa, Latin America and Asia. Finally, this chapter outlines the conceptual framework of the research drawn from the literature review. The first part of this chapter outlines the theoretical and conceptual approach to policy analysis, policy trajectory studies informed by different theoretical perspectives.

3.2 Policy trajectory studies

3.2.1 Policy

From a historical perspective, policy studies emerged, mostly in liberal democratic countries, in the 1950s. It is an established research field today linked to the processes involved in bringing about change. At its early stages, a so-called rationalist approach, grounded in political science, was developed. It mainly addressed the needs of the state (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). For instance, the idea of a liberal-democratic state is sustained through its welfare agenda that finds expression in policy. While there may be promise of ‘change’, the institution of the state and its dominance is maintained through policy. Researchers were interested in examining ‘how they [the state actors] negotiated various political interests, and more generally, managed policy processes’ (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 2). During the 1980s, the rationalist approach lost popularity and critical policy analysis became more dominant. A shift took place from social democratic to neoliberal orientations.

After this brief introduction into the historical development of policy studies, I take a step back to reflect on how I understand policy. How one understands policy determines how one studies policy, Ball (1994a) suggests.

3.2.1.1 *What is policy?*

Bell and Stevenson (2006) state that

Policy is political: it is about the power to determine what is done. It shapes who benefits, for what purpose and who pays (Bell and Stevenson, 2006, p. 9). [...] Policy is about the power to determine what gets done, or not done (Bell and Stevenson, 2006, p. 23).

This definition highlights the political nature of policy and the power involved in decision-making. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explain that policy ensembles - a collection of interrelated policies - exercise power in the form of discourse through the production of 'truth' and 'knowledge'. They allude with this insight to a Foucauldian (2003a) understanding of knowledge production in that power and knowledge are related insofar as knowledge exists within power relations and power relations influence the production of knowledge.

Besides questions of power and knowledge, I embed my understanding of policy within the debate about policy as text and discourse following several writings of Ball (1993, 2006, 2015). For example, decentralisation can be informed by a discourse of austerity in the case of a financially driven rationale or by a socio-democratic discourse, which emphasises the participation of the local population. Ball (2006) expands the previous definition of policy as power, to policy as discourse, whereby discourse is understood as follows:

Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority (Ball, 2006, p. 48).

In his response to his article, *What is policy?* from 1993, Ball (2015) examined the continuing tensions between domination and agency, discourse and text in policy research and the misapplication of the concept of discourse. In particular, he criticises how many studies, claiming to use a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, misuse the term discourse. He suggests that Foucault meant by discourse 'to address the structures and rules that constitute a discourse rather than the texts and utterances produced within it' (Ball, 2015, p. 311), while most studies analyse the textual rather than the discursive level of the social practices, power relations and so on hence reducing power to domination, and detaching knowledge from power. While Ball understands policy text as 'policies [that] are 'contested', mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts' (Ball, 2015, p. 311), he considers policy as discourse

'produced and formed by taken-for-granted and implicit knowledges and assumptions about the world and ourselves' (Ball, 2015, p. 311).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010), inspired by Easton (1953), expand the understanding of policy as text and discourse to questions of values. They define policy as the 'authoritative allocation of values' and explain more precisely:

how education policies represent a particular configuration of values whose authority is allocated at the intersection of global, national and local processes (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 2).

The crucial question for this study is how particular values, such as control, are interpreted and negotiated in light of other values, such as autonomy. What Rizvi and Lingard (2010) call the 'trade-off of values' is political as some values are privileged over others through political processes. In the context of globalisation, they suggest a convergence of values towards efficiency and accountability makes it necessary to re-articulate some values and subordinate others, such as democracy and equality. That is how policies 're-orchestrate' and enact an assembly of shifting values (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

Drawing together different ideas of policy, I understand policy as concerning questions of authority and power, text and discourse and to be a matter of values. This understanding helps to deconstruct the policy of education decentralisation for this study. In the next section, I explore different approaches to policy analysis.

3.2.1.2 Approaches to policy analysis

To start this section, I clarify the difference between analysis of policy and analysis for policy. This study is an analysis of the policy of decentralisation in Benin where I seek to understand 'why a particular policy was developed at a particular time, what its analytical assumption are and what effects it might have' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 45). In contrast, analysis for policy implies the study of an issue for developing a particular policy, which is often commissioned by a government, hence theoretically and methodological speaking constrained because of tighter time frames, among other restraints.

Ball's (1993) framework for analysing policy requires looking at policy trajectories within three different contexts: the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context(s) of practices. The context of influence examines how the agenda was set for a particular policy, such as education decentralisation, whereas the context of policy text production analyses the process of formulating the policy. Finally, the context(s) of practices focus on the mediation

and the enactment of policy. In this way, these contexts provide ‘a mechanism for linking and tracing the discursive origins and possibilities of policy’ (Ball, 1993, p. 16), the responses to and the effects of the policy. The policy cycle is messy, often contested and displays non-linear relationships (Ball, 1994a; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

Taylor (1997) developed another framework to analyse policy, which is grounded in discourse theory.²⁹ Her framework for policy analysis involves three aspects: context, text and consequences. In the first instance, and similarly to Ball's framework, the economic, social and political factors, as well as pressure groups and social movements, are examined (context). In the second instance, the content of the policy itself is analysed in order to state what the policy aims to accomplish and what the underpinning values of the policy (text) are. In this regard, Bell and Stevenson (2006, p. 12) highlight the importance of ‘silences’: ‘what is clearly said and what is not said’. In the third instance, the consequences of the policy, which are the effects of the policy, are explored (Taylor, 1997). Bell and Stevenson (2006) emphasise the process of moving from the policy formulation to the policy in practice or as Taylor et al. (1997, pp. 24–25) write: ‘policy is both process and product’. In this respect, the term *policy* covers the text itself, the production process and ongoing modifications to its implementation. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) add a further dimension to Taylor's (1997) three-dimensional framework; implementation.

Grimaldi (2012) takes up the conceptualisation of policy as discourse from a Foucauldian perspective. He suggests that such a conceptualisation helps to explore critically ‘the embeddedness of policy within wider discursive frameworks and knowledge/ power regimes’. His proposed framework consists of a Foucauldian archaeology and structuration theory and critically explores the ‘*power/ knowledge regimes* shaping policy enactment itself and the transformative capacities inherent in the agency of the actors involved’ (Grimaldi, 2012, p. 462).

Taylor (1997), Ball (1993, 2006, 2015), Rizvi and Lingard (2010) as well as Grimaldi (2012) share a common understanding of policy and policy analysis in that they are all interested in how the policy idea came about as well as the formulation of the policy whose process can be understood in discursive terms. They all subscribe to a tighter or a looser understanding of a Foucauldian influenced conceptualisation of discourse. For example, Ball (2006, p. 48) suggests understanding how ‘policy ensembles [...] exercise power through the production of “truth” and

²⁹ Taylor's approach to discourse theory in relation to education policy analysis is informed by her work in feminist cultural studies and in feminist policy studies. She adopts a ‘broad—and pragmatic—approach to the interrelated developments in social theory, and reject[s] any tight categorisation of theoretical positions’ (Taylor, 1997, p. 25).

“knowledge”, as discourse’. Rizvi and Lingard, as well as Taylor, focus on the effects and outcomes of policy, and Rizvi and Lingard, as well as Ball, are also interested in policy enactment.

From a post-modernist perspective, it could be suggested that they all implicitly assume linearity of time without allocating enough importance to questions of place and space. Time is not linear nor is space flat, but '[s]pace-time is dynamic, fractured, porous, paradoxical, and non-individual with sets of space-time relations existing simultaneously, rhizomatically and overlapping, interfering with each other' (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 619). In line with Massey (1994b), who argues that space and time are integral to one another, I provide a historical exploration of education governance in two different regions in Benin. If spatial is conceptualised in terms of space-time, a place can be considered as 'a particular articulation of those relations, a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings' (Massey, 1994b, p. 5). This work draws on a temporal and spatial lens, beginning with research in two local field sites in 2017, extending to the analysis of national and global influences on policy formulation and mediation from 1990 onwards.

3.2.1.3 An excursus into policy borrowing and lending

Discourses of globalisation and globalised discourses shape the context of policy text production (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). In anticipation of the coming discussion on decentralisation in the context of globalisation (cf. section 3.3.1.3), I briefly relate how policy ideas and reforms travel across time and space. Sayed (2010), for example, wonders about

the extent to which national policies across different contexts show a remarkable similarity around a narrow range of global policy prescriptions and the extent to which they constrain the autonomy of nation-states (Sayed, 2010, p. 62).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out the need to analyse education policy not only from a historical perspective but also from a global one and how these two perspectives are entwined. The continued interest in this area of research is an outcome of the discussion of how global governance affects national education systems, beliefs, and practices, and vice-versa.

Steiner-Khamsi (2012), a significant scholar of theorising policy borrowing and lending, proposes an interpretive framework for exploring the process, impact, and timing of policy transfer from a political and economic perspective. The unit of analysis, she claims, is the local policy context, but she does not address issues of agency and mediation as much as the previously referenced approaches to policy analysis. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) explains the powerful force of globalisation as a social imaginary that impacts on the 'evening' of education systems around the globe as does globalisation itself. However, she also points out that globalisation cannot be used

as an external mechanism to explain policy borrowing. Rather, it is the interplay between national governments and global actors that make education policies travel, revealing the remarkable similarity, Sayed (2010) mentioned above.

As the conceptual framework at the end of this chapter shows (cf. section 3.5), I mainly draw on Ball's approach to clarify the context of influence, the context of the policy text production and the context of social practices. However, my understanding of the context of the policy text production is closer to the textual analysis suggested by Taylor (1997). She explored what a policy aims to accomplish and what the underpinning values of the policy are. In a similar vein, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) understand the analysis of policy and textual issues as the discursive formation of policy and policy concerns, textual considerations, the interests involved and that underpin the policy, policy structural processes and resource issues. As suggested by them, I take into account the history (e.g. colonialism), the political aspirations (e.g. post-colonialism) and the state's geopolitical location in policy studies (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). The next section explains how the theoretical lenses inform the conceptual approach to policy trajectory studies.

3.2.2 Theoretical lenses: complementarities or contradictions?

This study is informed by ideas of different theoretical lenses, notably ANT and CDA, but without following them rigidly. I draw on the ideas of both approaches as they respond to different aspects of the three dimensions of Ball's policy framework. This section introduces both approaches, ANT and CDA, independently, and discusses the rationale for combining them. It finishes by explaining how they inform the policy framework adopted. The next section starts by outlining the main features of CDA.

3.2.2.1 *Critical Discourse Analysis*

In this section, I introduce the aim and the different dimensions of CDA and explain how CDA informed this research. CDA is an analytical framework 'to develop ways of analysing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist society' (Fairclough, 1995, p. 1). Blommaert (2005, p. 22) states that 'CDA was founded on the premise that linguistic analysis could provide a valuable additional perspective for existing approaches to social critique'. CDA examines how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use (Blommaert, 2005). Although French poststructuralist theory has influenced CDA, this approach is most committed to Critical Realism (CR) (Fairclough, 1995, 2010).

Following from the objective above, CDA has the following characteristics:

[...] it is part of some form of interdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social processes; [...] it includes some form of systematic analysis of texts. [...] it addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 10–11).

In that regard, CDA offers an approach to analysing text from its interplay with broader social processes, while taking a normative and explanatory stance. CDA is normative because it evaluates existing realities and their underlying values. It is explanatory because it not only evaluates these existing realities and underlying values, but it also explains them as the effects of structures or mechanisms of forces, for example (Fairclough, 2010).

Critical theory of language, in which CDA is grounded, considers the ‘use of language as a form of social practice’ (Janks, 1997, p. 329). Woodside-Jiron (2011) recalls Fairclough’s definition of social practices, discourse practices and discourse as text. While ‘social practices represent discourse as ideology and power’, discourse practices, he suggests, ‘involve the process of text production, distribution, and consumption’ (Woodside-Jiron, 2011, p. 154). Fairclough (1995) conceptualises power in terms of the asymmetrical relations between the production, distribution and consumption of texts. Text, based on Halliday’s understanding, refers to words in spoken and written form, as well as silences and absences (Woodside-Jiron, 2011).

In his book ‘*Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language*’, Fairclough (1995, 2010) developed a three-dimensional framework combining discourse analysis with the social analysis of sociocultural change. As the table below shows (*Table 3*), the third dimension, social analysis, aims to examine hegemonic processes such as democratisation (Blommaert, 2005). The processing analysis scrutinises how and by whom the policy is produced and interpreted. For the text analysis, Janks (1997) recalls Fairclough’s critical criteria based on Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics which are:

lexicalization, patterns of transitivity, the use of active and passive voice, the use of nominalization, choices of mood, choices of modality or polarity, the thematic structure of the text, the information focus [and] cohesion devices (Janks, 1997, p. 325).

Types of analysis	Dimensions
Text analysis/ Discourse as a text (description)	The analysis of the linguistic features and organisation of concrete instances of discourse, e.g. analysis of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure

Processing analysis/ Discourse-as-discursive-practice (interpretation)	The process by which the object is produced and received by human subjects, e.g. speech acts, coherence, and intertextuality
Social analysis/ Discourse-as-social-practice (explanation)	The analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice, e.g., i.e. the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse operates

Table 3 Dimensions of Critical Discourse Analysis (author's compilation based on Fairclough, 1995 and Blommaert 2005)

Even though this study draws on the three-dimensional model above, my overall understanding of discourse subscribes to a Foucauldian rather than a semantic approach to the text. This is in line with other scholars using a Foucauldian approach to CDA. For example, Bazzul (2014) deploys Foucauldian notions of discourse and subjectivity in his CDA of science education texts. As this research suggests, Bazzul argues that it is not necessary to use CDA through research paradigms already legitimated in the literature. Instead, the varied use of more structural/poststructural, politicised approaches offers transformative, critical research in science education. Using a Foucauldian approach to CDA is also in line with the previous discussion inspired by Ball (2015), who argues that discourse is concerned with the structures and rules that constitute a text. In other words, analysis of the discursive levels helps to de-construct the 'taken-for-granted and implicit knowledge and assumptions about the world and ourselves' (Ball, 2015, p. 311) (cf. section 3.2.1.1).

I moved away from an initial analysis of the policy of decentralisation privileging a semiotic analysis of the policy text - analysing the patterns of transitivity and different temporal use or passive voice - because I considered this interpretation was limited to the policy text itself. Overall, I foreground the processing analysis (second) dimension of the framework shedding light on how and by whom the policy was produced and interpreted as well as the discourses at work, and the social analysis (third dimension) to discuss the effect the postcolonial context had on the formulation of the decentralisation policy (cf. section 5.2). Taking this approach, CDA is used in the Foucauldian sense - to understand the policy discourse and issues of power. The next section discusses Actor-Network-Theory.

3.2.2.2 *Actor-network theory*

As in the previous section, I briefly introduce the aim of ANT and explain how it was used for the analysis of the data in this research. According to Latour (1996, p. 369), ANT 'aims at

describing the very nature of societies' and 'extends the word actor- or actant- to non-human, non-individual entities'. It 'rebuild[s] social theory out of networks' and is, therefore, 'as much an ontology or a metaphysics as a sociology'.

In order to understand ANT, I clarify its components - actors and networks. Networks in the context of ANT are different from and not reducible to technical or social networks. In contrast to a technical network, the actor-network is an entity 'that does the tracing and the inscribing' (Latour, 1996, p. 372). The network is understood as a global entity that remains local. For instance, Latour (1996) rejects the conceptualisation of space in terms of geography, which implies undoing many notions associated with far / close, small-scale / large-scale, inside / outside. As an alternative, he suggests 'associations' to refer to how actors connect and 'make others do things' - which could also be referred to as acts of transformation or translation (Latour, 1996, 2005).

An actor can be any element in the network that acts, is given activity or activated by others, as the following quote explains.

An "actor" in ANT is a semiotic definition- an actant-, that is something that acts or to which activity is granted by others [implying] no special motivation of individual human actors (Latour, 1996, p. 373).

ANT does not contrast structure and agency but explores how a given element becomes strategic or how it becomes less important. The potential interest of ANT here lies in the inclusion of non-human actors, which it borrows from New Materialism. In contrast, in traditional sociological perspectives, things and objects are subordinate to humans and thus obscured. For ANT, the human subject is neither agentic nor intentional, but an effect of networked associations (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010).

Even though Latour (1996) distinguishes between actants and actors in his earlier work and between a mediator and an intermediary in his later work³⁰, he also suggests less rigidity in the definition 'of what sort of agencies populate the world' (Latour, 2005, p. 55). This proposal is also taken up by Fenwick and Edwards (2010) in suggesting that the distinction between human and non-human can be considered an effect rather than a basic assumption. Koyama and Varenne (2012) use *assemblage* interchangeably with actor and actants. This term usefully extends the notion of assemblage to the dynamics of actual activities tracing how an actor-network is

³⁰ The actor is a working entity with agency, whereas the actant enables an activity; and a mediator can change or distort the meaning of the elements, whereas an intermediary only transports meaning without changing or acting upon it.

translated into discourse and practices. For this study, the distinction between actor/ actants is unhelpful, and I use *actor* and *assemblage* interchangeably following Koyama and Varenne (2012) to avoid the ‘naturalness’ of categories.

As previously pointed out, while this thesis does not strictly subscribe to ANT, it draws on some of the ideas of this analytical approach. Some ANT authors strongly emphasise the role of non-human actors, with the example of an educational reform as a non-human actor in Fenwick’s (2011) chapter ‘Reading Educational Reform with Actor Network Theory: Fluid spaces, otherings, and ambivalences’, while others predominantly focus on human actors. They still follow other main ideas of ANT, such how elements/ actors translate one another (cf. *Assembling and Disassembling: Policy as Productive Play* of Koyama and Varenne, 2012). This work considers non-human actors in the analysis to the extent that they are part of the broader network (cf. sections 6.1.1, 7.1, 7.3 and 7.4), but tends to privilege the voices and actions of human actors in sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3 and 7.2. Overall, ANT is less about creating categories for the human and non-human, but more about the ‘intimate associations between objects and all human attributes, capacities and activities’ (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010, p. 4).

This study is in line with Fenwick and Edwards (2010, p. 6) suggestion that educational policy processes are ‘shaped by the material things [...] as much as by the human ideas, desires, meanings and actions’. This study examines education decentralisation as a popular governance reform, particularly in Global South countries. Chapter 6 focuses on small-scale actor networks at the local level in the Southern and Northern field sites in mediating the decentralisation policy. Non-human actors include, among others, networks (education and development fora), school buildings and quality norms, documents (development plans, devolution and education laws) (cf. also section 4.4.1.3 for a discussion on how the methodological choice of actor-maps cohere with the underlying principles of ANT). In contrast, chapter 7 takes the 1990 conference as a starting point to trace the connections between the lived events, historical processes, concepts, individuals, groups and social formations that contributed to the emergence of the decentralisation policy in Benin.

Applying ANT to policy studies may not only help to reveal the connection within and across assemblages to guide the analysis of the policy’s emergence, formulation and enactment but also the process for the production of new policies by understanding actor-networks provide explanations through their connections (Koyama and Varenne, 2012). Explanations in this context are understood as the ‘attachment of a set of practices that control or interfere in one another’ (Latour, 1996, p. 375). Each network offers its explanations implicitly, blurring the line between

description and explanation. For example, ANT starts from unconnected localities to provisional connections instead of taking globalisation as an explanation for the borrowing of educational reform policies.

Moreover, ANT helps to trace how power is achieved as opposed to power as an explanation (Gorur, 2015). Fenwick and Edwards (2010) suggest that potentially powerful actors become dominant because they are the assemblages of broader assemblage networks. Gorur (2015) understands power, with reference to Foucault, as a 'taken-for-grantedness and naturalisation'. He considers power as a process of translation of the relations between actors and argues that 'actors may become powerful in their capacity to translate other actors' (Gorur, 2015, p. 90). Foucault (1978, 1988) calls it the immanence of power, starting from "'local centers"' of power-knowledge, all-pervading and operating within and through its subjects.

The added value of applying ANT to this policy research is the 'linked distribution of activities in networked ad hoc and emergent assemblages that produce different experiential objects in each of the linkages' (Koyama and Varenne, 2012, p. 158). In other words, starting from unconnected localities and then considering the various ways they can connect, at least temporarily, has the potential to reveal various perspectives on a given topic. In the final section, I explain the rationale for combining both approaches and how they inform this study.

3.2.3 How have the analytical lenses informed this study?

I consider neither ANT nor CDA as distinct to policy analysis but search how they can inform the analysis of policy. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that for the analysis of policy texts, CDA in particular, is a common approach. Fairclough's (1995, 2010) approach combines the analysis of the linguistic features of a policy text with a Foucauldian inspired account of text in context. Consequently, CDA is useful for examining 'how political ideologies are authorized through policies by locating them in the dominant popular imaginaries' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 63). In addition, CDA coheres with the earlier discussion of policy as text and policy as discourse insofar as policy as text relates to text analysis (description) and policy as discourse, to the analysis of processes (interpretation) and social practices (explanation).

CDA informs the fifth chapter through the analysis of the textual and discursive features of the PONADEC. This analytical approach seems to be relevant to the analysis of both policy documents and interview data because it covers the analysis of text, processes and social practices. This chapter focuses on the first two dimensions, discourse-as-text and discourse-as-discursive-practice. Discourse as text allows the analysis of the linguistic features and organisation of

concrete instances of discourse, whereas discourse-as-discursive-practice is about the processes of text production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1995). Chapter 5 deconstructs the discursive nature of the decentralisation policy, its philosophical underpinning and its internal and external co-authors, shedding light on its production, distribution and consumption.

Drawing on ANT, I consider the different contexts of Ball's policy cycle, particularly the context of influence and the context of social practices- as 'as actor-networks in which participants and participation are ordered in time and space' (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010, p. 131). In this research, ANT concepts inform the sixth and seventh chapters. Multiple forms of ANT exist, but in this instance, I used ANT as a methodological tool. Kanger (2017) describes ANT as a method to learn from actors without imposing on them any a priori definition of their world-building capacities. This means that I watched how actors (human and non-human) interacted with one another, formed networks and brought about certain, temporarily stable, social practices that were more dominant than others were. I used two local field sites in 2017 to reveal the social practices around the 2010 policy of education decentralisation from a relational perspective in chapter 6. For chapter 7, I take the 1990 conference in Benin as the starting point to unfold the contextual and historical formations, which led to the decision of the Beninese government to decentralise parts of its government machinery.

The sixth chapter is a study of small-scale actor-networks at the local level in both the Southern and Northern field sites to explore how the actors involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education mediated the current decentralisation policy. I analysed their discursive and social practices from a relational perspective. Focusing on 'the strategic, relational, and productive character of particular, small-scale, heterogenous actor-networks' (Law, 2009, p. 145) is in line with the actor-network as a methodological approach. The seventh chapter explores how and implicitly why education decentralisation came onto the agenda in 1990 through following actors and their networks in space (from the local to the global) and time (from 1990 back to the early 20th century).

Ball (2015), adopting a post-structural position in his 2015 article, implicitly alludes to assemblage theory and ANT, I propose. For example, he understands policies 'as discursive strategies [made up of] sets of texts, events, artefacts and practices' (Ball, 2015, p. 308), transcending the centrality of human actors and even the dichotomy of human and non-human actors. Later, he addresses the 'complex web of interpretations, translations, 'active readership' and 'writerly' work around the policy' (Ball, 2015, p. 309) whereby I approach web in the context of actor-networks. In drawing on poststructuralism and implicitly alluding to New Materialism,

Ball's (2015) ideas of policy analysis cohere with ideas from ANT and assemblage theory in that he takes into account notions of webs and actors covering texts, events, artefacts and practices, among other aspects.

Before the completion of the literature review, I expand my understanding of policy analysis in the context of the post-development framework of this study.

3.2.4 A policy study in the context of a post-development framework

Overall, I position this study in a post-development framework which I understand as being critical of the very idea of 'development' as being Eurocentric. Escobar (2012), for example, explores the production of the idea of the Third World and its construction within development in the post-cold-war period. Development is presented as a social imaginary that has become stabilised, underpinned by the economic growth of nation states and informed by human capital theory. In his book 'Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World', Escobar offers examples of how development discourse shapes reality, which he aims to deconstruct, locating development within historically produced discourse.

More broadly, post-development suggests alternative ways of thinking, e.g. radical forms of democracy, an economy based on reciprocity and solidarity, acknowledging the value of traditional knowledge (Sachs, 2010). However, this study intends neither to romanticise local communities and cultural traditions, such as the traditional kingdoms in Benin, nor to engage in dichotomies, such as traditional versus modern. Moreover, I acknowledge the challenge of re-producing categories of the development discourse, such as in using the concept of participation in this study (cf. Rahnehma (2010) for a further discussion in section 3.3.3.3).

Overall, it is crucial to position this study in a post-development framework reviewing the Eurocentric character of development discourse and the hierarchical understandings and behaviours between developers and those 'to be developed'. Despite the criticisms mentioned above, post-development offers a framework for a more nuanced critique of 'development' discourse, and ways of thinking about alternatives (Ziai, 2017) as well as the implications of this for official governance and decentralisation structures and policies and the way people engage with these. This framework and its impact on education governance also lead on nicely to the two conflicting yet somehow linked notions of power that I bring to the discussion in section 3.3.2. While the concept of policy trajectory studies provides the framework for this study in the context of a post-development setting, I now turn to the key concept of decentralisation and related ideas.

3.3 Conceptual approach: decentralisation, power and participation

The second part of the literature review discusses the main concepts of this study, which are decentralisation, power and participation. Power and participation are important to the understanding of education decentralisation because they are inherently part of decentralisation as a governance reform, potentially redistributing power and the possibilities of participation. As such, this part starts with reviewing the conceptual literature on education decentralisation.

3.3.1 Decentralisation

This section is a critical engagement with the literature on decentralisation. There are three sub-sections: first, I define decentralisation and its sub-concepts - delegation, de-concentration, devolution and privatisation. Second, I situate these definitions in the context of Benin and third, I discuss decentralisation at the intersection of governance and globalisation.

The decentralisation of government in developing countries became a topic of debate at the same time as discussions on development began in the 1950s (Conyers, 1984). These discussions emerged in a period when many developing countries, particularly in the African continent, prepared themselves for independence. In the second wave, independent governments initiated decentralisation reforms in response to centralisation trends immediately after independence in a second period, from the early 1970s to the early 1980s (Conyers, 1984). During this period, the emphasis was on ‘deconcentrating hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies’ (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, pp. 2–3). The second wave of decentralisation extended the understanding of decentralisation to ideas of ‘political power sharing, democratization, and market liberalization’ (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, pp. 2–3), which opened up the door for privatisation. During the third wave in the 1990s, decentralisation was seen as a way of opening governance to wider public participation through civil society organisations. Edwards and DeMatthews (2014, p. 29) observed that decentralisation in the third wave was ‘reconceptualized [...] to embody [...] further market mechanisms in the provision of education’.

The decentralisation periods alternated with centralisation periods, commonly known as the decentralisation-centralisation pendulum. In 1984, Conyers (1984) asked

whether this [growing criticism of the second decentralisation period] will result in increased decentralization (for example, by a renewed emphasis on devolution rather than deconcentration), or in a ‘backward’ swing of the pendulum resulting in increased centralization (Conyers, 1984, p. 190).

However, I attempt to avoid the dichotomy of the decentralisation- re-centralisation debate in this study by drawing on a Foucauldian understanding of power ‘as manifesting only in relations offers a framework’ (Berkhout, 2005, p. 318). This considers the ‘interactive force of networks and other structures and actors in a world of pluralistic policy-making’ (Berkhout, 2005, p. 318) offering a multi-layered analysis beyond the policy-practice gap and decentralisation-re-centralisation rhetoric. In other words, such a theorisation takes a step back from a functional analysis and the focus on binary distinctions between decentralisation/ centralisation and policy/ practice. It aims to consider issues of education governance through capillary power, in which questions of governance, decentralisation and re-centralisation remain blurred and fluid.

3.3.1.1 Definitions and forms of decentralisation

This section draws on major theorists, such as McGinn and Welsh (1999) as well Cheema and Rondinelli (2007), providing a defined understanding of decentralisation and the multiple sub-forms it embraces. In light of the changing nature of governance influenced by global trends, Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) understand decentralisation as follows:

Decentralization now encompasses not only the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within government but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, p. 6).

This definition highlights that government entities, the private sector and civil associations negotiate the sharing of power. New public management systems, implying deregulation and privatisation for efficiency and effectiveness, have been the major drivers of devolution.

Decentralisation is often presented as a means to empower participants in decision-making and contribute to socio-economic growth. Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) explain that the underlying rationale of democratic governance is two-fold: it not only offers an institutional framework for the participation of citizens in economic and political processes but also favours human rights and values as ends in themselves. However, administrative decentralisation, in the case of de-concentration, not only promotes greater political participation but also implies the risk of extending ‘state control to territorial units’ (Rondinelli, 1990, p. 494). This is of particular importance in this research as the Beninese government tends to privilege de-concentration over devolution.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) distinguish democratic devolution from functional and fiscal devolution: democratic devolution points to democratic participation, local control and community decision-making, whereas functional decentralisation is often linked to accountability and transparency. In contrast, Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) distinguish four forms of

decentralisation: administrative, political, fiscal, and economic. Administrative decentralisation points to the sub-concepts of de-concentration, delegation and decentralised cooperation, whereas political decentralisation can be understood as the ‘devolution of powers and authority to local units of government’ to increase citizen participation (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007, p. 7). Although of less importance for this study, fiscal decentralisation can imply fiscal cooperation, fiscal delegation or fiscal autonomy, whereas economic decentralisation points to market liberalisation, deregulation, privatisation and public-private-partnerships. As the concepts have become more complex, so have their goals of embracing increased economic development, political accountability, and public participation (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007).

Figure 7 represents different forms of decentralisation as administrative reforms based on Rondinelli (1980). The least extensive form of decentralisation is de-concentration. This involves shifting the workload from the central ministry headquarters to government staff located in offices outside the national capital. It is a form of spatial relocation and reorganisation of power. Delegation is another form of decentralisation, whereby decision-making and the management authority for specific functions are delegated to bodies, which are only under the indirect control of central government ministries, such as specialist agencies. Devolution is a more pronounced form of decentralisation and points to the strengthening or the creation of local governments, although it can be extended to the school level, while privatisation refers to a transfer of ownership and responsibilities from the government to the private sector. For this study, de-concentration and devolution are the relevant forms of decentralisation.

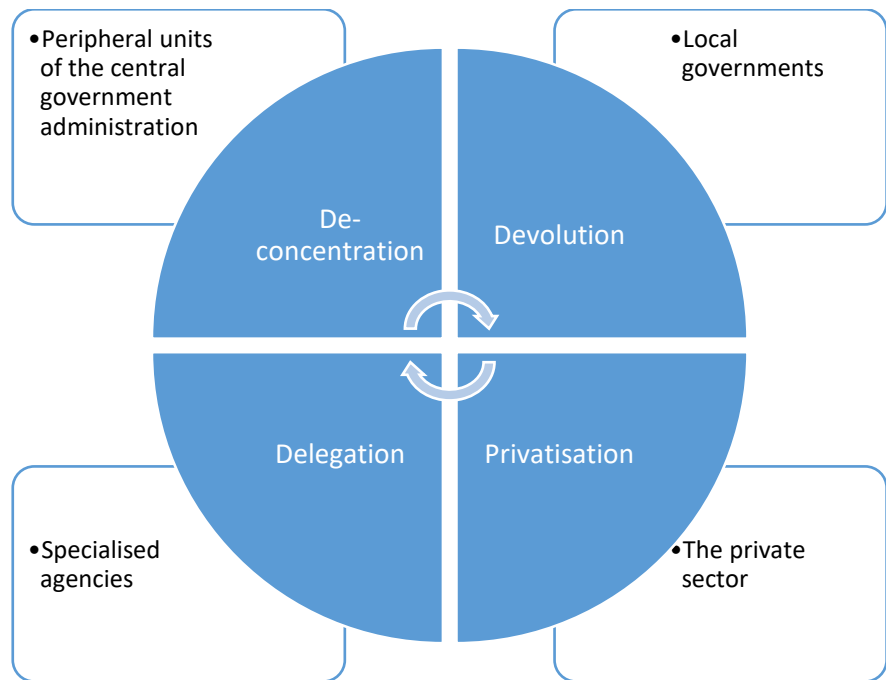


Figure 7 Four forms of administrative decentralisation (author's compilation based on Rondinelli, 1980)

Although decentralisation is often linked to neo-liberalism, decentralisation reforms can be embedded in different political traditions. Sayed (1999) suggests, for example, that either the political left or right can initiate the conception and implementation of decentralisation reforms. Decentralisation is not only differently motivated, but also different political traditions shape the decentralisation reform in different ways. For example, McGinn and Welsh (1999) identify different decentralisation types according to questions of political legitimacy, professional expertise and market efficiency, which are political decentralisation, expert decentralisation and decentralisation driven by market reforms.

Political legitimacy reforms imply a shift from professional to political control and are feasible in 'strong states' with a high level of social equity, whereby decision-makers at lower levels in the system have to be 'experts' who know the 'best practices' (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). If the objective is to maximise community participation in decision-making, this is a form of political decentralisation. In contrast, expert decentralisation occurs if the objective is to minimise variations in school quality and to maximise overall school effectiveness, under the assumption that a small set of 'best practices' will likely result in higher levels of performance. Decision-makers at the lower level have to be experts or persons trained to a sufficient level of expertise (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). Market efficiency, also known as finance-driven or competitiveness-driven reforms, is closer to the privatisation of education. The concept identifies

public and private choice: Public choice offers choices to communities, whereas private choice enables the increased freedom of individual parents (McGinn and Welsh, 1999).

Following this general discussion of decentralisation and its sub-concepts, a contextualised understanding of decentralisation is provided in the next section. Berkhout (2005, p. 316) points out that ‘individual terms that appear similar, often have different referential implications and are embedded in different constructions of meaning’. Similarly, Grauwe et al. (2005) point out that particular kinds of understanding of decentralisation are differently translated in the reality of West-Africa.

3.3.1.2 *Decentralisation in the context of this study*

In the Beninese context, the PONADEC implies several subtypes of decentralisation, whereby the sub-concepts of devolution and de-concentration are central. Interestingly, the decentralisation policy does not explicitly clarify these concepts, but its implementation Plan2D did five years later. It states in the appendix:

Decentralisation is a *political* reform aimed at empowering *people* in the management of local affairs through *elected bodies* and *citizen participation* mechanisms for *local development*. It is based on the following institutional changes:

- The transfer of powers, responsibilities and patrimonies following the laws and regulations governing the municipalities and the PONADEC [...].
- The transfer of budgetary resources following the code of local communities [municipalities] and the budget law of each budget year [...] (MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015, p. 113).³¹

Keywords in this definition are the *elected body*, which indicates that this definition can be understood as devolution (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). The definition gives equal weight to the municipalities as elected bodies and civil society. Decentralisation is presented as a means to promote local development.

De-concentration, in contrast, is defined as follows:

De-concentration is a *public* reform involving (i) the separation of strategic missions from implementation missions and (ii) the delegation of powers and funds to the dismantled structures of

³¹ *La décentralisation est une réforme politique visant à responsabiliser les populations dans la gestion des affaires locales à travers des instances élues et des mécanismes de participation citoyenne au développement local. Elle repose sur les mutations institutionnelles suivantes: le transfert des compétences, pouvoirs et patrimoines conformément aux textes législatifs et réglementaires régissant les communes et la PONADEC. [...] ; le transfert de ressources budgétaires conformément au code des collectivités locales et à la Loi de finances de chaque exercice budgétaire [...].*

an institution. It comprises two dimensions: administrative de-concentration and budgetary de-concentration [...] (MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015, p. 113).³²

From this definition, the aim of de-concentration is to bring the administration closer to the administered. The French term for *décentralisation* refers to devolution, while *déconcentration* indicates a hybrid form of de-concentration and delegation (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). For consistency, I use devolution for the French term *décentralisation* and de-concentration for the French term *déconcentration*.

As concepts of decentralisation and governance have changed rapidly and constantly in the context of globalisation, I discuss their interlinkages and changing nature in the next section.

3.3.1.3 *Decentralisation as a global governance reform*

Decentralisation is part of the new global governance reform calling for participatory governance through legal and policy frameworks (UNESCO, 2015), as stated in the introduction (chapter 0). In this section, I first discuss the concepts of governance and globalisation separately and then how they relate to each other. I put forward that policy-making is no longer the responsibility of the nation-state but influenced by multiple stakeholders. In that regard, it links back to a previous discussion on policy borrowing and lending, in which I argued that it is the interplay between national governments and global actors that makes education policies travel and show a remarkable similarity (cf. section 3.2.1.3).

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) (2009) defines governance as the operationalisation of ‘the responsibilities of national and subnational governments’ and ‘decision-making from the national finance or education ministry down to the classroom and community’ (UNESCO, 2009b, p. 6), whereas decentralisation implies a transfer of responsibilities and resources from the national to a subordinate level, as the previous definitional discussion of decentralisation has shown (cf. section 3.3.1.1). Furthermore, governance systems define ‘who decides on policies, how resources are distributed across society and how governments are held accountable’ (UNESCO, 2009b, p. 129), which links back to the discussion on policy (cf. section 3.2.1).

Although globalisation does not explain changes in governance and decentralisation reforms, the processes of globalisation interact with reform processes. Cheema and Rondinelli

³² *La déconcentration est une réforme publique portant sur (i) la séparation des missions d'ordre stratégique des missions de mise en œuvre et (ii) la délégation de pouvoirs et de crédits aux structures démembrées d'une institution. Elle comprend deux dimensions : la déconcentration administrative et la déconcentration budgétaire. [...]*

(2007) understand globalisation as the de-concentration of economic activity to subnational levels to increase the participation of individuals and enterprises. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) argues that imagined globalisation has affected the agenda setting of education policies in such a way that systems in the same 'educational space' align to global agendas. Linking governance and globalisation, Verger et al. (2012, p. 10) define the global governance of education as the 'redefinition of the relationship between education and the State'. In other words, governance implies changes in government because of the effects of globalisation (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Steiner-Khamsi (2012) goes further and insists that global governance is more than the sum of national governance systems; it is about the tension between state autonomy and the dynamic of global networks which challenges policy formulation and implementation.

[G]lobalisation is not an external force, but rather a domestically induced rhetoric mobilised at particular moments of protracted policy conflict, to generate reform pressure and build policy advocacy coalitions (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012, p. 49).

Similarly, Moutsios (2009) argues that policy-making takes place trans-nationally, implying that 'national borders are eliminated and mixed up and power flows from the global sphere into nation-states' arenas of power' (Moutsios, 2009, p. 471). This view of the link between globalisation and global governance resonates with Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) view about the post-Westphalian conception of the state. Policy formulation and implementation are no longer within the authority of the nation-state, but multiple stakeholders negotiate which kind of educational policies underpinned by particular values are on the agenda of national governments. Previously, the government could be considered as the embodiment of the state, but more recently, Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) proposed considering the government as a governance institution. Likewise, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that the nation-state no longer has authority over the policy process but that 'the interests of a whole range of policy actors' negotiate the form and content of policies. This observation raises the question of who the dominant stakeholders are, for instance IOs.

IOs, which I broadly understand as bi- and multilateral agencies, can be conceptualised as 'relatively autonomous sources of power'. Their power is anchored in the 'legitimacy of the rational-legal authority' through their representation and the control over information (Verger, Novelli and Altinyelken, 2012, pp. 16–17). Barnett and Finnemore (2004) explain that transnational organisations exercise power through three mechanisms: firstly, they classify the world e.g. through international standardised examinations such as the Programme of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for International Student Assessment (PISA); secondly, by fixing meanings in the social world (e.g. defining educational

development through indicators and benchmarks); thirdly, by articulating and disseminating new norms, principles and beliefs (e.g. through disseminating ‘best’ practices).

Finally, globalisation needs to be considered in relation to post-colonialism. The new transnational networks emerging from globalisation ‘imply the need to re-think narratives of colonisation and anti-colonisation’ because they cannot be disassociated from their roots in European imperialism (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006, pp. 254–255). Even though both concepts have different roots and foci - postcolonial theory in cultural studies focuses on place, identity, difference, the nation and modes of resistance and contrasts with globalisation in social studies, which focuses on issues of governance, among others. One of the major contributions of postcolonial theory is to consider ‘the discursive and cultural practices [...] as essential to the production and maintenance of colonial relations’ (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006, p. 256).

Therefore, this research also addresses of how this study speaks to the postcolonial condition. Tikly (2019) defines the postcolonial condition in discursive and material terms,

i.e. in terms of the constitutive effects of different discourses of development on the way that social reality and postcolonial identities are constructed but also materially, as an aspect of the cultural political economy of globalisation (Tikly, 2019, p. 223).

Following this quote, I understand the post-colonial condition from a postcolonial and global perspective, as well as in terms of discourse and practice. Globalisation from a contemporary perspective, and postcolonialism from a historical perspective, share the same conceptual territory in that both concepts refer to reciprocal relationships between actor groups, complicated networks of complicities and internal power imbalances (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006).

Summing-up this section, I argue that the global and national are co-produced. From a Foucauldian (2003b, 2003a) perspective, it is about the dominance of particular discourses or the capillary ways in which global discourses, such as the global governance agenda, permeate national and local contexts, such as in the Beninese case. Inherently involved within these structures, and thus decentralisation, are questions of power and power relations in society, which are reviewed in the next section.

3.3.2 Power

Acknowledging that traditional understandings of state power, sovereignty and decentralisation are anchored in a structural understanding of power, as are parts of the analysis

of this study, I lean towards a Foucauldian influenced understanding of power, while both contrasting this with and borrowing from a Critical Realist conception where appropriate. This understanding and positioning are in line with the overall methodology of this thesis, subscribing to critical and post-paradigms in using different analytical approaches in this study, as discussed in section 3.2.2, and taken up again in section 4.2. More specifically, the above is also coherent with using a Foucauldian conception of discourse rather than a semiotic understanding for the CDA of the policy of decentralisation, as proposed in section 3.2.2.1 and exemplified in chapter 5. Finally, it subscribes to the implications of a post-development framework (cf. section 3.3): either power as acting externally upon people, viewing people as subjects, as recipients/receptacles/objects of these policies without voice and expression, or resisting/remaking/signifying these.

Informed by Foucault, I understand power as a

multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere [...]; as the process which [...] transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect (Foucault, 1978, pp. 92–93).

Perhaps one of the most important characteristics is that power is exercised ‘in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 94) rather than acquired, as the following quote clarifies.

Nobody holds power, but the lines of power become unfolded in the sense of ourselves. [...] Power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised’ (Foucault, 2003a, p. 351).

According to Dore (2010), power is normative, productive and omnipresent. He proposes that power has a normative force ‘in proportion to its ability to persuade, incite, influence, direct, repress or control the conduct of the other’ (Dore, 2010, p. 738). He explains that ‘force’ has a coercive meaning which can, but does not have to be, a physical threat. Second, power is productive. ‘The productive aspect of power [...] produces truth and reality’ (Dore, 2010, p. 739). Dore adds that not only are truth and reality identified, but also individuals and the knowledge behind them. Third, power is omnipresent. To this end, Foucault suggests that

[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault, 1978, p. 93).

This understanding implies that power is produced in moments and relations contingent to each other.

Relations of power are immanent in other types of relationships, e.g. political, economic or social. They can be considered as ‘the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and the disequilibriums’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 94); and they are productive.

Of interest to this study is the idea that power can come from below to undo the binary notion of ruler/ ruled, the traditional notion of state authority- as a unitary state in the Beninese case- and its sovereign character. Even though the policy of decentralisation aims to devolve responsibilities from the central to sub-ordinate levels, this conception of power implies that power can be exercised at various levels and among various actors, reviewing the hierarchical understanding of institutions and individuals within a government and their capacities to exercise power. This idea is illustrated in chapter 6, where I discuss the analysis of power relationships from a structural and a post-structural understanding, i.e. the idea that decentralisation reform strengthens the central and municipal government entities to the detriment of parents and teachers, and contrast this with decentralisation manifesting itself in dynamic and potentially changeable actor-networks. Foucault calls this the rules of continual variations. Instead of thinking of who has power, e.g. the governor over the mayor, Foucault invites us to look at ‘patterns of modification’ as ‘relations of power-knowledge are “matrices of transformations”’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 99).

Also of interest for this study is the idea of resistance implied by power. Foucault (1978, p. 95) talks about a ‘multiplicity of points of resistance’, which are ‘present everywhere in the power network’. The ‘plurality of resistances [...] can only exist in the strategic field of power relations’. This is comparable to power relations forming a dense web, so does ‘resistance traverse social stratifications and individual unities’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). The analytical chapters deal in different ways with forms of resistance to the enactment of the decentralisation policy. For example, chapter 5 argues that the non-adoption of the implementation plan by the Beninese government can be considered as a form of resistance, whereas chapter 6 discusses the varied and multiple forms of resistance of local actors in the mediation of the policy.

Foucault’s theorisation of power is particularly useful for unpacking decentralisation as an inherently structural concept to shed light on some of the complex and unstable dimensions of the enactment of education decentralisation. In particular, Foucault (1978, p. 93) reminds us that power ‘is the moving substrate of force relations which by virtue of their inequality constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable’. As such, it is neither an institution nor a structure but rather ‘a complex strategical situation in a particular society’.

However, this conceptualisation also raises questions about how Foucault's conception of power speaks to structures and hierarchies, as discussed in the next sub-section.

3.3.2.1 *Bringing a structural and a post-structural understanding of power into conversation*

[R]elations of power are understood as established and maintained through discourse and through positions taken up and made possible within particular discourses (Davies & Harré, 2000; Davies, 2008b). Power is seen as complex and unstable. [...] These concepts are treated differently within critical, postmodern, and post-structural theories: indeed, their different takes on power, freedom, and agency act as distinguishing features between them (Gannon and Davies, 2014, p. 67)

As the above quotation explains, this section brings different takes on power relations, from a structural and a post-structural understanding of power, into the discussion. The Foucauldian concept of power contrasts with the Marxist idea of power, whether power can be possessed or simply exercised. From my viewpoint, Sayer (2012) usefully explores a critical realist view of power in comparison to Foucault's. Firstly, Sayer asserts that 'concepts of dispersed power [are] a potential possessed by all objects' (Sayer, 2012, p. 180). While the Foucauldian approach implies that power is exercised rather than possessed, Sayer suggests that power needs to be pre-possessed to be exercised. Secondly, while Foucault (1978, 1988) refuses to classify power as good or bad beyond its productive/ destructive character, Sayer pleads for the 'evaluation of power in terms of whether it causes flourishing or suffering [...] for adequate description and explanation' (Sayer, 2012, p. 180).

The underlying approach to bringing into conversation a structural and a post-structural understanding of power could be loosely framed as refraction as used in Webb's thesis (2014). While I try to refract the paradigms in one concept in this section, the use of different analytical approaches/ paradigms could be framed as *diffraction* (Youngblood and Mazzei, 2012; Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017), that is, making explicit the different effects of the use of ANT and CDA respectively. By refraction, I mean bringing together different paradigms into one concept. In other words, I enrich this understanding by bringing in a critical realist perspective, even though I primarily draw on a Foucauldian informed understanding of power.

Applying the idea of refraction to this study means that the whole study is written up in an arena of tension between a critical realist/ structuralist and a post-modernist/ post-structural understanding. This tension is expressed in the theorisation of power, on the one hand, and the analytical approaches rooted in different paradigms, on the other, but with a preference for a post-modernist understanding of concepts. Returning to the structural/ post-structural conversation of power, Foucault's (1984, 1988, 2003b, 2003a) work helps the understanding of how 'the social

operates through techniques of discipline and regulation' (Joseph, 2004, p. 144). In contrast, Critical Realism proposes a causality and a hierarchy of power relations. This conception of the power of the 'structured and stratified world' is necessary for a traditionally conceived Marxist notion of 'state power and its underlying structures' (Joseph, 2004, p. 144). As such, decentralisation, as a governance reform, implies both acknowledging structure, such as the state's structure, and a functional understanding of decentralisation, and in addition, the fluid and changeable process of governance in a global setting.

The inherent tension between a structural versus a post-structural understanding of power is illustrated in the discussion of the empirical literature, in the next section.

3.3.2.2 *Power and decentralisation*

Power is part of most definitions of decentralisation and implicitly alludes to control, authority, supremacy, power or influence (Dictionary.com and Oxford University Press, 2020). Cheema and Rondinelli (2007, p. 6) define decentralisation as 'the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility' and similarly, Lauglo and McLean (1985) provide an education-specific definition for decentralisation using the notion of control for the concept of power:

decentralisation is a transfer of the control of education from national to local bodies within a public governmental system (Lauglo and McLean, 1985, p. 3).

Decentralisation shifts responsibilities and resources from one level to another, although the degree of power shift varies according to the sub-concepts of decentralisation.

Sayed (1997) discusses the concepts of power and participation in the policy of education decentralisation in South Africa. By analysing three documents, which he considers as the keys to change in the discourses of education, he refers to an inherent tension between state control and individual freedom of consumer choice. He furthermore nuances participation, understood as the electoral process and the formulation of policy documents, as differently conceived in these key policy texts. For example, statutory consultative bodies are reduced to the role of 'consultation'. Monitoring bodies present an alternative option for citizen participation. Sayed contends that even though the particular goals and values instilled in the policy documents, such as parental participation, freedom and democracy, favour the idea of an individual with 'decentralised original power', at least three limitations can be identified. Firstly, a particular version of democracy (mainly representative democracy) is implied. Secondly, the constitutional existence of one right may interfere with other rights; and thirdly, a 'legalistic' approach to rights can lead to complex legal procedures that marginalise minority groups.

In their comparative case study of four West African countries, Grauwe *et al.* (2005) point out that one of the central assumptions of decentralisation is the aims to widen the involvement of actors who do not belong to the community of education professionals. The authors state that the rather low involvement of local authorities in education varied, which can often be related to scarce resources (human, financial and material). Therefore, they argue that a 'lack of involvement should therefore not be interpreted as an inherent characteristic of decentralization but more as the result of implementing decentralization in a context of scarcity' (Grauwe *et al.*, 2005, p. 6). The relationship between the elected authorities and local education offices is as much one of conflict as of collaboration: 'education officials refer to their professional legitimacy, while local authorities emphasize their political legitimacy' (Grauwe *et al.*, 2005, p. 6). The relationship between actors at the institutional level is much closer but not without tensions either. The close relationship between the head teacher and the president of the parents' teacher association risks transforming the parents' teacher association into an instrument of the head teacher that reinforces their authority over the school and the teachers.

From a post-structural perspective, Berkhout (2005) challenges the conventional analysis of education decentralisation in her comparative study in Belgium and South Africa. Instead of proceeding to an 'analysis of the functional (re-) distribution of power along the centre-periphery continuum in the public arena', she uses a Foucauldian understanding of power which enables her to go beyond a merely functional analysis of the structural concept, decentralisation. A functionalist analysis, when power is conceived as 'authority for decision-making', revealed that 'decentralisation seldom constituted a clear shift or restructuring of power from the centre to the periphery, but was often an amalgamation of decentralisation and concealed centralisation measures', according to Berkhout (2005, p. 316). In contrast, a Foucauldian influenced understanding of power 'as manifesting only in relations offers a framework', Berkhout (2005, p. 15) suggests, for 'rethinking the distribution of power and the decentralisation-centralisation dynamic'.

As discussed in this section, questions of where power lies are inherent in concepts of decentralisation. Sayed (1997) discusses the concepts of power and involvement in the policy of education decentralisation in South Africa. He contends that even though there are particular goals and values instilled in the policy documents, such as parental participation, freedom and democracy, which favour the idea of an individual with 'decentralised original power', these documents are limited by questions of power. Grauwe *et al.* (2005) argue that the relationship between elected authorities and local education offices is as much one of conflict as of collaboration. While the relationship between actors at the institutional level is much closer, it is

not without tensions either. Berkhout's (2005) conceptualisation of power, influenced by Foucault, goes beyond the practice of policy gap and a binary understanding of decentralisation/re-centralisation by suggesting that power manifests itself in relationships and networks.

From a structural perspective, power intersects with participation in that different degrees of participation are associated with different degrees of power or, as Arnstein (1969, p. 2016) states, 'citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power'. The next section sheds light on the concept of participation, which is conceptually related to decentralisation when decentralisation aims to increase citizen participation.

3.3.3 Participation

This section defines the concept of participation at its intersection with democracy, which provided a framework for analysing participation in this research, and finishes with a critical review of the concept. Arnstein (1969) understands

citizen participation [as] a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216).

Arnstein's (1969) definition can be understood in the context of popular participation where participation aims at achieving a particular kind of power- people power- meaning that those who were previously oppressed achieve some degree of power through participation.

Essuman and Akyeampong (2011) explored the different meanings of community participation to support and improve the quality of education provision through a case study in Ghana. They state that much of the theoretical and policy expectations on representation and participation in education by community members were only evident in form, but not in practice, despite the more comprehensive social and democratic governance reforms of 1987. They point out the need for a change in the professional culture to encourage teachers to incorporate a sense of serving the community into their roles and the importance of giving school management committees greater responsibility for teacher recruitment to achieve this end. Consequently, they conclude that:

achieving a positive relationship with teachers is a first and most important step in the framework of a 'social contract' between schools and community representatives (Essuman and Akyeampong, 2011, pp. 524–525).

Sayed's (2010) review is based on a comparative case study of four regions (East Asia, East Africa, South Africa, and North Africa) to consider how far education governance and decentralisation have contributed to promoting equity, increased participation and improved education quality. Based on the analysis of these four case studies, Sayed (2010, p. 62) asks 'who benefits from policies of education decentralisation, what gets transferred and crucially [what is] the nature of democracy'. He furthermore points out the importance of knowing 'how services are delivered to where they are needed most, the extent to which education is responsive to local needs, and how institutions become spaces for active and empowering citizen action and participation' (Sayed, 2010, p. 62). Sayed argues that political and technical questions arise in the governance of education and recommends integrating a pedagogic model of devolved governance prioritising teaching and learning since simply granting schools greater autonomy does not necessarily improve the quality of education, the degree of participation or equity.

All three authors in this section discuss the question of participation in education decentralisation. Sayed (2010) points out the need for a pedagogical model of devolved governance with a focus on teaching and learning, while Essuman and Akyeampong (2011) call for a change in the professional culture to encourage teachers to incorporate a sense of service to the community. Both studies show that decentralisation is not only a political or administrative matter of structure (institutions and their relationships) but that teachers 'as agents of change' are crucial for the implementation of decentralised reforms.

Moreover, participation can be considered as the cornerstone of democracy (Arnstein, 1969), particularly when it intersects with participatory forms of democracy. In the next section is a short discussion of how participation relates to an understanding of democracy and its particular forms. This discussion is important for this study because decentralisation is often linked to democracy. For example, the *Literature and best practice review on educational decentralization* (2004, pp. 4–11) writes that decentralisation can be viewed as 'an integral part of democratization'. The empirical evidence is mixed, however, as to what extent democratisation and decentralisation are positively correlated.

3.3.3.1 *Participation and democracy*

This section gives definitions of democracy and outlines the intersection with decentralisation. Democracy can be understood in different ways. Some scholars suggest it means 'giving citizens equal political rights while defending large areas of society and the economy from 'political inference'', while others suggest that 'democracy has only been achieved when the aspirations of the masses are no longer thwarted by the powerful' (Pinkney, 1993, p. 2). Bobbio

(1987) defines a minimal form of democracy, influenced by Rousseau, as a system where all adult citizens regardless of their situation can possess political rights and can vote on common issues, and where each vote has equal weight. Citizens can furthermore form their opinion freely in a context of free competition between rival political parties. Their choice is free in the sense that they have alternatives to choose from and they are bound by the majority decision, keeping in mind the principle that at least in theory the majority cannot bind the rights of the minority.

As decentralisation intersects with democracy through participation, I discuss participatory forms of democracy in more detail. Participatory democracy assumes that participants within an institution are equally entitled to take part in decisions, which affect their work in their institutional settings. It furthermore stresses that the institution has relative autonomy, free from excessive external control. Lauglo (1995) suggests that participatory democracy consists of a mix of syndicalist and anarchist forms of socialism, emerging from the student movements in the late 1960s and 1970s, which gave rise to neo-Marxist ideas. In participatory forms of democracy, voluntarism is vital with the aim of keeping norms, rules and regulations to a minimum, e.g. it could point to more scope for voluntarism in styles of learning. Also, it promotes 'empowering the powerless in developing countries' (Lauglo, 1995, p. 15). Institutions, such as schools and universities, are at the base of participatory democracies alongside some 'communalist' social forms outside these institutions. Participatory forms of democracy also gave rise to participatory forms of school governance, such as school committees, whereby the rationale is to distribute authority in an egalitarian way.

As outlined in chapter 2, Benin's history was marked by a socialist government with participatory elements in the 70s and 80s (Gisselquist, 2008), before transitioning into a liberal form of democracy in 1990 (Ngwane, 2006). Socialist democracies aim for equality and social justice, but they are not necessarily representative of the population through electoral competition as social democracies. Liberal forms of democracy, replaced many socialist governments after the end of the cold war, taking account of the rights and duties of the individual rather than society as a whole. They are criticised for privileging the voices of those who are already privileged, which is problematic in contexts of high inequality, particularly in the Global South (Pinkney, 1993; Lauglo, 1995).

To round off this section, I review some empirical literature that examines the question of how decentralisation and democracy relate to each other. Even though decentralisation and democracy seem to be inherently related in that decentralisation should widen democracy through citizenry participation in decision-making, Lauglo (1997) contends that at least three major

reasons show that decentralisation does not necessarily increase democratic behaviour. Firstly, by transferring some responsibilities to sub-national units, educational outcomes favouring the whole of society are limited. In particular, he argues that the decentralisation of certain aspects of the curriculum could lead to social disorganisation and a weakening of democracy. Second, democracy requires motivated and capable individuals and organisations to exercise their rights and duties. Often, however, communities lack the resources and skills to participate in a democratic society. Thirdly, democracy implies shared goals on the one hand and tolerance for diversity and disagreement on the other hand. Democracies suffer, however, when societies promote the 'achievement of excellence' because they favour certain groups over others.

Putting decentralisation into context with democracy, participation and empowerment in the Global South, Kulipossa (2004) argues that

the contribution of decentralisation to the fostering of democracy, participation, and empowerment is contingent on the coincidence of many factors and/or conditions at local and national levels (Kulipossa, 2004, p. 774).

This statement suggests that decentralisation can be pursued in the absence of democracy, participation, and empowerment. The contingency of other factors and conditions at different levels of a governance system is an important argument to understand the (dis-) connection between decentralisation and democracy.

Many scholars have found a causal relationship between decentralisation, democracy, and participation (e.g. Olowu, 1997; Brian Smith, 1985 in Kulipossa, 2004), yet just as many are critical about causal relationship between decentralisation, democracy, and participation (e.g. Crook and Manor (1998) and Wolman (1990) in Kulipossa, 2004). Following on from this generic discussion of participation and democracy, I introduce a framework for the analysis of participation in the next section. In particular, I draw on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation for the empirical part of this study, notably chapter 6. His framework is helpful for this study because it focuses on the role of the citizen in the context of political decision-making.

3.3.3.2 Arnstein's typology of participation

Arnstein (1969) distinguishes eight degrees of citizen participation on a ladder from the least involvement to the most extensive form. The two least extensive forms of participation are manipulation and therapy, whereby I understand manipulation as when 'participants' think they are involved, but their participation is only symbolic and may even be to their detriment. Therapy is similar to manipulation, but in a context where the participants become 'pathologised', in the sense that rather than taking account of the structures contributing the pathology of the citizen,

the focus is on curing the illness. Participants are forced into participation, in the same way into clinical group therapies. Arnstein (1969) considers these two types as forms of non-participation because they serve to either 'educate' or 'cure' the citizen.

He defines the next two rungs, 'information and consultation', as the first legitimate steps towards citizen's participation. However, information can imply informing without participating, in other words, 'participants' are informed, but have little or no channels to offer feedback. Consultation, which is a dominant form of the agenda-setting and the formulation of education decentralisation in the context of this study, serves as a forum for bringing people with different degrees of power together, but in Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) words, the 'have-nots' 'lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful'. Placation, the fifth rung, enables citizens to have some influence, but it depends on their capacities, their quantitative representation to the more powerful, and to what extent their voices are heard. Citizens have only an advisory role in that regard. These three levels of participation can be considered as degrees of tokenism because they pretend to be participation without effectively enabling individuals to partake (Arnstein, 1969).

The following rungs, which are partnership, delegation and citizen control, can be considered degrees of citizen participation and interrelate with the sub-concepts of decentralisation. Partnership can be understood as a redistribution of power between citizens and power-holders to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through particular structures. Partnership participation requires, however, certain pre-conditions to be met, such as a well-organised community and sufficient financial resources. Based on his case studies, Arnstein states that the city is not the power-holder, but the citizens themselves negotiate power.

Since those who have power normally want to hang onto it, historically it has had to be wrested by the powerless rather than proffered by the powerful (Arnstein, 1969, p. 22).

In the case of delegation, power is delegated to the citizen for a particular purpose in which they have authority over decision-making, whereas in the case of citizen control, citizens can run programmes (e.g. a community school), or govern an institution (e.g. town council or be responsible for policy and managerial issues). Arnstein (1969, p. 216) considers these two forms as achieved when 'have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power'.

Arnstein (1969) considers the two first types of participation (manipulation and therapy) as forms of non-participation, as they only serve to either 'educate' or 'cure' the citizen. He conceptualises the next three levels of participation as degrees of tokenism because they pretend

to share power without effectively enabling participation. The following rungs, which are partnership, delegation, and citizen control, can be considered as degrees of citizen participation and relate to the sub-concepts of decentralisation. In particular, Arnstein (1969) considers delegation and citizen control as achieved forms of participation. All degrees of participation that imply the empowerment of some and disempowerment of others have their risks, however. The power-holders may have racist, paternalist attitudes and resist power redistribution, whereas the less powerful may have difficulty ‘organizing a representative and accountable citizens’ group’ and may face ‘inadequacies of the poor community’s political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge-base’ (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

I consider Arnstein's (1969) typology as useful insofar as it relates to and coheres with Rondinelli's (1980) typology of decentralisation in terms of how degrees of citizen participation cohere with ways of redistributing responsibility and power. Furthermore, participation has emerged as an important theme for active groups and levels in this research, and I share with Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) concept that there are ‘150 rungs with less sharp and “pure” distinctions’. The eight categories present an over-simplification of a complex phenomenon. I also appreciate that he acknowledges that ‘neither the have-nots nor the power-holders are homogeneous blocs’ (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). I reject, however, the view that power, and hence participation, are possessed and fixed within people or groups of people, but rather see them as fluid, relational and non-hierarchical.

While Arnstein (1969) differentiates between eight forms of participation, I use a looser understanding of participation to view these forms as constitutive and not mutually exclusive. In the analysis of the data, I often considered more than one ‘category’ as relevant, e.g. in the case of parents, as I assume that their voice and engagement constantly adapt within their interaction with other actors, such as teachers or NGOs. Thus, participation and power are constantly re-negotiated and depend on all the actors involved and the particular space in which the (re-) negotiation takes place. As such, categorising the degree of participation and power often felt uncomfortable, and I consider Arnstein's (1969) typology as a set of useful capturing snapshots, but which can undergo alteration at any moment in time.

The critique of the typology of participation leads to a further critique of the concept of participation itself, as discussed in the following section. Even though I decided to use this concept for this study, as the analysis of decentralisation brings up questions of participation through the (re-)distribution of power, I remain critical of its usefulness in light of its historical genesis in development. Sachs (2010) points to the connotation of the modernity surrounding

discourses of decentralisation, such as development, planning, participation and State, which all serve the development machinery, as he argues.

3.3.3.3 *Critiquing the concept of participation*

Rahnema (2010) provides a critique of the concept of participation centring on its instrumental use for achieving greater effectiveness, its potential to allow greater involvement of the private sector. Although history has shown that participation, particularly in its forced forms, has led to many negative consequences, such as the holocaust under Nazi Germany, he argues that it is no longer perceived as a threat, but has become politically and economically attractive. However, he distances himself from the instrumental use of the concept, particularly in the contexts of development interventions, as the following quote shows.

This is how the pioneering participatory mendicants of the early development years were also robbed of their participatory ideal, as the latter was transmogrified into the present-day manipulative construct of participatory development (Rahnema, 2010, p. 141).

In this quote, Rahnema (2010) alludes to the point that development interventions aiming for macro-change are often rejected by the many micro-changes questioning the dominant knowledge/ power centres.

Similarly, Edwards and Klees (2015) argue that participation is instrumentalised through liberal governance systems in the sense that participation is used to legitimise policy interventions.

In other words, liberal approaches tend to enable and sustain participation only as a front-end process that does not carry over to program management or policy implementation (Edwards and Klees, 2015, p. 491).

They argue that governmental and nongovernmental representatives use participation, claiming that it results in better data analysis and problem identification besides increased ownership. Nevertheless, it is often conceived as top-down participation and limited to consultation according to Arnstein's ladder of participation. 'As such, they tend to reify, rather than redirect, those processes and structures into which they are fed', which implies that 'liberal participation maintains rather than challenges the status quo' (Edwards and Klees, 2015, p. 491).

Albeit brief, the critiques of Edwards and Klees (2015) as well as Rahnema (2010), highlight the instrumental use of participation in liberal democracies and the development sphere more broadly. As an alternative, Rahnema (2010) suggests other forms of participation anchored in endogenous movements and knowledge. This view is important in light of chapter 7, in which

I argue that education decentralisation is influenced by both endogenous and exogenous formations. I propose, thus, that greater importance should be given to endogenous knowledge and experience in designing social policies regarding the implications of this study (cf. chapter 8).

The second part of the literature review has reviewed the main concepts of this study, which are decentralisation, power and participation. I will come back to these concepts in the conceptual framework about how they relate to each other and how they are used in this study. The third part of this chapter reviews the empirical literature on education decentralisation.

3.4 Conditions and effects of education decentralisation

A discussion of the conditions for and effects of education decentralisation reforms follows in this section. I review the empirical literature concerning education decentralisation, particularly but not exclusively in SSA. It focuses on the transfer of resources and accountability in terms of conditions, and issues of inequity and marginalisation as well as quality in terms of the effects of decentralisation.

3.4.1 Conditions

3.4.1.1 *Transfer of resources*

In the context of Benin, Odushina et al. (2008) examined the impact of decentralisation on the management of local school actors. Their research, based on three cases studies of local school authorities, and six schools in urban, semi-urban and rural parts of Benin, draws several important conclusions regarding the transfer of skills and resources. Despite the vital role of local school authorities in managing education, they do not have sufficient resources to support their schools pedagogically, the authors argue. At school level, the transfer of skills shows a willingness to give more responsibility and autonomy to local actors, e.g. via local subsidies for schools. Although school-based management has resources at their disposal and strengthened responsibilities as part of the legal framework, they lack support and funding. Indeed, despite the presumed autonomy of local actors in school management, they remain dependent on their external partners, such as parents' associations and NGOs (Odushina *et al.*, 2008).

In the West African context, Grauwe et al. (2005) extended the understanding of resources as not restricted to funding but to the credibility and the social networks of the actors involved. In their comparative study of education decentralisation in four West African countries (Benin, Mali, Guinea and Senegal), they suggest furthermore that 'resources, competencies and assets are

not immobile; they change continuously, and governments have opportunities and the obligation to impact upon them' (Grauwe *et al.*, 2005, p. 13). Nevertheless, it is not only a question of lacking financial resources but also how these are managed: firstly, the central level makes resources available within tight budget lines, which restricts the autonomy of municipal and local actors. Secondly, the transferred funds do not take into account the characteristics and needs of each district and its schools. Thirdly, the use of resources lacks transparency. Grauwe *et al.* (2007) point to the risk that 'the lack of transparency reinforces the monopoly of power exercised by certain individuals within many offices and localities, which in itself is the cause of that lack of transparency'.

Odushina *et al.*'s (2008) study, as well as Grauwe *et al.*'s (2005) study, have shown how the lack of transfer (skills, finances etc.) limits the autonomy of local actors and how the absence of transparency creates centres of powers. Odushina *et al.* explicitly point to the limited autonomy of local actors through constrained transfer of resources, while Grauwe *et al.* only mention it implicitly, pointing rather to the exercise of power by individuals in lack of transparency situations. Autonomy, when restricted by limited resources, is often discussed together with issues of control and accountability, as the next section illustrates.

3.4.1.2 *Accountability*

Gershberg, González and Meade (2012) examined the implementation of education decentralisation reforms that attempted to improve incentives and accountability through a combination of voice, exit, and institutional and management arrangements. They use the accountability framework of the World Bank (2003) aimed at 'providing better services to the poor' (Gershberg, González and Meade, 2012, p. 1025) which they developed further based on three case studies in Latin America (Chile, Nicaragua, and Colombia). This framework outlines the actors and relationships that are important for understanding the accountability functions in education service provision. The underlying assumption of the accountability framework is that 'holding service providers accountable for delivering expected results is key to successful education outcomes' (Gershberg, González and Meade, 2012, p. 1025). The authors questioned the added value of stressing the impact of long-term, system-wide accountability reform processes depended on student results, and the transferability of the results of the evaluation to support reform strategies in other contexts. In their conclusions, they plead for a balance between 'clear and efficient top-down monitoring and enforcement' (Gershberg, González and Meade, 2012, p. 1024) combined with other accountability measures, such as robust local quality support systems.

Autonomy is often discussed in the context of control or accountability, as do Gershberg, González and Meade (2012). Rwiza (2014) examined how head teachers in Tanzania harmonise different roles to achieve autonomy, external accountability and be competitive. Her study, which is informed by political discourse analysis and decolonising theories, found that the adoption of new roles in the context of education decentralisation creates conflict and imbalance. She suggests that educational policies should not only be separated from market influences but also decolonised. Qi (2017) explores the decentralisation of basic education in Shanghai, notably the devolution of the decision-making authority to local education departments and the introduction of policies for private schools granting them more autonomy. She considers this form of decentralisation as county-based school decentralisation since it allocates some of the decision-making authority over a number of areas in the public school sector to the three county bureaux of education. She offers some recommendations about first, how to promote school decentralisation, and second, how to balance it with accountability.

Gershberg, González and Meade (2012) plead for top-down monitoring mechanisms in combination with local quality support systems to improve the quality of local services. Rwiza (2014) examined how head teachers in Tanzania positively combine the needs of autonomy, external accountability and competition in light of the dialectic between accountability and autonomy. Qi (2017) explored the decentralisation of basic education in Shanghai, discussing how to promote school decentralisation on the one hand, and accountability on the other. What they have in common is the inherent tension in decentralisation of allocating greater autonomy to sub-national levels while ensuring some form of accountability. The next section examines questions of inequity and marginalisation as well as quality as some common effects of decentralisation reforms.

3.4.2 Effects

3.4.2.1 *Inequity and marginalisation*

Sayed and Soudien (2005) examined how the framework of decentralisation and factors of inclusion and exclusion in the South African context related to each other and how the focus on inclusion can exacerbate the problem of exclusion. Concentrating on governance, access and curriculum, they argue that

decentralisation reforms that have been adopted in post-apartheid South Africa, as administrative and legislative mechanisms to deal with the divisive effects of apartheid, have themselves produced new forms of exclusion (Sayed and Soudien, 2005, p. 116).

Administrative and legal decentralisation led to a state divided between the centre and the decentralised provinces with parallel responsibilities. The reasons for exclusion lie in the distribution of responsibilities and resources as well as in the process of juridification (codification of the legislation). Firstly, decentralisation means that funds from national level funds are distributed to the counties and other sites but is not involved in the management and control of schools within these sites. Secondly, the process of juridification constrains rather than controls because the interpretation of the law is often contested. As a consequence, the ‘process of juridification of the political process [...] (re)sites conflict between the centre and provinces, from the political arena, to the judiciary’ (Sayed and Soudien, 2005, p. 118). The authors argue that the re-articulation and representation of the legislation emerged from the policy tension between choice and democracy.

Rasmussen (2011, 2013) analysed public service delivery and democratic decentralisation reform within the primary education sector in Benin. She argues that heterogeneity will always exist in conditions of access to public services, but variations are extreme in a context, like Benin, with a highly fragmented system of public authority. Consequently, decentralisation leaves room for the marginalisation of some groups at the local level and the abuse of public authority, e.g. in the unequal distribution of school materials. In the education sector, there seems to be a return to the centralised functioning of the state, whereby the role of the municipality is only minor in law and even more limited in practice. Despite the constitutional objective of free primary education for all children, varying costs remain for educational materials, teaching infrastructure and teachers. Increased state intervention in the sector of primary education can reduce parents' charges, but access to a high, or even reasonable, quality of education remains an unsolved problem (Rasmussen, 2011, 2013), as studies in other contexts have also demonstrated (Grauwe *et al.*, 2005; Gershberg, González and Meade, 2012).

Relevant to this study is how the legislation affects the enactment of education decentralisation, as shown by Sayed and Soudien (2005). In their case, they demonstrated how the focus on inclusion in the context of the decentralisation reform in post-apartheid South Africa had produced new forms of exclusion. Rasmussen explains that heterogeneity will continue to exist in service delivery, but it is more pronounced in fragmented settings like Benin. Even though more state interventions could respond to the problem of inequity, in terms of user fees, for example, it will not resolve the issue of quality. Besides questions of equity, the study of education decentralisation often questions whether the reform has improved or degraded the quality of education, as discussed subsequently.

3.4.2.2 *Quality*

Grauwe et al. (2005) also examined whether decentralisation can lead to school improvement. They particularly focused on the collaboration between actors at the institutional and the municipal level and the quality of education through monitoring the management of teachers and funds. They state that a key mission of local education offices is to monitor the quality of the teaching in its schools, but inspection was of poor quality in all four cases. One cause, among others, was the challenge to cover a large number of schools in a context of scarce resources. Municipal actors furthermore face the challenge of exercising control, on the one hand, and offering support, on the other. Further discrepancies are the inadequate profiles of district officials, the rather traditional format of school visits and the lack of strategic planning.

Channa (2016) studied the empirical evidence concerning the relationship between decentralisation and educational quality in Indonesia and Kenya. The case studies demonstrated that different approaches to decentralisation can result in significantly different outcomes in terms of educational quality. The author argues that the design and implementation of education decentralisation influences quality outcomes, and the characteristics of design and implementation are shaped by economic conditions in development economies. Venkataraman and Keno (2015) analysed Ethiopia's post 1991 decentralisation reform. They evaluated the level of service delivery in two field sites in the education sector and discovered that there are quality constraints even though significant improvements have been made in extending educational service delivery. The concern for quality relates to existing challenges, e.g. the lack of adequate financial support, trained labour, increasing rates of teacher attrition, absence of adequate participation by the community and planning, among others. They conclude that the grass root level needs to be involved to tackle these challenges.

Grauwe et al. (2005) highlighted the challenge of delivering good quality education in the context of the education decentralisation reforms in West Africa because of the lack of resources for school inspections, but due to the conflation of support and control in the Beninese case. On the other hand, they highlighted good practice, such as networks between the local school authorities and schools to support issues of quality. Channa (2016) discussed how decentralisation reforms in the education sector have had different effects on the quality of education, shaped by the design and implementation of such reforms as well as the economic conditions, in which they take place. Similarly, Venkataraman and Keno (2015) demonstrated how educational outcomes depend on economic factors, such as the lack of adequate financial support.

This part of the literature review has discussed a selection of literature on education decentralisation with a particular focus on Benin and SSA, but has also referred to experiences in Latin and South America as well as Asia. The last section elaborates the conceptual framework for this study, bringing together the framework for policy trajectory studies, the main concepts of this study, and the analytical lenses.

3.5 A post-development conceptual framework

This research explores how the decentralisation policy in the context of Benin can be conceptualised as discursive and social practices and how actors mediate this policy in the context of the pre-school and primary education system in Benin. It uses the policy trajectory studies, incorporating three different contexts, as its main conceptual framework. This framework includes the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context(s) of practices (Ball, 1993, 2015). Moreover, I draw on Massey's (1994b) theorisation of space, conceptualising the spatial as space-time, implying a particular articulation between the networks of social relations. As such, this work adopts a temporal and spatial lens, beginning with research in two local field sites in 2017 and extending it to the analysis of national and global influences on policy formulation and mediation from 1990 onwards. Finally, I position this study in a post-development framework which I understand as being critical of the very idea of 'development' as Eurocentric and which serves the global development industry and the West more broadly (Sachs, 2010; Escobar, 2012; Ziai, 2017). Post-development offers a framework for a more nuanced critique of 'development' discourse, and ways of thinking about alternatives (Ziai, 2017) as well as the implications of this for official governance and decentralisation structures and policies and the way people engage with these.

All three sub-questions of this study relate to one dimension of the policy framework. The first sub-question addresses the context of policy text production. I understand this dimension in a narrow sense, as this research question explores how the decentralisation policy is discursively constructed, and how it relates to pre-school and primary education (cf. chapter 5). The second sub-question sheds light on the context(s) of practices: how the actors involved in providing pre-school and primary education mediated the decentralisation policy from a relational perspective (cf. chapter 6). How actors connected to bring about the agenda setting of education decentralisation in 1990 related to the context of influence (cf. chapter 7). Tracing the genesis of education decentralisation in the Beninese context contributes to understanding why and how the policy of decentralisation has been enacted in particular ways, i.e. understanding resistance, and critically engaging with the colonial legacy, as revealed in the policy text, discourse and practices.

This is a qualitatively oriented policy study informed by ANT (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) on the one hand, and CDA (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013) on the other. In chapter 5, CDA helps to conceptualise policy as text, as discourse and as social practice, unpacking the dominant ideologies and powerful discourses and practices, to offer a vision of change. In chapters 6 and 7, I draw on ANT to conceptualise this research as shifting networks of human and non-human actors bringing about particular discourses and social practices which are temporarily stabilised but remain open to alteration. The tracing of their relations is useful for developing an understanding of the 'how', and implicitly, the 'why' of the emergence, the formulation and the mediation of the decentralisation policy.

Decentralisation, power and participation are the main concepts of this study. Decentralisation is a global governance reform that redistributes power within a governance institution, alias government (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). In the context of globalisation, international, national and local forms of governance co-exist and interrelate with each other (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Decentralisation shares with participatory forms of democracy the view that power should be distributed and citizens are entitled to participate in the governance of their locality (Lauglo, 1995). In this study, devolution and de-concentration as administrative forms of decentralisation are of particular importance, since devolution overlaps with political decentralisation in that it transfers authority to elected bodies (Rondinelli, 1980).

Power is inherently involved in the concept of policy and decentralisation. Power is implicated in policy as Bell and Stevenson (2006, p. 9) show, policy is about the 'power to determine what is done' as well as within the concept of decentralisation when the latter is understood as a transfer of power to lower levels (Lauglo, 1995). Moreover, this study is also informed by the concept of participation. Participation intersects with power in that different degrees of participation are associated with different degrees of power from a structural perspective, and is linked to democratisation as decentralisation aims to increase citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969).

The whole study is written up in the arena of tension between a critical realist/ structuralist and a post-modernist/ post-structural understanding, expressed in the theorisation of power, on the one hand, and the analytical approaches of ANT and CDA rooted in different paradigms, on the other. From a Foucauldian perspective, I understand power as relational, productive and normative, and power relations as dynamic and multi-directional, fluid and potentially changeable. Foucault's (1978, 1988, 2003b, 2003a) work helps the understanding of how 'the social operates through techniques of discipline and regulation' (Joseph, 2004, p. 144). In

contrast, CR proposes causality and a hierarchy of power relations. This conception of the power of the 'structured and stratified world' is necessary for a traditionally conceived Marxist notion of 'state power and its underlying structures' (Joseph, 2004, p. 144). As such, decentralisation, as a governance reform, implies both acknowledging structure, such as the state's structure, and a functional understanding of decentralisation, and in addition, the fluid and changeable process of governance in a global setting.

To sum up the conceptual framework (cf. Figure 8) akin to post-development, it consists of policy trajectory studies, including the context of influences, the context of policy text production and the context(s) of practices (Ball, 1993, 2015). Decentralisation, power and participation, intersecting the local, national and global, present further conceptual instances through which I conceptualise the empirical data, while I draw on ideas of ANT (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) and CDA (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013) to analyse the data. The next chapter introduces the research methodology.

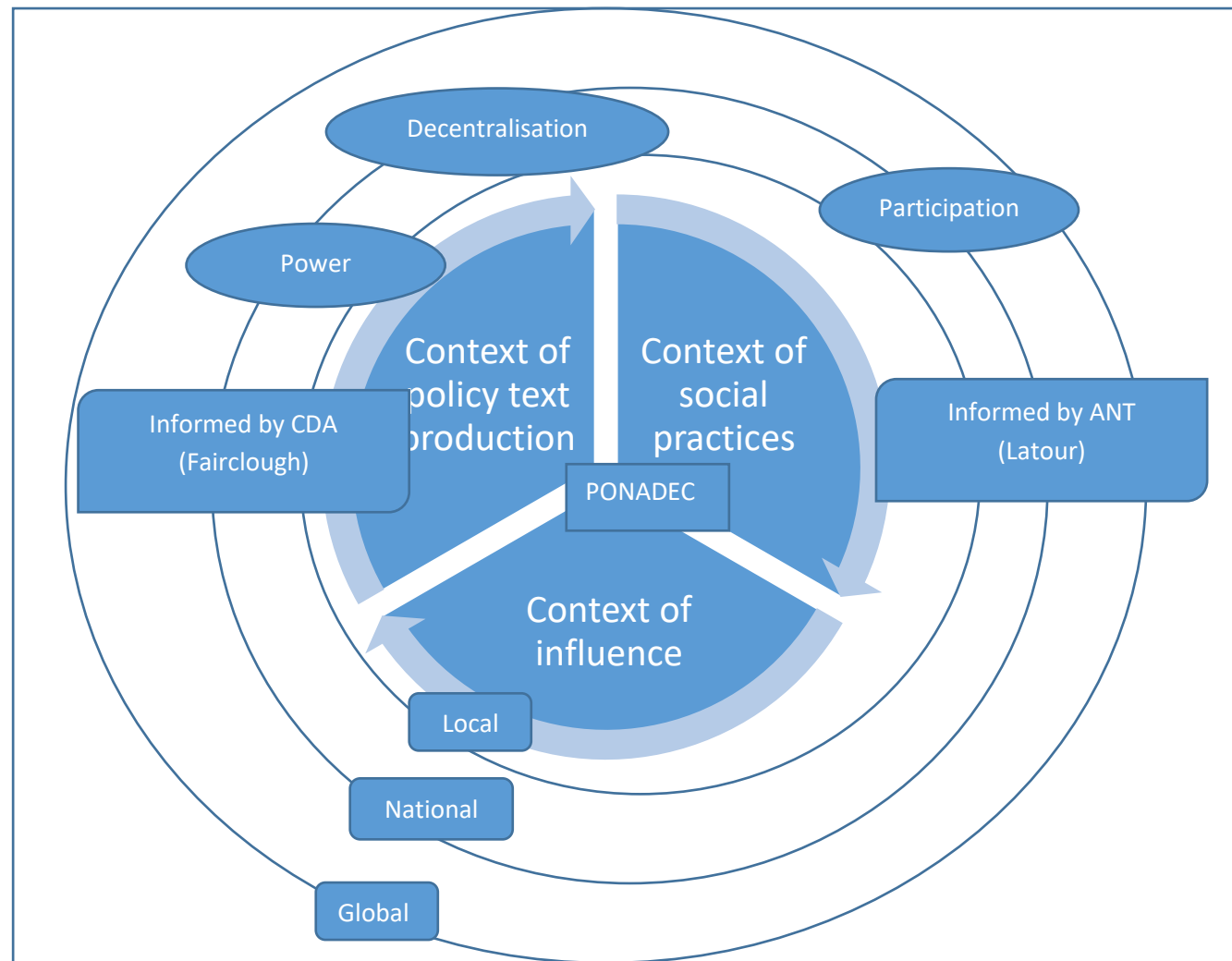


Figure 8 Conceptual framework

4 Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter first introduces the research paradigm as a reflection. The research design covers the sampling of institutions, research participants and policy documents and the processes of data production and analysis, including the methods used in the conduct of the interviews and for collecting policy documents. This chapter then outlines how the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research were established and subsequently addresses the ethical concerns about confidentiality and anonymity. The last part of this chapter describes my positioning and my reflections.

Before discussing the research philosophies adopted, I first explain my understanding of the research paradigm. I understand by paradigm, ‘a shared world view that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline and that guides how problems are solved’ (Schwandt, 2001, pp. 183–184). Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) explain that philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality (as the ontology), ways of knowing (the epistemology), and ethics and value systems (the axiology) inform our worldview. The methodology is a process where the ontology, epistemology and axiology intersect and inform each other (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012).

4.2 Research philosophy as a reflection

[N]othing is innocent; everything is dangerous; but dangerous can be useful (Lather, 2006, p. 47)

This section outlines the research philosophy as a reflection, which may be unusual but follows a trend of newer paradigms. In this thesis, I am drawing on ANT (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) on the one hand and CDA (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013) on the other. In that regard, this study may represent a methodologically uncomfortable zone for some researchers as I draw on different analytical approaches, arguably rooted in different theoretical paradigms. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011, p. 100) plead, however, for the ‘great potential for interweaving of viewpoints, for the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and for borrowing, or bricolage’ in combining different paradigms. They argue that we are researching in a period where we need to accept that ‘there will be no single “conventional” paradigm’ (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 100). Instead, we need to make space for ‘multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms’ (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 125).

The literature review discussed at length how both analytical projects complement each other, and how they inform this study. In this section, I want to add a more personal perspective

about my motivation for engaging with these different analytical approaches and paradigms. During the first part of the doctoral studies, an initial analysis of the policy of decentralisation was informed by CDA. Later, 'in the middle of the task at hand [my PhD]' (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 620), I became interested, and temporarily more inclined towards ANT. I decided to use CDA for one of the earlier chapters, the discussion around the de-construction of the policy of decentralisation, while ANT informs the later chapters in the discussion of the agenda setting of education decentralisation and the mediation of this policy. The doctoral research mirrors my intellectual passage from one paradigm to another.

The use of CDA and ANT in one piece of work can present concerns because they are rooted in different theoretical paradigms, although the boundaries are not clear-cut. Some scholars consider ANT as an empirical translation of poststructuralism, notably assemblage theory, a bottom up framework for the analysis of social complexity focusing on fluidity and multi-functionality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980), while others emphasise its roots in New Materialism (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010), a 1990s reaction to the dualism influencing much of cultural theory. CDA, arguably, may be anchored in a critical realist tradition, where language is understood as constructing our social realities (Riley, Sims Schouten and Willig, 2007), although it has roots in French poststructuralism (Fairclough, 1995, 2010). I briefly outline below my understanding of Critical Realism and Post-modernism, the underlying paradigms of the analytical approach used in this study.

Critical Realism, predominantly developed by Roy Bhaskar (1989) and Andrew Sayer (2000), represents a shift from positivism (empiricism) to post-positivism (CR). The underlying ontology of Critical Realism considers reality as "real", 'but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible'. Knowledge is constructed dualistically and objectively, whereby 'findings [are] probably true' (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 98). In this way, Critical Realism provided a coherent frame for critical policy analysis (Woodside-Jiron, 2011) and for using CDA to analyse data (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

In contrast, postmodern theories blur the distinction between epistemology and ontology. Although postmodernism and poststructuralism are often used interchangeably, they deserve further description. Lather (1983), for example, suggests that postmodernism 'raises issues of chronology, economics (e.g., post-Fordism) and aesthetics whereas poststructural[ism] is used more often in relation to academic theorizing 'after structuralism'.

Postmodernism argues against the values, practices, and goals of Enlightenment humanism as they play out in Modernism (Lather 1993, p. 688 in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 616).

Besides the previously mentioned discomfort zone, the use of both CDA and ANT is complex because they do not sit comfortably in a 'category' theoretical framework nor 'methodology' and even less as 'methods'. CDA constitutes neither a theoretical framework nor a method; it is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse. Fairclough (1995, pp. 1–2) considers CDA as an 'analytical framework- a theory and a method for studying language in its relation to power and ideology'. Similarly, different scholars and theoretical conceptualisations inform ANT, which led Kanger (2017) to the comparative, critical and reflexive analysis named 'the ANT multiple'. He distinguishes seven different readings of ANT, considering the first three as ontological frameworks; the fourth as a controversy about its applicability; and, the fifth as a set of methodological guidelines; the sixth as an ontological and a methodological approach and the seventh as indefinable.

Being aware of the triangle between the substantive issues (concepts), theoretical frameworks and methodology (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005), I argue against the convention of conceptualising the theoretical framework before defining the methodology and methods respectively. Instead, I suggest that it is a process of going back and forth, growing more organically and dialogically between all three dimensions. Although St. Pierre (2011) claims that neither she nor the other posts (postmodernism, poststructuralism, among others) offer an alternative methodology, she suggests that

Putting posts to work, notably deconstruction³³ and entanglement³⁴, implies the creation of a different articulation, remix, mash-up, assemblage, a becoming of enquiry that is not a priori, inevitable, necessary, stable, or repeatable, but rather, created spontaneously in the middle of the task at hand...' (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 620).

This quote emphasises a different form of inquiry which is always developing, unpredictable and allows for looking at the phenomena from different angles.

Ending the section on the research philosophy, I emphasise that I looked at the data from two different angles, informed by CDA and ANT, without adopting a particular worldview, such as considering my actions as those of a critical realist or a poststructuralist. Instead, I used two different analytical approaches to analyse the data, which are derived from and anchored in different theoretical paradigms. I adhere to the concept of 'fluid exploration', which suggests that

³³ '[D]econstruction is not just attention to language but to the very material structures we create through language and social practice, including that very material structure we call the human being' (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 618).

³⁴ Entanglement in quantum theory implies 'to lack an independent, self-contained existence; [...] individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating [...]' (Barad, 2007 in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 619).

the construct of a paradigm can be too rigid, and 'paradigm proliferation', pointing to many different smaller paradigms (Samuel, 2016) may be preferable. In drawing on ANT and CDA, I loosely draw on post- and critical paradigms, foregrounding issues of power and how discourse is embedded in political purposes from the critical paradigm on the one hand, and that discourse as inseparable from its subject, where reality remains unknowable, from the post-(structuralist) paradigm on the other hand (Samuel, 2016).

Taking up the position above implies that I assume my understanding of reality is jointly co-constructed with others in the social world and that my occupation of a spatial social construction enables me to negotiate a paradigmatic 'liminal' trajectory that helpfully draws on both theoretical paradigms. I assert that occupying an 'uncomfortable' position that bridges two paradigmatic spaces allows me to question what both may offer to the sense making of my research topic in ways that produce new knowledge. Having reflected upon my theoretical journey to understand 'how is it that we become available to a transformation of who we are, a contestation which compels us to rethink ourselves, a reconfiguration of our' place' and our ground' (Butler, 1995, p. 132 in St. Pierre, 2011), I now move on to the research design of this study, starting with the sampling strategy.

4.3 Sampling

This section discusses the sampling strategy, notably the type of policy documents, the selection of field sites and the groups of research participants. I understand by sample a subset of the total Beninese population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) and I used two different sampling strategies; purposive sampling and snowballing sampling. Purposive sampling means to 'hand-pick' the cases to be included in the sample based on evaluating their typicality. It does not represent the wider population and offers depth rather than breadth of information. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest that purposive sampling is often used for accessing 'knowledgeable people' who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues because of their role, power, and access to networks, expertise or experience.

Besides the purposive sampling, I had recourse to snowball sampling when I used my professional networks and those of research participants. Snowball sampling is used to identify a small group of individuals who have characteristics relevant to the research. These individuals then identify further informants, who in turn, may recommend further informants. It is useful for hard-to-reach groups, such as the very powerful or social elites. Noy (2008, p. 329 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 159) suggests that snowballing implies the 'equalization of power relations' because it reduces asymmetrical power relations between the researcher and the

participants due to its inherent nature of relying on social interaction. However, this sampling strategy may produce biases because the researcher's initial contact may heavily influence the sampling strategy. In this sense, bias can include or exclude members of a population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Acknowledging the possible bias of snowball sampling, I mainly used purposive sampling and snowball sampling as an auxiliary method of gaining access to professional and social networks of interviewees previously identified by purposive sampling.

Altogether, my sample consisted of policy documents concerning education decentralisation from 1990 to 2017 and research participants from the different ministries in charge of education, decentralisation and development as well as from municipalities and schools. I focused the documentary review on three normative documents (constitution and laws), one policy document (PONADEC), and two strategic and implementation plans (cf. section 4.3.1). The oral data came from the 64 interviews and four focus groups I carried out, with more than 80 research participants (cf. section 4.3.3). Appendix 9.2 provides a chronological overview of research participants.³⁵

Overall, I collected more than twice as much data as planned. The main reason for the 'over-production' of data was due to the snowball sampling strategy I adopted. The sample now covered not only the officials formally in charge of education decentralisation, but also retired officials or officials who had changed their institutional affiliation. As the initial focus of this study was on how officials in charge of education decentralisation understand and interpret the decentralisation policy, I prioritised the data of officials in the system rather than give voice to knowledgeable people often outside the system.

4.3.1 Policy documents

This documentary review includes normative documents, policies and implementation documents, produced by the government and often financially and technically supported by IOs. Normative documents include the constitution (1990), the education law (2003, revised in 2005) and the devolution laws (1999). The Oxford Dictionary defines a constitution as

The rules and practices that determine the composition and functions of the organs of central and local government in a state and regulate the relationship between the individual and the state. Most states have a written constitution, one of the fundamental provisions of which is that it can itself be amended only in accordance with a special procedure (McLean and McMillan, 2009, p. n.p.)

³⁵ In order to protect their anonymity, I excluded their precise job description.

The PONADEC is a core policy document for this study. It is not specific to education but includes pre-school, primary and secondary education besides other sectors. The UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming defines education policy as a document, which

establishes the main goals and priorities pursued by the government in matters of education – at the sector and sub-sector levels – with regard to specific aspects such as access, quality and teachers, or to a given issue or need (Yano, 2013, p. 6).

In contrast, the PDDSE, including a policy letter, is a strategy which specifies how the policy goals are to be achieved. This study analysed the 2006 to 2015 version because the Beninese government had not finalised the more recent 2015-2025 version by the time of the data analysis.

Procedural or implementation plans cover: Plan2D at the national level, the Intra-sectoral Development Plans (PDDI) at the provincial level, the municipal development plans for two municipalities (North and South) and the sectoral plan for education in one municipality (North) respectively. The UNESCO handbook defines a plan as identifying ‘the targets, activities to be implemented and the timeline, responsibilities and resources needed to realize the policy and strategy’ (Yano, 2013, p. 6). In the course of the data analysis, I decided to include only the PDDSE and the Plan2D in this thesis, as insights from the analysis of the plans at lower levels did not add much to the overall information. In addition, I examined the proceedings of the national conference in 1990. I also had access to the documentation of the Decentralisation Department within the MEMP, which existed from 2006 to 2016. The documents included official correspondence, working plans with budgets, decrees, reports, magazines and studies, among others. Table 4 summarises the policy documents which have been used for this study in the aforementioned categories.

	Education	Devolution
Normative framework	Constitution 1990	
	Education law 2003 (05), decrees	Devolution laws 1999, decrees
Public policies and strategies	Education strategy 2006 - 15	Devolution and De-concentration policy 2010
Implementing documents	Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation (Plan2D) at the national level	Provincial intra-sectoral plans (PDDI)

	Sectoral development plans (PSE) at the municipal level	Municipal development plans (PDC)
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Table 4 Overview of foundational and policy documents (author's compilation)

In addition, I examined the proceedings of the national conference in 1990 and had access to the documentation of the Decentralisation Department of the MEMP, which existed from 2006 to 2016. This documentation included official correspondences, working plans including budgets, decrees, reports, magazines and studies among others.

4.3.2 A note on elites

As this research focuses on interviewing elites, among others, I briefly discuss my understanding of the problematic concept of elites. In contrast to school actors, I considered all other research participants, notably national officials, appointed officials at sub-national levels, and elected officials at municipal level as elites because they potentially had high levels of knowledge of the subject and general intellectual and expressive abilities' (Herod, 1999). However, I first need to nuance my understanding of elites further before I discuss potential methodological implications of interviewing elites. I suggest that there is no single accepted definition of elites as it depends on the theoretical perspective of the researcher (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002; Burnham *et al.*, 2008).

Hence, scholars are divided about whether the construct of elites exists, if the boundaries between elites and non-elites are blurred or if there is no such thing as elite. Several proponents have developed distinct categories to classify elites, for example, according to the sector or geographical area they belong to. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) argue that elites might be perceived in terms of the power and privilege associated with certain individuals or groups. Herod (1999) considers the concept of elites as more open, related to level of experience and work, able to provide structured and well-documented information as members of particular organisations who often have an academic background and overseas experience. In contrast, postmodernist and feminist scholars plead that there are more commonalities between the elite and non-elite interview than might be assumed (Smith, 2006). This confluence is due to the conventional perception of power relations between the researcher and the researched, which Smith (2006) questions. From a poststructural perspective, not only is the definition of elite problematic but so is the transfer of professional power into the interview space. Even though I do not consider myself a poststructuralist, I borrow certain ideas, such as the Foucauldian concept of power, implying distance from the notion of elites.

The discussion of elites, in terms of the sampling strategy used, refer to the sample from the relevant institution and professional role/ area of expertise. It was not possible to include further criteria, such as gender or age, at higher levels because senior male officials mainly dominated the administration. At municipal and school level, however, I included gender to ensure female and male administrators and teachers' perspectives.

4.3.3 Research context and participants

The data production in the field consisted of semi-structured interviews with three Ministries at different levels: the MEMP, the MDGL and the MPD, their de-concentrated sub-units at provincial, and, in the case of pre-school and primary education, at the municipal level. The municipalities - the only devolved level - schools and IOs are further key institutions where I conducted interviews with key informants.

The research participants included high- and middle-ranking education, decentralisation and planning officials, teachers, and the parents of students and members of teachers' unions. I categorised them broadly into state (appointed) and municipal (elected) officials, and interviewed state officials at the national, the provincial and the municipal level from three different sectors. The main focus was on how officials from the MEMP understand and put into practice the decentralisation policy, but I also included officials from the MDGL and the MPD to clarify their perceptions regarding the emergence, formulation and how that policy was mediated. At the institutional level, I talked to parents, teachers, headteachers and members of teaching unions.

- *Government officials at central level:* This category included high-ranking officials from the MEMP, the MDGL and the MPD. I mainly interviewed the heads of relevant departments as well as other high-ranking officials in key positions in charge of education decentralisation. Overall, I interviewed 17 central government officials.
- *Appointed officials at provincial and municipal level:* Appointed officials included high and middle-ranking officials of the prefecture, the provincial planning authority, the provincial school authority and the local school authority. I interviewed the head of each institution, such as the governor as well as the heads of sectoral authorities and further officials in charge of particular aspects related to education decentralisation. Overall, I consulted nine appointed officials at the provincial and municipal level.
- *Elected officials at municipal level:* Elected and employed officials by the municipality present a further participatory group. I interviewed heads and civil

servants from the relevant institutions and services, particularly the deputy mayor in charge of education, the general secretary and the technical official in charge of municipal development. Altogether, the discussions were with six elected and employed officials from two municipalities.

- *School actors:* At the institutional level, I conducted four Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with three to four teachers in an urban and rural setting. For each focus group, I invited one female and one male teacher from the pre-school and one female and one male teacher from the primary school to participate. In some cases, fewer teachers were available, or more men/women were present due to the gender balance of teachers in each school. Moreover, I held individual interviews with the head teachers and representatives of the parents' association and a representative member of a teaching union for each school. Summing-up, I spoke to four head teachers (all female), 13 teachers (six female and seven male), three representatives of parents' associations (all male) and two representatives of teachers' unions (all male).

International Organisations as 'secondary' data

I interviewed IOs, including bi- and multilateral agencies as well as international NGOs, because they were influential actors in the development and the implementation of the decentralisation policy. I used IO data as secondary data for two reasons. First, it was important to me to prioritise the voice of national and local government officials, teachers and parents rather than IOs. Secondly, the historical knowledge potential of IOs often seems to fade because of the rotation of staff working for IOs. For this study, I included the Swiss and the German development (bilateral), and the European Commission and the World Bank (multilateral) in the sampling because they currently support the decentralisation reform. It would have been valuable to include the French bilateral agency because they were involved in developing the devolution laws together with German bilateral agency in the 1990s, but I was not able to access informants.

4.3.4 Location

The study took place at two major sites, which I broadly categorise as South (Cotonou and Porto Novo) and North (Parakou and N'Dali), which is relevant for the lower levels of data production (from provincial to school level). At the national level, the data production took place in Cotonou, where two of three ministries relevant to this study, and the STP are situated, as well as Porto Novo, where the MEMP is located. Both cities are positioned in the South of Benin. Porto Novo, which is the political capital, is also the provincial capital of Ouémè-Plateau

province. Cotonou, the largest city in Benin and often called the ‘economic capital’, is in the provinces Atlantique-Littoral. At provincial level, the North has four provinces: Borgou- Alibori and Atacora-Donga. I decided to choose a province in the Northeast of Benin for two reasons: first, Borgou- Alibori has the poorest results for access to education and achievement. Second, the Swiss development agency supported specific education plans at the municipal level in eight municipalities in these regions. I selected this province because I was interested in how the education-specific and the municipal development plans interrelated with each other and how they were enacted in practice.

At the municipal level, I chose Porto Novo in the South for pragmatic reasons: it is the headquarters of the MEMP, and the other two ministries are situated at a distance of 35km. As two out of the three research questions targeted ministerial officials, it was important to me to live near these ministerial institutions. To minimise the logistical challenges, I decided to conduct interviews with provincial and municipal officials and teachers, as well as parents in the same field site. In the North, I choose the municipality of N’Dali concerning the availability of education-specific development plans at the municipal level, the existence of an education forum, and the security situation. Most municipalities in these provinces have a municipal education plan; however, are situated in areas the French Embassy recommended avoiding because of security issues (e.g. the kidnapping of foreigners). N’Dali was located in a secure region and had a municipal education plan and a municipal education forum during the period of the data collection. Table 5 below provides an overview of all municipalities in the Northeast of Benin and the criteria I used to decide the sampling strategy.

Province		Existence of municipal education plan	Existence of an education forum	Headquarters of the local school authority	Risky for foreigners
Borgou	Kalalé	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Nikki	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Pèrèrè	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	N’Dali	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Tchaourou	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Sinendé	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Bembèrèkè	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Alibori	Malanville	Yes	Yes	Yes	-

Table 5 Selection of municipalities in Borgou-Alibori with particular characteristics regarding education and the security situation

As the chapter 2 has shown, the socio-economic and the education situation in Benin significantly differ according to the nature of the municipality as well as its geographical location in the North or South. Consequently, I suggest that the selection of the Northern and the Southern field site offers a maximum variation case, which can help to cover the various circumstances of the study process and outcome (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In each municipality, I choose two schools, one pre-school – and one primary school for each. In the North, I sampled one semi-urban pre-school and primary school in N'Dali and one rural pre-school and primary school in the district of Gbégourou, which was the closest rural district to the N'Dali municipality. In the South, it was not possible to sample urban and rural schools, as all the schools were within the city of Porto Novo. Instead, I sampled one school in the centre of Porto Novo and one school in the periphery. I also took into account the infrastructure situation of the schools within the municipality based on the MEMP statistical yearbook (MEMP, 2016a). In light of the legal framework for transferring the responsibility for school infrastructure to municipalities, I was interested in how the municipality, the local school authority and the school interacted to provide classrooms and equipment. I chose schools whose data indicated that they do not have sufficient classrooms or were missing equipment (e.g. tables and chairs). The third criteria concerned gender and I privileged female-headed schools over male-headed schools as women are underrepresented in this study.

This section has outlined the sampling strategy in terms of the research context and participants, the policy documents and the location. The next part outlines the data collection methods and processes.

4.4 Data production

The research draws on qualitative data and is divided into two steps: firstly, I collected, reviewed and examined the texts of the decentralisation policy and related documents; secondly, I conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups at different levels of the pre-school and primary education system to generate the data, which the respondents produced. These two data sets inform the research in response to the research questions: chapter 5 is mainly informed by the documentary evidence, whereas chapter 6 is mainly informed by the data from the interviews and focus groups. Chapter 7 discusses both documentary and interview data. I consciously use the term 'data production' to refer to the interview data rather than 'data collection', borrowing from Mannay (2016, p. 22) the idea that 'data is produced 'with' participants' instead of 'about' them in interviews.

4.4.1 Methods

Franklin (2012, p. 51) describes methods as ‘addressing particular method techniques’ in larger research designs. For this study, I used policy documents, semi-structured interviews and FGD as well as visual and participatory methods to collect data. I conducted all the interviews and focus groups in French language.³⁶ The different interview schedules of the groups with the details of the interviews can be found in the appendix 9.5. When research participants authorised the recording of the interviews and focus groups, the discussions were audiotaped. In this section, I review the literature on documentary reviews, interviews, notably elite interviews, FGD and participatory visual methods.

4.4.1.1 *Documentary review*

The documentary review preceded the conduct of interviews and focus groups. As indicated in section 4.3.1, I analysed normative, policy and implementation documents. Before the analysis of documents, the authenticity and credibility of the document need to be verified as the first step as Scott (1990, p. 7 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 253) puts it: ‘How representative, typical and generalizable the surviving document may be.’ Some scholars criticised documentary analysis, however, for privileging a top-down view. The documentary analysis may also focus too much on factual knowledge.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest taking into account the text and its broader context in order to work out the meaning of a document. Several scholars have focused on language and form and especially language and discourse to explore the meaning of a document. Besides this focus, the document needs to be considered in the broader educational, social, political, economic and other relationships of the particular time of the document. Cohen et al.’s approach to documentary analysis reflects Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework for examining policy texts, the discursive and the social practices, as discussed in section 3.2.2.1 and illustrated in chapter 5 in terms of deconstructing the discursive nature of the policy of decentralisation, including the incremental and implementation plans.

While an interpretive perspective on documentary research considers the document as a phenomenon, which has been socially constructed, a critical approach focuses on social conflict, power, control and ideology (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). CDA subscribes to a critical

³⁶ The process of translation from the empirical data in French to the written-up thesis in English can be found in section 4.7.2.

research paradigm. Therefore, I foreground the issues of conflict, power, control and ideology in this chapter manifested in the discourse. The next section explains my approach to interviews.

4.4.1.2 *Semi-structured interviews*

For this study, I used semi-structured interviews as a flexible and powerful tool for research and particularly suitable to interviewing elites. Semi-structured interviews leave room for discussion to allow interviewees to give their opinions. Burnham et al. (2008) propose that semi-structured interviews are more appropriate than, for example, structured interviews, although elite interviewing is not about a particular interview technique. As for the definition of elites, scholars are divided as to whether interviewing elites needs different strategies from interviewing non-elites. Some argue that elites may have more professional and personal power than non-elites, and that power impacts positively on the conduct of the interview. They argue that interviewing powerful research participants leads to better data because the power difference between the interviewer and the interviewee is usually less compared to the relationship between interviewer and less powerful research participants. As elites hold a certain amount of power, the interview might have, what Kvale (2006) calls, an ‘agonistic character’ compared to, for example, a more empathetic interview with less powerful research participants. By virtue of the ‘approximate egalitarian power distribution’ and the acknowledgement of power differences and conflicts’ in these kinds of interviews, Kvale (2006, p. 486) argues, that a different kind of knowledge, possibly of better quality, can be produced. Similarly, Herod (1999) argues that elites might also provide ‘better data’ because of their educational background and former institutional affiliations.

On the other hand, some scholars consider there are challenges in interviewing powerful research participants. Ball (1994b, p. 113 original quotation marks) considers the interview with powerful policy-makers as ‘an extension of the “play of power”’ and therefore as more challenging, but also richer to interpret’. Wang and Yan (2016) suggest, for example, that elites might be less easy to manage within the interview space because they might question the interview process or try to exert counter control strategies. From a similar perspective, McHugh (1994) argues that powerful research participants have more power to circumvent questions or, according to Kvale (2006, p. 485), to use counter strategies; for example, ‘not answering or deflecting questions, talking about something other what the interviewer asks, or merely telling what they believe the interviewer wants to hear’. Consequently, interviewing the powerful might intimidate the interviewer, which might limit the conduct of the interview, Walford (1994) argues. Elites might also embed the topic within pre-existing discourses dominant in their institutions or discourses influenced by IOs agendas, for example.

It is important to stress that the theoretical perspective of the researcher determines if and to what extent interviewing elites and non-elites is different concerning the methodology and ethical considerations. From a post-modernist viewpoint, there is not much difference between interviewing elites and non-elites as not only are the definition of elite and the positivist notion of the interviewee as the knower problematic, but so is the transfer of professional power into the interview space. Smith (2006) argues that there are more commonalities between interviewing elites and non-elites than might be assumed. These commonalities are not the same in different cultural contexts, I argue, although I generally agree with Smith that professional power can only partially be taken into the interview space and is dependent on other factors, such as time, space and the personality of the interviewee, among others. Similarly, Gubrium (2002, p. 28) states that the ‘postmodern trend in interviewing [...] blurs the line between the interviewer and respondent, moving beyond symmetry to a considerable overlap of roles’.

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) advise combining elite interviews with non-elite interviews to study how power is exercised between different social groups. Therefore, this study also covers focus groups with head teachers, teachers, students’ parents, and members of the teachers’ unions, which I discuss in the next section.

4.4.1.3 Focus groups including visual and participatory methods

In chapter 6, I used focus group data combined with visual data production methods to explore the perception of practices about devolved responsibilities, particularly school infrastructure. I used focus groups at the institutional level for two reasons: firstly, they are economical in terms of time when it is not feasible to interview all the relevant actors at institutional level on a one-to-one basis. Secondly, they make it possible to discuss a topic in a focused way. Generally, focus groups are carefully selected research participants who discuss a topic together, from which data primarily emerges from the interaction between members of the focus group and not with the interviewer (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

I consider the visual and participatory tools to be methodological instruments by which to explore the perceptions of how teachers understand and mediate education decentralisation at the local level. The objective in producing the visual and participatory methods was not to achieve a picture reflecting the reality of the process itself, but rather to visualise the multiplicity of perceptions of the research participants. Mannay (2016) understands the objective of using participatory visual methods as eliminating the conceptual and practical filters of the researcher. This objective points to the underlying assumption of inclusive practice associated with

participatory methods in giving voice to participants, and hence, allowing for the production of more authentic data.

I borrowed the actor-maps from the cooperation management book of GIZ (2014) but adapted it to the practicalities of this research. In using the concrete example of school infrastructure as the main devolved responsibility to municipalities, I explored the understanding of the actors involved in the delivery of pre-school and primary education at the local level. Mannay (2016) distinguishes between three types of creative approaches: found images and narratives, researcher-initiated productions and participatory productions. I locate the adapted actor-map in between researcher-initiated and participatory productions. Although I consciously neither contributed to nor intervened in the group process, I had to facilitate the exercise and provided elements, such as the guiding questions.

The participatory visual instrument formed the first part of the focus group, with a follow-up discussion between the participants, prompted by open-ended questions, forming the second part. Mannay (2016, p. 20) as do other scholars, insists that ‘the visual needs to be embedded and understood in and within narrative forms’. That is why I followed-up the ‘actor-map’ exercise with open-ended questions about how school actors understand and enact education decentralisation.

After introducing the study objectives and the formalities, I used three steps; inviting the research participants to extend the actor-maps, visualise the actors involved and the process of building pre-school and primary schools. First, I asked the research participants to identify all the actors involved in the process of school construction and write them on post-its. Second, I asked them to locate these actors’ physical location in relation to the centre, which was labelled ‘decision-making’, close to the centre when they considered them influential in terms of providing school infrastructure, and further away when they considered them as less powerful. Third, I asked the research participants to outline the process of how a school is built, but also to visualise the relationship between the actors, e.g. if the relationship between actors in this process was unilateral or reciprocal, cooperative or not, and where major tensions existed.

In line with ANT, the actor-maps were also particularly suitable to make the material dimension of associations or the role of non-human processes clear. Even though the first step consisted of identifying (human) actors in the process of school building, the research participants did not limit themselves to these, but integrated corporate bodies, i.e. the Beninese government, a loose aggregate of institutions, i.e. NGOs, or individuals, i.e. benefactors (cf. also Latour, 2005). The various and messy ways of building and extending existing school buildings can be

considered as processes and how the various actors and processes act upon each other. Their resistance or convergence can be considered as further assemblages, which are part of the broader actor-network (cf. section 3.2.2.2). The next section outlines the process of conducting the interviews and FGD.

4.4.2 The process of conducting interviews

In this section, I discuss some of the methodological and ethical challenges involved in accessing the research participants, conducting the interviews and mediating the power relations in the context of interviews and focus groups.

4.4.2.1 Negotiating access

Generally, access and entry to the study site are important and sensitive issues, particularly in the context of elite interviews. Acknowledging the importance of getting approval and consent of hierarchies, I first presented this study's purpose to all three ministries and asked for research authorisation. I received the research authorisation, generally signed by the cabinet director, within some delay. Getting the approval and consent of hierarchies, in the first instance, the concerned Ministries, is not only a bureaucratic requirement but also a cultural necessity in the context of a strongly hierarchical society such as Benin. As Festinger and Katz (1966 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, pp. 82–83) argue, 'there is a real economy in going to the very top of the organization or system in question to obtain assent and cooperation'.

The network from my previous work with GIZ and the generosity of some ministerial officials in sharing their contacts and networks helped me to access the research participants. Generally, access at central level was fast and easy. I could organise an interview within a few days through a phone call, but the procedure slowed down at the lower levels, as I sent a letter to introduce the research project, including the research authorisation, information sheet and consent form. While the research authorisation did not seem to be of particular importance at the national level, it became more important when accessing research participants at lower levels, because it not only confirmed the validity of the research but also the consent of the top of the hierarchy.

To access schools, I asked the head of the relevant CS to introduce me to the head teacher of the previously identified school. Then, the head teacher helped me to organise the FGD with teachers.

4.4.2.2 The conduct of the interview and focus groups

In the context of interviews and focus groups, I took an approach reflecting my knowledge of their culture and ways of engaging in meaningful dialogues. This empathetic approach is in line with Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2003, p. 32) arguing that ‘sensitivity and empathy of the researcher are highly significant to the outcomes’. Moreover, I kept the semi-structured interviews flexible by adjusting to the preference of each research participant: in some cases, I only introduced the research topic, completed the consent form and the interviewees immediately started to reflect on education decentralisation. I focused the conversation by asking questions where appropriate. In other cases, I used an interview outline to structure the discussion chronologically. This procedure is in line with Moyser and Wagstaffe’s (in 1987, p. 18 Odendahl and Shaw, 2002, p. 310) recommendation that the ‘degree of structure or directiveness’ of the interview depends on ‘which data-generation strategy best fits the particular research design and theoretical problems’.

Time and place proved to be important factors in the conduct of interviews and focus groups. Instead of conducting interviews in the office during work hours, I occasionally asked interviewees to meet me outside their office space and work hours, e.g. for lunch in a restaurant nearby. Some scholars argue that conducting the interview outside the office brings richer data in the sense of ‘sensitive or subtle ideas’ (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002, p. 304). Additionally, power dynamics might be more manageable outside the interviewees’ offices as research participants may be more relaxed and less likely to play power games (Ball, 1994b). Although these interviews tend to have fewer interruptions and the interview can be more conversational, my experience showed that this was not always the case. I conducted interviews in formal office spaces and during work hours which went equally well. Overall, I concluded, however, that non-formal spaces outside work hours contributed to the smooth conduct of the interview facilitating open and in-depth discussions and insights.

For the FGD, I presumed that the use of actor-maps would partially allow me to transcend the official discourse and provide a more diverse picture of social practices at the local level. The finished maps presented an excellent starting point for the subsequent discussion to examine how research participants framed actors, their relationships and the process of school construction. However, I was not always able to clarify the tensions and contradictions that emerged from the two data sets, neither in the process of conducting the FGD nor in the analytical process.

The actor-maps as visual participatory methods did help to balance the power relations between the research participants and myself to enable a lively discussion between the research

participants. As noted by Mannay (2016), participatory visual methods can reduce but not transcend relations of power. Indeed, power dynamics took place within the group; for example, a senior male teacher seized more time to speak than his younger or female colleagues did. In addition, even though I stepped back from my central role as interviewer, my presence still influenced the dynamics of the group, which highlights the importance of mediating power relations in interviews.

4.4.2.3 Mediating power relations in the interview space

Overall, I talked to a wide variety of research participants in terms of their power and had to adapt to different participants and contexts. Hence, ‘tensions of identity and positionality vis-à-vis the different participant groups’ emerged (Srivastava, 2006, p. 211). While I tried to present a more ‘professional persona/profile’ to high-ranking senior officials, I identified differently with teachers, telling them about my past as a primary teacher, for example. Srivastava (2006, p. 214) suggests that the ‘[f]ield identities [of the researcher] have to change, adapt and be mediated’ in relation to the research participants. Similarly, McDowell (1998) recommends being very sensitive in the interview process concerning the changing positions of the interviewer and the interviewee. In that regard, I remained aware that this procedure could equally reinforce the power differences between research participants and myself.

A point I want to emphasise is that power was not fixed in any interview situation. From a structuralist perspective, potentially powerful people did not necessarily play power games, but potentially less powerful people sometimes did. More specifically, I observed that officials in higher positions tended to play down their power more than middle-ranking officials in less influential positions or they used power differently, e.g. in questioning the interview questions. I assume that the potentially more powerful participants were confident of their position and power; also, they might be used to being involved in research. From my experience, I suggest that power is fluid, which requires flexibility in the interview space because of changing positions. I adopted Gubrium's and Holstein's (2002) position who advocates an alternative approach to power in the interview space. According to them, if the interviewer and the interviewee are both considered as interview participants, power can be redistributed. In this case, both sides can raise questions, and answers are not considered as conclusive.

Following the process of data production, I now discuss the process of analysing the different data sets.

4.5 The data analysis process of interviews and focus groups

For data analysis, I followed Nowell et al.'s (2017) proposal of the six phases for analysing qualitative data thematically: first, I familiarised myself with the data, second, I generated initial codes, third, I searched for themes, fourth, I reviewed the themes, fifth, defined and named the themes and sixth wrote-up the thesis. I was also inspired by the three levels of analysis of Samuel (2016), which are the descriptive, the evaluative and the theoretical. First, the descriptive level asks what the field revealed. Second, the evaluative level interrogates what sense I make of the data and the findings respectively. Third, the theoretical level invites the question: 'how does what I found link to the existing literature and the theoretical framework' (Samuel, 2016, p. 26)?

The data analysed consisted of 28 transcribed interviews and FGDs, summaries of all 70 interviews, and the main policy documents, the PONADEC, PDDSE and Plan2D.³⁷ The principal analysis of the 'oral and visual data' after fieldwork was carried out with the help of the qualitative software tool, NVIVO, which built upon the previous analysis of field documents, which I undertook using hardcopies of the policy documents, post-its, pens and highlighters. To have the full body of data in one place, however, I also included the policy documents in NVIVO afterwards.

The interviews were conducted in French, and hence, the transcriptions are in French language, too (cf. appendices 9.6.1 and 9.6.2 for two examples), but I provide the original quote in footnotes for every in-text quote in English. Most of the interview transcriptions were outsourced to save time and concentrate on the analysis. However, I did transcribe two significant group interviews at the beginning and the end of the data production process myself, and checked the accuracy of all interview transcripts from listening to the audiotapes. I also wrote-up summaries of each interview and FGD in a research journal (in English), which contributed to the familiarisation process with the data.

4.5.1.1 Familiarising myself with the data

During the field works, I built up a 'close' relationship with the data as I conducted and documented all my interviews and FGDs myself. Firstly, the documentary analysis informed the interview process. For each level and sector, I analysed the policy documents first before

³⁷ Please refer to sections 4.3.1 and 4.4.1.1 for the analysis of the policy documents as the documentary review preceded the conduct and analysis of the interviews and focus groups.

conducting the interviews, e.g. the PDDSE before interviewing national education officials or the municipal development plans before interviewing elected officials.

4.5.1.2 Generating initial codes

My research journal also contained short reflections on the data close to when it had been collected. When I re-read the summaries and initial reflections in the research journal as well as listened to the audiotapes, I highlighted and noted emerging ideas, such as control by the central state. These codes I allocated to these ideas remained open, initial and substantive (Samuel, 2016). During fieldwork, I developed a table (cf. table 6) where I documented initial ideas in response to the three research questions, some of which became themes later. The original research map was divided into institutions and levels to figure out if particular groups, for example education officials at central level, had a viewpoint other than central decentralisation, or planning officials about the question of control and autonomy.

Actors	Education	Decentralisation	Planning	IOs	Observations
Research question 1 The emergence of the policy	- e.g. tension between the internal vision versus external influence				
Research question 2 Formulation of the policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - e.g. discursive ownership of the policy - the divergent understandings of de-concentration and devolution - how sectoral and intra-sectoral local development plans interrelate with each other 				
Research question 3 Mediation of the policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - e.g. centralisation trends by the current government - cultural issues as a hindering factor - the role of donor-aid and the NGOisation of education 				

Table 6 Initial table of codes (March – June 2017)

4.5.1.3 Searching for themes

Back from the field, I first analysed the data without software through the commentary function of Microsoft Office word, annotating each interview transcript. Second, I used the data management software NVIVO to manage the large amount of data more efficiently. I built up the project of this research and imported all the data defining sources, nodes and classifications. For developing themes, I used the conceptual framework and the research questions, such as the political factors or understandings of decentralisation. Themes also emerged while listening to the audio records and reading the interview transcripts. Subsequently, I was able to add relevant

queries to the case nodes, and ask, for example, if teachers in the Northern field site had a different understanding of decentralisation to that of teachers in the Southern field site. These procedures helped to identify and refine the themes of this study. Figure 9 represents a mind map with all the themes of the research project. I used the research questions as the basic structure, and added further themes, which had become dominant in the data, such as cultural conditions or questions of power, spatial and temporal issues.

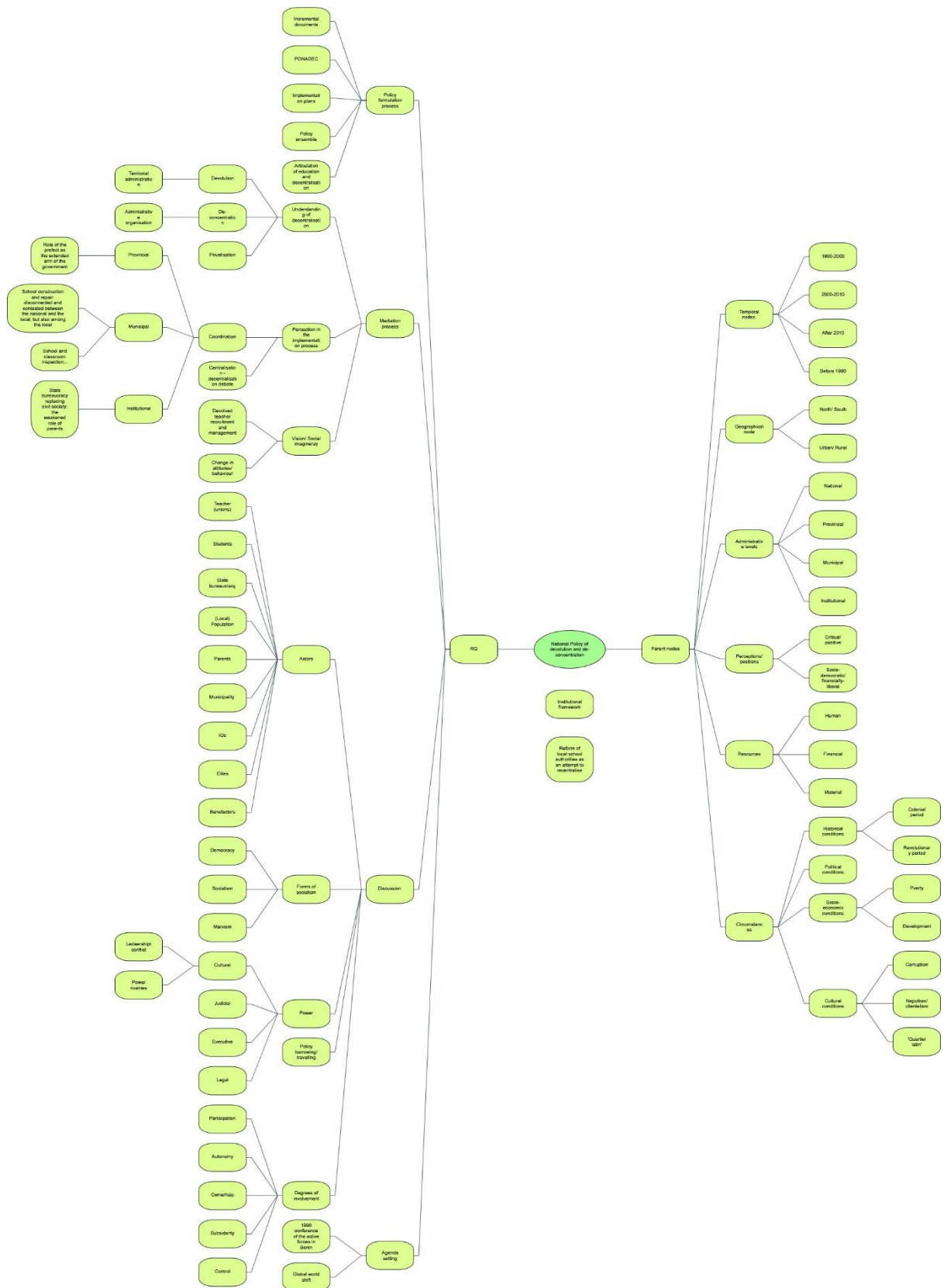


Figure 9 Themes from the NVIVO project

4.5.1.4 Reviewing themes

Reviewing themes checked whether the coded nodes/ themes were accurate and valid. As the next section shows, I used theoretical, methodological and spatial triangulation to ensure the validity of the data. I furthermore conducted a variety of queries in NVIVO to compare the themes generated from actor groups (education-decentralisation-planning; national-provincial-municipal-institutional), locations (North-South, urban-rural) and sources (interviews and documents). Figure 10 shows a diagram of the municipality in the North compared with another in the Southern municipality identifying some of the differences that emerged in the different field sites. I also used free writing and other creative approaches to support my analytical process (Elbow, 1998). For example, I took particular themes, such as autonomy and control, and wrote freely for five to 10 minutes on the issue. This type of exercise helped to reflect more freely about the data, before linking it back more closely to the empirical data.

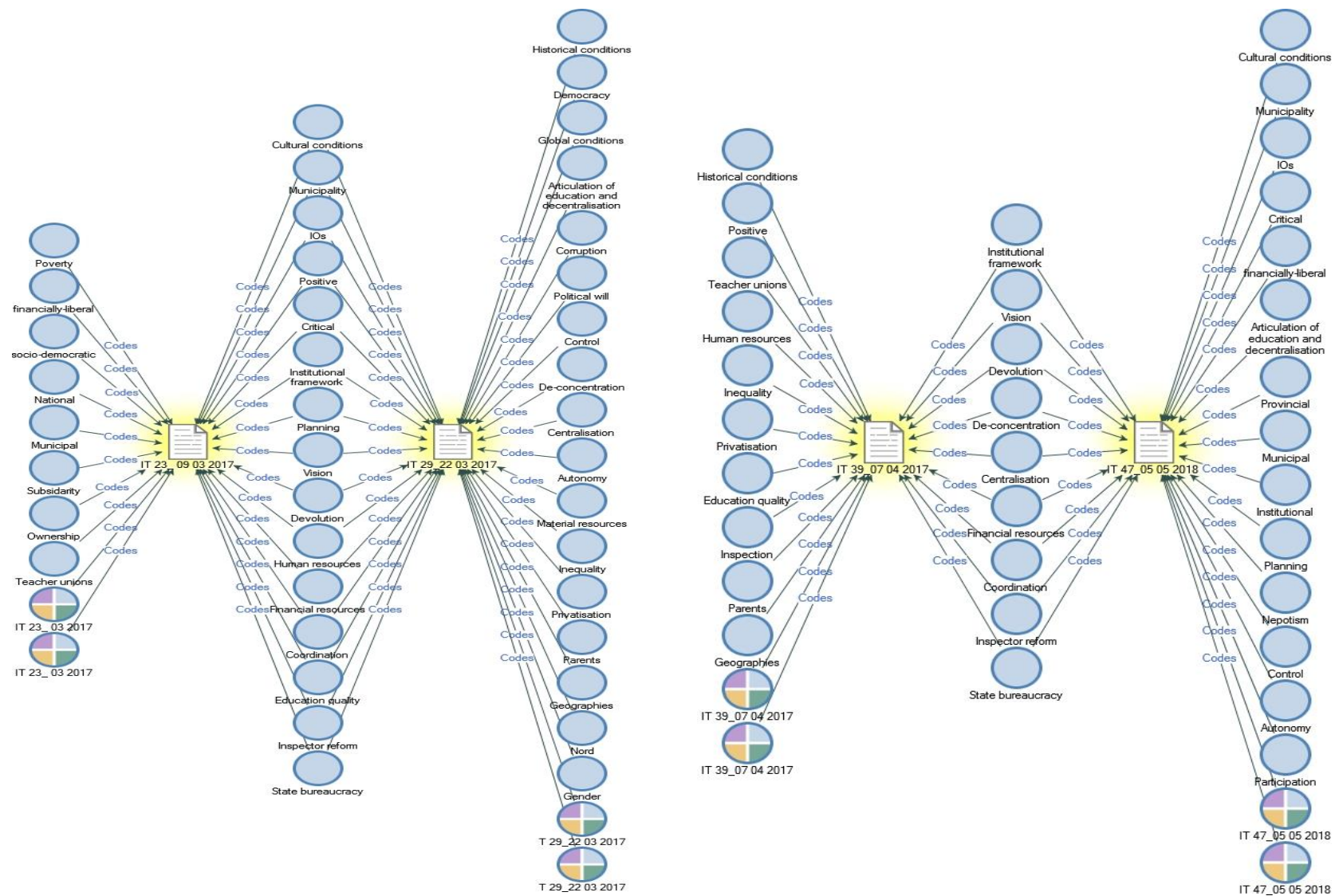


Figure 10 Comparison of nodes in the Northern and Southern field sites

4.5.1.5 Theorising the data

Nowell et al. (2017) propose the fifth step is defining and naming themes. However, I suggest calling this step the theorisation of the data, informed by the theoretical framework of the thesis. This procedure is more aligned with Samuel's (2016) approach to data analysis, which distinguishes the descriptive, the evaluative and the theoretical levels of the analysis. For theorising the data, I used CDA and ANT respectively to analyse the data (cf. chapter 3). In chapter 5, I predominantly used CDA to analyse the PONADEC and related documents. I used Fairclough's (1995, 2010) three-dimensional model of CDA to show how the policy is constituted discursively. At the textual level, I examined the patterns of transitivity, the use of active and passive voice, the thematic structure of the text, the information focus and the cohesive devices based on the textual analysis of Halliday's (1994) *Introduction to Functional Grammar*. At the discursive level, I examined the production process of the policy, e.g. actors who were in charge of developing the policy. The social analysis covered the wider political and socio-economic climate, within which the policy production process took place.

Chapter 7 is informed by ANT (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). I used the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 as the starting point to unfold the actor-networks. This event can be considered a local event for understanding education decentralisation as a global phenomenon (first move). Starting from the actor chosen, I then explored this actor and the human and non-human actors that related to it, which coheres with the second move: redistributing the local (second move). The interviews and the analysis of the documents provided ways to identify these human and non-human actors. In this research, I identified lived events, such as the fall of the Berlin wall; historical determinations, such as colonialism; concepts, such as devolution and de-concentration; and individuals and groups, such as elites, the local population and IOs as human and non-human actors. In the next move to connect data sites, I clarified the connections, e.g. how the 1990 conference and the elites in exile relate to each other, and how did incremental documents, such as the constitution (1990) or the General States of Territorial Administration (1993) emerge from that interplay?

4.5.1.6 Producing the thesis

The sixth stage consists of producing the thesis. It points out the insights regarding the research problem and the research questions in relation to the wider literature and the theoretical framework (Samuel, 2016). I discuss the findings of education decentralisation in Benin in the context of Ball's (1993, 2015) policy frameworks, informed by CDA and ANT respectively, in

the findings chapter, and provide a synthesis and an answer to the ‘so what question’ in the conclusions.

This section explained how I analysed the data. In the next section, I discuss the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as alternative notions to validity and reliability.

4.6 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) propose that the key criteria of validity in qualitative research are credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability) and confirmability (instead of objectivity). These four key criteria inform the trustworthiness of the results and conclusions of a project, which means evaluating its worth. I ensured the credibility of my findings through prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation of different production methods and consequently, of results. By *credibility* (internal validity), I understand confidence in the 'truth' of the findings by experts in the area of education decentralisation and the particular research context (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). I spent seven months in the field to collect the data in 2017, but I had previously worked and lived in Benin for almost four years. Therefore, I believe that I was familiar with the particular research context, even before starting the data collection.

The research aims to describe and explain, as fully as possible, the ‘richness and complexity’ of education decentralisation as a social phenomenon by studying it from more than one perspective. Denzin (1970 in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 196) distinguishes different types of triangulation, such as time, space, theoretical and methodological triangulation. As the methods section 4.4.1 shows, I used pre-dominantly *methodological* triangulation through using different methods - a documentary review, bi- and multilateral interviews and FGDs including participatory visual methods of the same object of study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 195) define methodological triangulation as ‘the use of two or more methods of data production in the study of human behaviour’. In addition, I triangulated the data *theoretically* by using two different approaches to analyse the data, ANT and CDA. I also used spatial triangulation in that I sampled two municipalities with very different characteristics in the South and the North of Benin (cf. chapter 2).

Transferability (external validity) signifies the applicability of the findings in other contexts under expressed specificities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research privileges internal validity over external validity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), which quantitative research does not. In that regard, I have not focused on the *transferability* of my qualitative

research findings, though I used thick descriptions, first introduced by Geertz (1973), to support the findings. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) explain thick descriptions as when a researcher describes a phenomenon in as much detail as possible so that conclusions can be transferred to other times, settings, situations, and people. Some of my findings might be *transferable* (i.e. be relevant to) to other contexts of education or governance issues respectively, particularly in francophone West African countries. For example, the data collection at school level through FGD and visual participatory methods allowed for detailed descriptions of the substantive of education decentralisation, but also for the particular contexts and dynamics in which I conducted these discussions. Overall, I emphasise, however, that the locus of this research is the national context of Benin and the insights remain *context-dependent*.

As qualitative research allows multiple interpretations of and meanings given to situations and events, the concept of dependability is important. *Dependability* (instead of reliability) implies that the findings are contingent and tentative in particular contexts and with particular participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Dependability is most often associated with inquiry audit or audit trails. Audit trails can refer to documenting and recording the methodological conduct of a study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). I used a reflexive journal during the fieldwork, which not only summarised the main aspects of each interview and FGD but also included methodological adjustments, such as the revision of the sampling strategy at the local level. In addition to the raw data in the NVIVO project, including the audio records, transcriptions and summaries of the interviews and FGD, the notes on the process of analysing the data can serve as a tool to help other researchers to (re-)construct the findings of this study. Following from this, I assume that another observer with the same theoretical framework and observing the same phenomena would come up with similar interpretations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

I addressed the confirmability of this study through triangulation on the one hand (cf. above), and reflexivity on the other. Confirmability (instead of objectivity) sees the role of the researcher as an instrument of the study shaping the analysis. It points to the researcher's critical engagement with their own positionality and power (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). As a reflexive researcher, I acknowledge that I am part of the social world that I research, and that this social world has already been interpreted. I remain aware of my selectivity, perception, background and the inductive processes and paradigms potentially shaping the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

4.7 Ethical concerns

This section addresses the ethical concerns. More specifically, it explains how I ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents and how I used and stored the data. Finally, I discuss the methodological implications emerging from conducting the data collection in French but analysing and writing-up the thesis in English.

4.7.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity are key issues in the context of research ethics. I followed Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 76) who argue that ‘informed consent requires full information about possible consequences and dangers’. This requirement is based on respect for the research participants’ dignity and their rights to freedom and self-determination. The authors also draw attention to the fact that ‘informed consent implies informed refusal’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 78) which means that the interviewees can refuse before or withdraw their participation without explanation up to the point when the thesis is submitted.

Appendices 9.3 and 9.4 are the information sheet and a consent form used before conducting the interviews and FGDs. The information sheet explains the study in detail, why the research participants were selected to participate in the study, the procedure adopted for the interview and FGD, but also the implications of participating in the research (benefits and risks). The consent form, signed by the research participants, indicate their willingness to be interviewed by the researcher, that the interview can be audiotaped and transcribed and a copy made available to him/ herself. It also asks participants to be available for a further interview should that be required. It highlights the key ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the agreement to adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (Parliament, 1998).

I assured the participants of the confidentiality of the information they provided on the information sheet as well as on the consent form. Guaranteeing the confidentiality of the data implies not disclosing ‘information from a participant in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 92). In line with Odendahl and Shaw (2002), I created identifiers through numbering the interviews chronologically (1, 2, 3 etc.), stating the sector and the level, e.g. national/ education, and added the date when the interview took place. This procedure makes it difficult for third parties to link the research data to the research participants.

Questions of anonymity are especially sensitive when interviewing elites as they are more likely to be identifiable (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002), and therefore the information they provide

might be traceable. I consider this study as sensitive concerning the identity of the research participants. For example, I included particularly high-ranking officials in specific departments of the MEMP, for example, the head of department x. This interviewee, even without his/ her name being disclosed, could be easily identified due to his/ her unique position. As explained, I used composites, e.g. numbered interviews, level/ sector, date and generalised the function of research participants in the chronological overview of the interviews and FGD (cf. appendix 9.2), e.g. senior or junior official to preserve anonymity.

Finally, the research records are held according to data protection guidelines of the Data Protection Act 1998 (Parliament, 1998). I stored the participant's names and addresses securely and separately from the research data. While the research data is stored on an external disc, the list with the interviewees' contact details is stored on a password-protected computer. I coded all the place names and institutions which could lead to the identification of individuals or organisations.

This section has shed light on different dimensions of the research ethics (external, consequential, deontological and individual), questions of confidentiality and anonymity and the use and storage of the data. The subsequent section deals with the potentials and challenges of doing research in a different linguistic context.

4.7.2 An excursus to translations

This study took place in a multilingual context. While the PhD has been completed at a UK university, the data production took place in Benin. Benin has source-depending up to 52 local languages, but the official language and language of instruction in school is French. As I interviewed high- and middle ranking officials as well as teachers, I conducted all my interviews in French language. I acknowledge that the translation process for this study is embedded in a particular socio-cultural context. Although I am a native German speaker, due to my extensive period of study and work experience in Francophone contexts, I consider myself linguistically competent in the French language. In addition, I have some socio-cultural knowledge of the Beninese context, although I acknowledge that this is limited.

In this section, I follow Temple's and Young's (2004, p. 164) suggestion that translation is 'part of the process of knowledge production' in the interpretive paradigm. Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010, p. 17) define translation as 'the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language'. They point to several challenges that arise in conducting qualitative research in bi- or multilingual contexts, such as maintaining accuracy when translating,

but also the time-consuming and resource-intensive aspect of translations. However, I believe that the translation processes can also benefit the researcher as Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010) put it:

the process of translation and transliteration can widen the academic audience for a piece of research without jeopardizing its validity (Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington, 2010, p. 22).

In that regard, I aim to make my thesis or parts of my thesis available in both languages, French and English, targeting not only scholars but also practitioners in the field of education and development.

Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington (2010) distinguish between literal translation, which implies word-by-word transcriptions and consequently translations, and piecemeal or free, elegant translations where ‘only the key themes or issues that emerge in the process of translation are transcribed’ (Birbili, 2000 in Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington, 2010, p. 21). I decided to adopt the conceptual equivalence approach borrowing from Flaherty et al. (1998) for pragmatic reasons (saving time and resources), which implies that terms have ‘the same meaning and relevance in two different cultures’ (Regmi, Naidoo and Pilkington, 2010, p. 20). For example, I translated particular concepts, such as *compétence* in French into *responsibility* in English instead of using the term with the same linguistic origin *competence*. The concept *responsibility* seemed to fit better in the context of education decentralisation, as this is the dominant term used in the scholarly literature.

I first did ‘forward translations’ of the research instruments, such as the information sheet, consent form and interview guides, which were then edited and proofread by a francophone researcher. Second, I conducted and transcribed all interviews in French, whereas the research journal, including the summaries of each interview, were written-up in English. This bilingual procedure was a first step to compare the accuracy of my understanding of key terms and themes. I analysed all the data in the original language but developed codes in English. When writing-up my analytical chapters, I only translated the quotes I used in the written text. As this procedure indicates, I moved progressively from French to English language.

I acknowledge the risk of losing or changing meaning through the process of free translation. For accuracy, I asked other bilingual researchers to double-check the translation to reduce errors. Their feedback and our discussions were valuable for critically reflecting on various meanings and connotations in the translation process. However, I acknowledge that translations add a further layer of interpretation. For transparency, I kept the original quotes in the footnotes that readers could reconstruct the translation process.

The last section of this chapter discusses how I position myself to the study and how I understand and practised reflexivity.

4.8 Positionality and reflexivity

In this section, I provide a thick description of myself, my values, ideological biases, relationship to the participants and closeness to the research topic. It captures some of my reflections about power and positionality in the active research space. The nature of the social world and power relations is implicit in every research project as research is the result of the social interaction between the researcher and the researched (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005). I raised questions such as did I consider myself an outsider or rather an insider, and did I navigate between these potential identities.

My positionality is formed by different identities: as a German doctoral student in a UK university; my previous work experience as an advisor in different positions for GIZ in Benin; my belonging to a Beninese family, since my husband is from Benin. As a student, I was a non-threatening interviewer, which may have facilitated access to the research participants. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) suggest that researchers perceived as ‘relatively harmless’ might more easily gain access to the research participants, which possibly enabled my respondents to be clear about their decision to participate in the research. Being acquainted with some research participants was most helpful in the sense that I already had their trust. Yet, some research participants considered me in still in my GIZ advisor role rather than as a doctoral student, and so tended to reproduce the official discourses. When I felt being addressed as a GIZ advisor rather than as a Sussex student, I diplomatically reiterated my new role and recalled that I could not address certain concerns in my new role.

I also observed that most of the research participants gave more importance to my belonging to a Beninese family than to my previous professional work background. Many of them considered me ‘one of theirs’, and consequently spoke to me openly. For example, one interviewee reasoned: ‘I would like to support you in your research. A Gbaguidi, one cannot refuse a service. My wife is from Savè.’³⁸ Besides, the last name of my husband, which I used to gain access, is common in Benin, associated with intellectuals in the past. Being married and having a child enhanced my status in the cultural context of Benin. Although Benin is often

³⁸ *Je veux bien vous appuyer dans votre recherché. Un Gbaguidi, on ne peut pas refuser un service. Ma femme est de Savè.*

described as a patriarchal society, where older people have a higher standing than younger people have, I enjoyed a certain recognition because of my dual social and Westerner status.

Informed by Kerstetter's (2012) argument below, I consider myself both an insider and outsider, simultaneously noting that the two complement each other. She suggests that research should 'move beyond a strict outsider/insider dichotomy' to underpin the relative nature of researchers' identities, depending on the specific research context' (Kerstetter, 2012, p. 100). On the one hand, I was particularly aware of my involvement with the Beninese educational system in my previous professional work in the country and also the benefits of my family connections. This experience allowed me to develop insider familiarity with the social and cultural contexts necessary to carry out this research. However, I also benefitted from temporal distance due to my professional affiliation and role, which together with my new identity as a research student at the University of Sussex and my Western background, placed me in an outsider position. According to Ganga and Scott (2006, p. 1), this 'increases awareness amongst both researcher and participant of the social divisions that exist between them' while 'paradoxically [...being] an insider [...] affords the researcher a degree of social proximity'. This proximity, nonetheless, is affected by 'the researcher's position, ideas and experiences' as an interpretive paradigm would suggest.

4.9 Summary

The methodology chapter first introduced a discussion of research paradigms. Instead of restricting myself to a particular paradigm, I chose 'fluid explorations' and 'paradigm proliferation' pointing to many different, smaller paradigms. I loosely draw on post- and critical paradigms, foregrounding issues of power and how discourse is interrelated with political purpose, from the critical paradigm on the one hand, and discourse as inseparable from the subject from the post- (structuralist) paradigm on the other (Samuel, 2016).

The research design covered the sampling; I discussed how I sampled the research participants and policy documents. I also explained the sampling criteria for the two field sites of the study, in the Southeast and the Northeast of Benin, both with very distinct characteristics. In particular, I introduced the controversial notion of elites throughout this chapter.

The research design consists mainly of semi-structured interviews (individual and group interviews), FGDs, including participatory as well as visual methods and documentary analysis. Discussing the process of data production, I reflected on negotiating access and the conduct of interviews and focus groups, and also how I dealt with the power relations. Following from that, I (re-) introduced two approaches to analysing the data: first CDA, for the formulation of the

decentralisation policy, and ANT informing the sixth and seventh chapters. Overall, I explained the six stages of data analysis, from familiarising myself with the data to writing up the thesis.

I proposed credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability) and confirmability (instead of objectivity) borrowing from Denzin and Lincoln (2011) instead of the quality criteria of validity and reliability. The chapter then reflected on the ethical obligations and concerns, particularly for guaranteeing anonymity in the context of interviewing high-ranking officials. I furthermore discussed the limitations and advantages when translation is involved in the study since I collected and analysed the data in French, but I have written-up my thesis in English.

In the last part of this chapter, I reflected on my positionality, notably my different identities as a doctoral researcher from a UK university, my previous work background in development and my belonging to a Beninese family. Shedding light on these different identities, implying different positionalities, I consider myself both an insider and outsider, simultaneously noting that the two complement and support each other.

The next chapter de-constructs the policy of decentralisation and its wider policy ensemble, starting with normative documents, followed by the policy, and subsequently implementation plans.

5 A discursive analysis of education decentralisation

This chapter is a discursive de-construction of the PONADEC and other documents related to the second dimension of Ball's (1993, 2015) policy framework, the policy production process. The first research question explored how the decentralisation policy is discursively constituted, and how it related to the broader policy ensemble, with the focus on the three stages of the policy cycle: first, the incremental documents, such as the constitution, the decentralisation and the education laws; second, the PONADEC, which is the unit of analysis of this chapter; and third, the Education Sector Strategy as well as the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation. This chapter also addresses how the analysis of the policy text speaks to the post-colonial condition, which I understand in discursive and material terms, as explained in the literature review (cf. chapter 3).

In this chapter, I predominantly focus on policy as discourse. Discursive practices involve the process of text production, distribution, and consumption (Fairclough, 1995, 2010). By incremental, I refer to the common occurrence whereby 'policies are usually built on or developed out of previous policies' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 9). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest that policy-making always has incremental links to previous (policy) documents, as state structures and policy history are continuous elements. Moreover, Taylor et al. (1997, p. 97) propose that there 'is always a prior history of significant events, a particular ideological climate, social and economic context.'

This chapter follows a chronological order to make explicit how education decentralisation was built up incrementally. Firstly, it analyses the legal framework of education decentralisation; secondly, it focuses on the de-construction of the policy of decentralisation; and thirdly, it discusses how education decentralisation was translated into forming the PDDSE and Plan2D. The next section starts with the analysis of the incremental documents, notably the constitution and the laws (education and decentralisation).

5.1 De-constructing the legal framework for decentralising education

The policy formulation process of PONADEC goes back to the legal framework for education and decentralisation as well as the constitution. More precisely, the devolution and de-concentration policy has incremental links to the constitution of 1990, the General States of Territorial Administration (*Etats Généraux de l'Administration Territoriale*) of 1993, the Devolution Laws (*Lois de décentralisation*) of 1999 and the Education law (*Loi d'orientation de l'éducation*) of 2005 (revised). I analysed these documents to examine when and how the concept

of decentralisation had been introduced into policy documents and how the idea of decentralisation is mirrored in the education law of 2005. This analysis mainly utilises the second dimension of Fairclough's three-dimensional model (cf. chapter 3), which focuses on aspects of intertextuality and coherence within and between documents. In addition, I analysed the particular vocabulary used in these documents and examine the structure of the texts, which is part of the first dimension.

5.1.1 The Constitution of 1990 enshrined education and decentralisation

The Republic of Benin adopted its current constitution, considered as 'Supreme Law of the State', by referendum on 11 December 1990 (République du Bénin, 1990b). The former president of the Republic (Mathieu Kérékou), the Prime Minister and incoming president (Nicéphore Soglo) and, the Minister for Justice and Legislation (Yves Yehouessi) signed the constitution as documented in the conference proceedings (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994). Despite the formal signature of Beninese high-ranking politicians and officials, the constitution can be considered as a joint product of the Beninese government and IOs. A redaction commission under the leadership of Professor Maurice Glele-Ahanhanzo, a legal advisor of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), designed and wrote the constitution (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994).

The constitution is permeated by Western concepts, with emphasis on liberty, democracy and human rights, which may point to the influence of global actors. For instance, the constitution mentions Benin's commitments to democracy in article 5; to human rights in articles 7, 19, 40, 53, 114, 117, 120 and 121; and opens the possibility for privatising education in article 14³⁹, which can be understood as a form of decentralisation (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). According to Fairclough (2010, p. 272), values are linked to style (the way of being). They serve to constitute an 'authorial identity', although most often they are implicitly expressed through value assumptions and ideologies, and have, therefore, a pervasive nature.

The 1990 constitution marks a shift from the socialist regime to a liberal democracy. I suggest that the adoption of the constitution in 1990 represents a 'crucial tension point', what Fairclough (1995) refers to as moments of crisis because the constitutional transition comes after a 'turbulent constitutional and political evolution since its accession to independence' (République du Bénin, 1990a, p. 3). The transition from 'People's Republic of Benin' instituted in November

³⁹ Religious institutions and communities shall be able to cooperate equally in the education of the youth. Private schools, secular or parochial, may be opened with the authorisation and control of the State. The private schools may benefit from state subsidies under conditions determined by law (République du Bénin, 1990a article 4).

30, 1975 to the Republic of Benin on March 1, 1990, is built upon the following premises: ‘to find again the place and role as pioneer of democracy and defender of human rights; [...] to create a State of law and plural democracy; [...] [to] [r]eaffirm our attachment to the principles of democracy and human rights’ (République du Bénin, 1990a, p. 3).

Although precursors of decentralisation pre-existed the democratisation process in 1990, this constitution is the first document to enshrine the idea of decentralisation in its current form. The constitution introduced the legal existence and role of the municipalities which have legal and financial autonomy, as a senior decentralisation official explained:

The constitution of 11 December [19]90 had already instituted the creation of territorial authorities [municipalities] through its articles 150, 151 to 153. Elected bodies administer these territorial entities freely, and the State works to contribute to the harmonious development of the territories by putting all the necessary means [at their disposal] to allow an inter-regional balance (article 153 of the constitution). This constitutional mechanism remains the bedrock for the creation of the territorial authorities (I11, national/ decentralisation, 26 01 2017).⁴⁰

The constitution as a policy text introduces the municipality⁴¹ as a new actor or, as the interviewee puts it, the municipality is the ‘bedrock’ for the creation of territorial authorities. Elected bodies administer these territorial authorities, which have both financial and legal autonomy. This form of decentralisation coheres well with political decentralisation because it implies municipal elections and provides the elected bodies a degree of autonomy (McGinn and Welsh, 1999; Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007).

Article 98 of the constitution states that the rules concerning: [...] the electoral system of the President of the Republic, the members of the National Assembly and the *Local Assemblies*; the territorial organisation, the creation and the modification of administrative districts, as well as the appointment of electoral districts [...], are the domain of the law. The law determines the fundamental principles which are [...] the *free administration of territorial authorities*, of their responsibilities and their resources (République du Bénin, 1990a).⁴² Hence, decentralisation is anchored in the constitution through the institutional creation of municipalities, and is an essential starting point in the formulation process of PONADEC.

⁴⁰ *La constitution de 11 décembre 90 a déjà à travers les articles 150, 151 à 153 revu la création des collectivités locales. Que ça soit des entités territoriales qui s'administrent librement par des organes élus et prévu que l'Etat travaille à concourir au développement harmonieux des territoires en y mettent tous les moyens qu'il faut pour permettre l'équilibre interrégional (article 153 de la constitution). Ce dispositif constitutionnel reste un sous-bassement de la création des collectivités locales.*

⁴¹ I use the terms municipalities, territorial collective and territorial authorities interchangeably.

⁴² *Article 98 Sont du domaine de la loi, les règles concernant: [...]de la libre administration des collectivités territoriales, de leurs compétences et de leurs ressources.*

The constitution only introduces the idea of municipalities gradually. The table below (cf. table 7), which is an excerpt from the constitution, shows that article 98 mentions ‘territorial authorities’ for the first time, while only articles 150 to 153 at the end of the constitution detail the role of future municipalities. The municipalities administer themselves freely (art. 151) and have financial autonomy (art. 152) (République du Bénin, 1990a). The idea of territorial administration and the principle of ‘free administration’ are new and have yet to be naturalised in a Faircloughian sense. For example, Woodside-Jiron (2011) shows in her policy analysis how familiar elements relate to new features to naturalise the latter. Introducing a new concept this way helps to naturalise it (Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 1995).

ARTICLE 150	Territorial units of the Republic shall be created by law.
ARTICLE 151	These units shall administer themselves freely by elected councils and under conditions provided by the law.
ARTICLE 152	No expenditure for the sovereignty of the State is charged to their budget.
ARTICLE 153	The State shall watch over the harmonious development of all the territorial units based on national solidarity, regional potentialities, and inter-regional equilibrium.

Table 7, Extract from the constitution (République du Bénin, 1990a, pp. 31–32)

The constitution raises a tension between the role of the State to ensure the ‘harmonious development of all municipalities’ (Article 153) and the principle of the ‘free administration’ of these (Article 151) (République du Bénin, 1990a). A retired representative from a bilateral agency, who was involved in supporting the elaboration of the devolution laws, pointed out that free administration is not to be confused with autonomy. He suggests that the municipality is a legal body, but not autonomous ‘as often claimed’ (I60b, IO, 04 06 2017). In his working paper about the History and Principles of Devolution and De-concentration in France and Germany, within reference to Benin, states

The term municipal autonomy sometimes evoked a centrifugal tendency toward the independence of the municipalities or towards the formation of “republiquettes”⁴³ which threatened to balkanise the national territory and endanger the principle of republican unity (Schneiderfritz, 2004, p. 4, own translation).⁴⁴

⁴³ The term “republiquettes” can be understood as many smaller units of a Republic.

⁴⁴ *Le terme d'autonomie communale évoquait parfois une tendance centrifuge vers l'indépendanciation des Communes ou en direction de la formation "republiquettes" risquant de balkaniser le territoire national et de mettre en danger le principe de l'unité républicaine.*

In contrast, Nanako (2016, p. 353) suggests that the 'principle of the free administration of local authorities has not been fortuitously constitutionalised' in the Beninese context. He does understand 'free administration' as implying autonomy and suggests that the free administration in francophone SSA could not resist the claim of unity and indivisibility, implying a strong central state on the one hand, and a limited transfer of responsibilities to lower levels, on the other.

Moreover, the 1990 constitution recognised the importance of education as a human right. In particular, articles 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the constitution refer to education issues. The constitution states that 'the State guarantees its citizens equal access to education' (article 8), 'ensures progressively free education' (article 13) and that 'education is a shared responsibility between the State and the municipalities' (article 12) (République du Bénin, 1990a). In terms that are more precise it points out that:

[T]he State and territorial authorities guarantee the education of children and to create favourable conditions for this purpose (République du Bénin, 1990a, p. 5, own translation).⁴⁵

Although the constitution laid the foundations for decentralisation through elected bodies at the municipal level, it remains silent about how education and decentralisation relate to each other. Only in 1999 did the devolution laws specify how education was to be shared between the central and municipal government entities, as shown in the next section, which presents an analysis of the devolution laws.

5.1.2 The legal framework: education as a shared responsibility

This section examines the relevant articles in the education and devolution laws after a short overview of the genesis of the legal framework. The formulation of the devolution laws took place between 1993 and 1998, when the National Assembly adopted them (MDGL, no date). The legal framework for the new territorial administration consists of five laws⁴⁶, more than 25 decrees (*décrets*) and around ten orders (*arrêtés*). They define the organisation of the municipalities, the advisory role of the prefectures in support of the municipalities, the funding of the municipalities and the actors at the central level (MDGLAAT, 2008). The education law was adopted in 2003 and revised in 2005.

⁴⁵ *L'Etat et les collectivités locales garantissent l'éducation des enfants et créent les conditions favorables à cette fin.*

⁴⁶ *loi n°97-028 portant organisation de l'administration territoriale de la République du Bénin*
loi n°97-029 portant organisation des Communes en République du Bénin
loi n° 98-005 portant organisation des Communes à statut particulier
loi n° 98-006 portant régime électoral communal et municipal en République du Bénin
loi n° 98-007 portant régime financier des Communes en République du Bénin.

5.1.2.1 *Devolved responsibilities for pre-school and primary education remain limited - the case of school infrastructure*

The devolution laws transfer two areas to the municipality: the construction, equipment and repair of public pre-school and primary education institutions (article 97) and, the promotion of education for young people (article 98). Article 97 of the law (97-029) states that the municipality is responsible for the construction, equipment and repair of public institutions for pre-school and primary education and their maintenance (MDGLAAT, 2010). It clarifies the role of the state, which is to transfer the necessary resources to the municipalities, which as chapter 6 shows, is highly contested. As indicated in chapter 2, the education and devolution laws fit together for school construction in that the education law states the requirement of quality school infrastructure, and the devolution laws transfer this responsibility to the municipalities. However, the education law does not mention devolution explicitly (Assemblée Nationale, 2003).

What emerges from the data is that school construction used to be managed locally but informally by parents. In the ‘absence’ of the State, a student’s parent provided either the resources or the labour to build schools in their village and to employ community teachers. In a focus group that touched on the role of parents in the construction of schools before the decentralisation reform, some teachers made this point:

I said earlier that parents of students did that [built schools]. At the beginning of the school year, [...] when we collect contributions, the parents give something. Afterwards, the director calls the parents' association. Well, we found so much, the school needs so much. So they take sand, cement. We call the bricklayer (I43, institutional, 20 04 2019).⁴⁷

Parents not only helped to build schools by supplying materials, such as sand and cement, as well as their labour, they also employed community teachers. The president of the municipal parents’ association explains that parents paid community teachers when the state was unable to provide government teachers:

It was before Yayi [the former president between 2006 and 2016], even the first two, three years of Yayi. We paid all the gaps in terms of teachers, the hourly mass of individual contractors; it is the example [where] the parents of students paid (I40, institutional, 12 04 2017).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Je disais tantôt que ce sont les parents d’élèves qui ont fait ça. A la rentrée, souvent à la rentrée quand on fait souscription là, les parents donnent quelque chose. Après, avec l’association des parents d’élèves, la directrice les appelle, le bureau APE. Bon on a trouvé tant, l’école a besoin de tant. Donc ils prennent sable, ciment. On appelle maçon.*

⁴⁸ *C’était avant Yayi. Et même les deux, trois premières années de Yayi. C’est nous qui payions. Tous les gaps en matière d’enseignants, les masses horaires des vacataires, c’est l’exemple, c’est les parents d’élèves qui payaient.*

While teacher recruitment has been fully centralised recently, through the integration of community teachers into the formal recruitment system, school construction has become the responsibility of the municipality. The responsibility for school construction used to be decentralised, even though it shifted from the village to the municipal level and from civil society actors (parents) to elected officials (town council). This observation raises the question of the purpose of developing the devolution laws in light of the previous organisation of school construction. However, it can be argued that the decentralisation policy is an attempt to counter-balance certain neo-liberal trends since the democratic renewal in the 90s, such as the privatisation of education, when the state shifted the responsibility from the state to non-state actors.

The devolution laws are not only restricted to what used to be locally managed in the past, but also mainly limited to school infrastructure. This gradual transfer of responsibilities is consistent with the literature on education decentralisation, which advocates decentralising certain areas before others, e.g. school construction before teacher recruitment and management (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). A national representative of the mayors argued that the devolution laws only devolved a small set of responsibilities to the municipal level, as the following quote shows.

This reform also involved the delegation of certain skills to the municipalities. Upon further observation, the skills delegated to the municipalities are not fundamental, that is pre-school and primary education. We handle pre-school and primary education, the municipalities build, equip and repair schools. Moreover, the State, the [central] government decides on the curriculum. The [central] government recruits and assigns the teachers. That, I think, is what is meant by fundamental: building classrooms, it is true that it is important. However, I do not think that it is the most important aspect (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).⁴⁹

In other words, the transferred responsibilities, notably school construction and the education of the young, are limited compared to what is centrally managed, such as teacher recruitment and management or curriculum development. Gomez (2010) confirms that the responsibilities of the municipalities in Benin are not only limited to pre-school and primary education but exclusively limited to school construction, equipment and repair. Nonetheless, devolving school infrastructure, which requires the municipality to fund and build schools, raises

⁴⁹ *Cette réforme passait par aussi la délégation de certaines compétences aux communes. Et quand on regarde bien, les compétences déléguées aux communes ne sont pas les compétences fondamentales, enseignement maternel et primaire. Nous sommes dans l'enseignement maternel et primaire, les communes construisent, équippent et réparent. Et les programmes d'enseignement, c'est l'Etat, c'est le gouvernement qui décide. Les enseignants à recruter, à déployer, c'est le gouvernement. Ça, je pense que c'est ce qui est fondamental : construire les salles de classe, c'est vrai c'est important. Mais je ne pense pas que ça soit le plus important.*

questions of equity, as the economic and financial capacities of municipalities varies significantly, as he points out.

In the next section, I point out that other devolved responsibilities remain vague, which results in a multiplicity of practices, as discussed in the subsequent chapter (cf. chapter 6).

5.1.2.2 *Devolved responsibilities remain vague - the case of the education of the young*

The second article of the devolution laws (029-98), which deals with the education of the young, remains vague and is understood and implemented differently in the field. As the excerpt below shows, the second article gives the municipality the responsibility to initiate all measures to stimulate and promote the education of the young but without specifying what kind of activities are referred to.

The municipality initiates all measures likely to favour and promote the education of the youth (MDGLAAT, 2010, law 97-029, article 98, own translation).⁵⁰

The lack of specification opens the door to multiple interpretations. For instance, a junior official of the municipality in the North (I30, municipal/ decentralisation, 22 03 2017) understood this article to mean ‘developing activities for economic growth’, while officials from the municipality in the South (I47, municipal/ decentralisation, 05 05 2017) thought it referred to ‘supporting leisure time activities for young people’. These diverging interpretations could lead to different foci or emphasis for implementation.

Gomez (2010) suggests that the reason for a multiplicity of interpretations and social practices could be because the relevant articles, 97 and 98, have never been translated into regulations, which complicates their application. In contrast to his perspective, I suggest that article 98 could be interpreted as a symbolic transfer of responsibility to the municipality because the education of the young is seen as beneficial to the municipality, but not as crucial as, for example, having school buildings or school teachers. Transferring less important tasks to the municipality may be convenient for central government officials, who want to hold on to power when it relates to financial power.

The last sub-section of the analysis of incremental documents discusses how the limited and vague legislation in relation to a rather weak limits the application of the devolution laws.

⁵⁰ *La commune initie toutes les mesures de nature à favoriser et promouvoir l'éducation de la jeunesse.*

5.1.2.3 Vague legislation in relation to a weak

The legislation remains not only vague, but municipal actors do not access the judicial branch of the government. Although mayors can take the government to court in cases where the government fails to respect the devolution laws, they are able to avoid doing this as the national representative of the municipalities of Benin explains.

The elected, that is to say, the mayor is given the possibility of bringing before the courts questions about issues he is unclear about and that the governor favours merit to. These courts can be, for example, the administrative chamber of the Supreme Court [...]. However, no mayor has ever assigned a governor to the court for the peaceful resolution of various situations. [...] Mayors are not inclined to do so; they will not spontaneously appeal for justice. It is bad. [...] They do not [assign a prefect] because they fear that the governor will find [an irregularity] during controls, since such is the power of the prefect. The governor has the power to control the legality of acts that the mayors take and put into effect. Therefore, the mayors fear that the prefect, in this function, will uncover something illegal. As a result, they avoid calling attention to themselves (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).⁵¹

The mayors fear the consequences of their action as the prefect, who represents the government at the provincial level, can exercise power through the legal responsibility to control the legality of acts undertaken by the municipality (cf. chapter 6).

The controversial role of the judiciary has to be considered in relation to the previous discussion about the principle of free administration, as instituted in the constitution (cf. section 5.1.1). Nanako (2016) suggests the problem is that the municipalities in Benin do not administer freely, but are anchored to the weak judiciary responsible for ensuring the application of the devolution laws. The constitutional judge does not help to guarantee the effectiveness of the free administration of local authorities despite the clarity of the constitution, he argues.

5.1.3 Summing up

The five devolution laws (97-028, 97-029, 98-007, 98-005, 98-006), adopted in 1999, can be traced to the General States of Territorial Administration in 1993 and the Constitution in 1990. The constitution (1990) instituted the creation of local authorities and the General States (1993) detailed the administrative division of Benin into 12 provinces and 77 municipalities. The analysis

⁵¹ *Et la possibilité est même donnée à l'élu c'est-à-dire au maire de porter devant les juridictions, les questions qui lui paraissent floues sur lesquelles le préfet fait du zèle par exemple devant la chambre administrative de la cour suprême. [...] Mais bon, dans les faits, et pour une gestion apaisée des différentes situations, aucun maire n'a jamais assigné un préfet en justice. [...] les maires ne, sont pas enclins, ils ne vont pas spontanément saisir la justice. C'est mauvais [...] Ils le font aussi parce qu'ils craignent qu'on ne leur découvre tout de suite lors des contrôles puisque c'est ça le pouvoir du préfet. Le préfet a un pouvoir de contrôle de légalité par rapport aux actes que posent et prennent les maires. Donc les maires, ils craignent que le préfet dans son contrôle n'aille lui découvrir des casseroles. Donc en conséquence, ils sont, ils s'aplatissent un peu.*

of the education and devolution laws has revealed that devolved responsibilities for pre-school and primary education remain firstly, limited to what used to be managed locally, namely school construction; secondly, they remain vague and are not translated into regulations; and thirdly, a rather weak judiciary poses a challenge to municipal actors putting into practice the decentralisation policy.

Summing-up, the first section has de-constructed the legal framework of education decentralisation. The next part of this chapter analyses and discusses the policy of education decentralisation, which is the focus of this chapter.

5.2 A de-construction of the National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration

This part outlines some of the backgrounds to the production and interpretation of the national devolution and de-concentration policy, including a textual analysis of the policy, based on the two dimensions of Fairclough's (1995, 2010) three-dimensional model: discourse-as-text and discourse-as-discursive practice. More broadly, it sheds light on how and by whom the policy is produced and interpreted as well as on the discourses at work, including the discourses of globalisation, and their underlying values. Firstly, I address a shift in the conceptual understanding of decentralisation from devolution to de-concentration. Secondly, I analyse underlying ideologies and values, and thirdly, I contextualise PONADEC within the global setting.

5.2.1 The concept shifted away from the initial idea of devolution

The most significant change in the policy text of PONADEC compared to the emergence of the idea in 1990 is the prominent focus on de-concentration in the National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration (*Politique Nationale de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration*). Devolution (*décentralisation*) and de-concentration (*déconcentration*) appear nearly equal in the policy text. In this study, the partial shift of the workload from the central ministries to their sub-units at the provincial and municipal levels, which are accountable to the hierarchy, is de-concentration. On the other hand, devolution refers to the transfer of responsibilities and resources to the municipalities (Rondinelli, 1980; Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). The analysis shows that the policy gives equal weight to de-concentration and devolution, although each concept has different implications: devolution is about giving-up some power, whereas de-concentration implies that the central level is still in a controlling position.

The focus on de-concentration was also mirrored in interview discussions at the national level. While the interviewees mainly addressed *décentralisation* (implicitly understood as devolution) when referring to the agenda setting of 1990, nearly all of them emphasised the importance of de-concentration as mediating the decentralisation policy. Most officials at the central and provincial levels conceived de-concentration as a bridge to devolution.

For de-concentration, the central power continues always to exercise its prerogatives. De-concentration allows a good devolution (I20, national/ education, 02 03 2017).⁵²

De-concentration is a corollary of devolution ... When the national level keeps the resources, how can devolution be a reality? First, we need a true de-concentration policy (I36, provincial/ decentralisation, South, 04 04 2017).⁵³

The underlying rationale for de-concentration is to 'bring the central administration closer to the local population' (e.g. I6, national/ education, 18 01 2017). On the other hand, de-concentration may imply the consolidation of central state control at the lower levels. This second understanding is exemplified in the quote from the following MEMP interviewee who claims the 'right to inspection' (*droit de regard*) concerning devolved responsibilities.

This [the mixture of de-concentration and devolution] is another way of saying that the State is keeping an eye on what is being done through its de-concentrated structures in the context of transferred responsibilities to the municipalities (I20, national/ education, 02 03 2017).⁵⁴

In other words, the central state can exercise its control over devolved responsibilities through its de-concentrated sub-units. In effect, de-concentration allows the central state to indirectly monitor what it has transferred to the municipalities. The strong emphasis on de-concentration by government officials is understandable in this respect, as most officials at the central level do wish to exercise direct control and power, even though they have to delegate some aspects of power and control. It appears that central state officials feel threatened by devolution because it may reduce their power, whereas de-concentration allows them to be a counter-balance and control devolution.

⁵² Pour la déconcentration, c'est toujours le pouvoir central qui continu d'exercer ses prérogatives. Une déconcentration pour permettre une bonne décentralisation [...].

⁵³ La déconcentration est corollaire de la décentralisation... Lorsque les ressources sont gardées an niveau national, comment la décentralisation peut être une réalité ? Il faut une véritable politique de déconcentration [d'abord].

⁵⁴ [...] est une autre manière de dire que, l'Etat, en transférant des compétences aux collectivités, a ses yeux sur ce qui se fait à travers ses structures déconcentrées.

Not only did government officials argue that de-concentration has to be functional to make devolution effective; this same argument is also mirrored in some accounts of IO representatives, as the following quote illustrates.

Devolution has taken precedence over de-concentration in Benin. However, for a truly successful devolution, good de-concentration is needed. What we are saying [...] even if the texts were in the current state, if we had an actual de-concentration, we would not have this problem of monitoring the teachers and quality with the local authority (I18, IO, 21 02 2017).⁵⁵

As a government official, this IO representative considers de-concentration as the first step to devolution. De-concentration, in his words, allows the state to monitor the quality of education at the local level. This view contrasts with his previous comment where he suggests that devolution has become more critical than de-concentration.

The next section unpacks the vision, the objective and the strategic orientations of the PONADEC, extending my analysis to the third dimension of Fairclough's (1995, 2010) three-dimensional model - the social analysis. More specifically, it discusses how ideas of development, modernisation and (neo-) liberalism have informed the policy text.

5.2.2 The underlying ideologies of decentralisation

The underlying ideologies behind decentralisation refer to a discourse of development and modernisation. Moreover, the reform subscribes to a hybrid mix of social, liberal and neo-liberal values.

5.2.2.1 *The development discourse behind decentralisation*

The policy text is underpinned by a particular understanding of development. For instance, the PONADEC vision emphasises the role of the municipalities in delivering democracy, governance and development. The policy text says:

Giving [the] territorial authorities space for *grassroots democracy, good governance and sustainable local development* in the context of a devolved *unitary state* that ensures the *harmonious development of the national territory*, on the basis of national solidarity, access to basic services for all, developing regional potential and inter-regional balance (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 11; 32, own translation, italics added).⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *C'est la décentralisation qui a pris le pas sur la déconcentration au Bénin. Or, pour une décentralisation vraiment réussie, il faut une bonne déconcentration. Ce que nous sommes en train de dire la [...] même si les textes étaient en état actuel, si on avait une déconcentration, on n'aurait pas ce problème avec de suivi des enseignants et de la qualité avec l'autorité locale.*

⁵⁶ *Faire des Collectivités Territoriales des espaces de démocratie à la base, de bonne gouvernance et de développement local durable dans le cadre d'un Etat unitaire décentralisé qui assure le développement*

This vision points to the constitutional form of a unitary state ensuring a 'harmonious development of the national territory'. The role of the unitary state was also highlighted in the interview data and may be understood both in the context of Benin's previous political instability and its ethnic diversity (cf. chapter 2).

There were frequent coups d'états. This [instability] justified the fact that the then governors preferred to have a unitary state, strong and centralised, in the aftermath of independence until the coup of 75 (I11, national/ decentralisation, 26 11 2017).⁵⁷

Dafflon & Madiès (2008) propose that many decentralisation experiences in previously French-ruled Africa were in response to a desire to preserve national unity by taking into account tribal and local particularities. The vision is translated into an overall objective by:

Creating the institutional and organisational conditions for a sustainable and balanced territorial development based on concerted local governance and by enhancing the potential of territorial authorities to boost development at grassroots level' (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 11, own translation).⁵⁸

Development appears to be the overall aim, and socio-economic development at the municipal level is explicitly identified as the overarching goal of this particular policy. Similar to the vision, the objective links local governance with development and highlights the importance of '*balanced* territorial development' and '*concerted* local governance', which may suggest issues of equity and participation. I understand the '*balanced* territorial development' as concerns of equity because of the socio-economic disparities between urban and rural Benin as well between the South and North, but also in terms of its ethnic diversity. '*Concerted* local governance' may refer to the coordination of (local) actors and/or it may refer to the middle range of forms of participation following Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, which can be considered as degrees of tokenism.

The discursive link between decentralisation and development is also reflected in the interview data. Nearly all the research participants link their understanding of decentralisation to local development, suggesting that decentralisation enables development. A senior education official from MEMP explained that:

harmonieux du territoire national, sur la base de la solidarité nationale, de l'accès de tous aux services de base, des potentiels régionaux et de l'équilibre inter-régional.

⁵⁷ *Il y avait une fréquence de coup d'Etat. Cela a justifié le fait que les gouvernants d'alors ont préféré avoir un Etat unitaire, fort et centralisé au lendemain des indépendances jusqu'au coup d'Etat de 75.*

⁵⁸ *Créer les conditions institutionnelles et organisationnelles d'un développement territorial durable et équilibré reposant sur une gouvernance locale concertée et sur la valorisation des potentialités des collectivités territoriales afin de dynamiser le développement à la base.*

It is this policy that allows the central state to transfer a certain number of responsibilities to the local authorities and to sub-units that can help the development at the grassroots level (I20, national/ education, 02 03 2017).⁵⁹

In other words, transferring a limited amount of responsibilities to local authorities will empower people at the local level to manage their own development needs or agendas. Another education official from the provincial level shared a similar understanding and argued that:

If the state has to concentrate on all responsibilities, development is not possible through the elected [officials]. We have understood that we must [...] go down to provide the means to the population at the local level so that they can manage and identify their real needs as well as invest in them at this level. [...] The concern is to see the population participating in the governance of their locality for its development (I46, provincial/ education, South, 28 04 2017).⁶⁰

Interestingly, the idea that decentralisation will lead to (economic) development (at the local level) has been inscribed into the policy text and is echoed in the discourses of education officials. It seems, from the views expressed, that the idea of discursively linking decentralisation to local development is anchored in an influential speech by then French president, Francois Mitterrand, at La Baule in June 1990 (cf. chapter 7), in which he linked development and democracy to French aid (Gisselquist, 2008). In addition, development agencies have been presenting (liberal) democracies as a necessary pre-condition for development in the Global South (Hippler, 1994; Escobar, 2012).

5.2.2.2 *Decentralisation has been driven by ideas of modernisation*

PONADEC explicitly refers to decentralisation as a modernising project, as the following excerpt shows.

Decentralisation and de-concentration, therefore, will be the driving forces of State modernisation, one of the goals of which remains economic growth and the reduction of poverty ...' (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 9, own translation, italics added).⁶¹

⁵⁹ *C'est cette politique qui permet à l'Etat central de transférer un nombre [spécifique] de compétences aux collectivités locale et à des structures qui peuvent aider le développement à la base.*

⁶⁰ *Si l'Etat doit concentrer toutes les compétences, le développement n'est pas possible à travers les élus. On a compris qu'il faut [...] descendre à la base, donner les moyens à la population pour qu'elle se gère et puisse identifier leurs besoins réels et investisse à ce niveau. [...] C'est dans le souci de voir la population participer à la gouvernance de leur localité pour son développement.*

⁶¹ *La décentralisation et la déconcentration vont donc devenir les éléments moteurs de la modernisation de l'Etat dont l'une des finalités restent la croissance économique et la réduction de la pauvreté ; cf. also 'Assurer la mise en œuvre des principes de bonne gouvernance territoriale par une administration modernisée et efficace (p. 11) ; la décentralisation et la déconcentration sont les moteurs de la modernisation de l'Etat (p. 12) ; L'efficacité de l'administration au niveau déconcentré passe aussi par une rationalisation de l'organisation des services de l'Etat au niveau départemental (pp. 10, 47)' (MDGLAAT, 2008).*

The underlying idea of modernisation is to transform traditional societies into modern ones by adopting the dominant values of the West (Scott and Marshall, 2015). Models of economic growth, embedded in liberalism, are linked to the theory of modernisation, used to explain the process of modernisation within societies. A modernist view of progress underlies the concept of development, which again is the subtext suggesting underdeveloped regions and populations need to evolve into developed ones. According to Tikly (2019), the beginning of modernisation theory framed good quality education within a Western view of modernity.

The emphasis on equating modernity with decentralisation and liberal democracies is also mirrored in the documents of the German Development Agency, GIZ, and the Delegation of the European Commission as shown in the analysis of appendix 9.7. Decentralisation is a component of the EC's programme of 'Support for good governance for development'. Its overall aim, as documented in the National Indicative Program (EC, 2014), is the institutional modernisation of the country and the strengthening of the rule of law and participatory democracy.

Similarly, GIZ's aims are similar in its declaration paper for the modernisation of the country's system of governance.

We support platforms for the promotion of international exchange of experiences and for the development of approaches to modernize decentralized political and administrative systems (Lampe, 2017, p. 2).

GIZ considers modernisation as a challenge and offers support through advising countries on how to politically and administratively decentralise their systems of governance. Hence, I argue that both EC and GIZ consider modernisation as a challenge and offer their support to countries to modernise through decentralising their political and administrative systems.

The last section will examine the underlying approaches to the governance reforms, pointing to a hybrid mix of social, liberal and neo-liberal orientations.

5.2.2.3 Decentralisation: a hybrid mix of social, liberal and neo-liberal approaches

Social, liberal and neo-liberal arguments for de-concentration and devolution can be observed in the decentralisation policy, particularly regarding its strategic orientations. The policy text builds upon two arguments: strengthening the population's access to local services and improving economic development at the local level. 'Access of the population to local services' (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 7, 28) can be considered a neoliberal or a social argument: neoliberal because it views the citizen as a consumer or social because it strengthens the rights and needs of the grassroots population. The idea of 'economic growth' (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 10, 11; 31, 33,

34) can be seen as both liberal and neoliberal because it frames development in economic terms (cf. Edwards and Klees, 2015).

The following excerpt from the policy text, concerning the efficient use of public funds, illustrates this link.

Recalling the premises of decentralisation [...], decision-making in the field favours a better allocation of resources [...] and greater efficiency of public funding (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 26, own translation).⁶²

Apart from the emphasis on efficiency, this excerpt may furthermore suggest a financially motivated decentralisation reform. The content analysis of the document revealed that the term 'resources' appears 122 times in the policy text. This is indicative of the focus being on a liberally and economically driven decentralisation reform.

Furthermore, the values explicitly underpinning the policy, such as transparency, accountability, performance, results-based, ethics, professionalism, respect for rules and norms, monitoring and evaluation and the strict application of the law by all actors (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 35), point to a hybrid mix of liberal and neo-liberal rationales. While transparency, accountability, performance and results-based management represent typical values of development discourse, referring to a neoliberal agenda, 'respect for rules and norms' and 'the strict application of the law by all actors' subscribe to a liberal agenda with a strong emphasis on the existing institutions (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 35). As Edwards & Klees (2015) point out, a liberal government often co-exists with market-based approaches. These values suggest that decentralisation is about achieving economically driven development while strengthening the control mechanisms of the State.

5.2.2.4 Transition

In this section, I revisited the analysis of the discourses of development surrounding the decentralisation policy. The analysis so far has shown that PONADEC is interwoven with a particular understanding of development, underpinned by ideas of modernisation, on the one hand, and leading to (economic) development (at the local level) on the other. The underlying rationale for development policies is rooted in human capital and functionalist paradigms, leaving out national and local contexts, history and culture, as pointed out by Colclough (2012).

⁶² *Rappel du postulat de la décentralisation [...] la prise de décision du terrain favorisera une meilleure allocation des ressources [...] et une plus grande efficacité des fonds public.*

Moreover, decentralisation as a reform implies the notion of something lacking and reiterates the very notion of development by Escobar (2012). He considers development as a singular historical experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action. This discursive understanding of development implies certainty in the social imaginary of a shaped reality. I suggest that framing decentralisation as a modernising enterprise on the one hand, and as boosting development on the other, serves the development machinery and repeats the colonial rules.

Overall, this section has discussed how PONADEC has been framed by development discourses, such as discursively linking decentralisation and development, underpinned by ideas of modernisation. This section also refers to the discursive dimension of the post-colonial condition understood from a postcolonial and global perspective, as well as in terms of discourse and practice (cf. chapter 3). This examination calls for a further investigation of the policy in terms of local and global formations, which leads to the third section.

5.2.3 PONADEC: policy as a bricolage of local and global formations

In this section, I consider PONADEC as being part of a broader policy ensemble, leading to a textual analysis of global actors, and finally, consider the decentralisation reform in light of its (post-) colonial legacy. In this context, I understand bricolage as

[n]ational policy making [which] is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently 'ailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work' (Ball, 1998, p. 126).

5.2.3.1 *PONADEC is part of a broader policy ensemble*

The Policy of Devolution and De-concentration is informed by a broader policy ensemble, predominantly of global policies which have been translated to the national context. More precisely, I conceive PONADEC as part of a policy ensemble, e.g., the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 20, 22, 30, 39, 67), and international strategies, implying that 'policies are located in a collection of interrelated policies' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 8). For instance, PONADEC (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 30) states in its third sub-objective that 'Benin's territorial development is based on [...] people's access to basic services and the reduction of poverty defined by the MDGs'. Elsewhere, it refers to the MDGs in the context of financial transfers to the municipality (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 19–20, 22, 39), which should amount to between 4% and 16% compared to the less than 2% in 2010. Moreover, the Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (*Stratégie de Croissance pour la Réduction de Pauvreté, SCRP*) and the Strategic Development Orientations (*Orientations Stratégiques de*

Développement, OSD) are the key documents for PONADEC, with 17 and 14 references, respectively. For instance, PONADEC (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 9) states that ‘the fight against poverty is an integral part of the decentralisation policy’ with reference to the SCRP’. This observation may be understood as PONADEC attempting to increase its legitimacy through reference to international strategies while also incorporating a (neo-) liberal understanding of democracy emphasising the economic fight against poverty.

The network of international strategies translated into national strategies such as the SCRP and OSD, spawns a further analysis of additional global actors that fed into the decentralisation policy in Benin, as the next section will discuss.

5.2.3.2 *A textual analysis of global actors involved in the policy formulation*

A social and textual analysis revealed that global actors, such as development agencies and consulting firms, played a considerable role in the formulation of the policy of decentralisation. The Beninese-French-German tripartite agreement for the development of the devolution laws and the subsequent role of the French consulting firm *Institutions & Développement (I&D)* leading the formulation process of PONADEC, were important actors in shaping the decentralisation reform in Benin.

In the mid-90s, the ‘Tripartite agreement’ of cooperation between the Beninese, French and German governments, represented by the French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement, AFD*)⁶³ and the German Development Agency GIZ, formed a powerful network for developing the devolution laws. As appendix 9.7 demonstrates, the website of the French Development Agency, supported by secondary literature, suggests that AFD tends to consider the role of the state as pre-dominantly one of redistributing resources and prioritising support to local authorities today. They refer to their expertise and experience of decentralisation on their website, while Dafflon & Madiès (2008) classify France as constitutionally unified with a centralised budgeting system.

In contrast, the analysis of the position of the German Development Agency points to a federal form of decentralisation (Lauglo, 1995; Dafflon and Madiès, 2008), referring to its governance system as ‘Bundesländer’ and ‘Landkreise’. GIZ's approach can be categorised as liberal based on Edwards & Klees framework (2015) because they emphasise the role of the

⁶³ No official position paper on decentralisation is publically available for the French development agency. Instead, the elements in this section come from AFD commissioned reports (Dafflon and Madiès, 2008, 2011). AFD states that the report does not necessarily reflect their official position.

central and local government in participation (cf. appendix 9.7). The textual analysis of these agencies suggests that there are divergent perspectives on how to advise Benin to develop its devolution laws. A previous IO representative, involved in the formulation process of the devolution laws, suggests a highly negotiated process of bringing in elements from the French, German and Beninese experiences but where the French experiences remained dominant (I60b, IO, 04 06 2017). Tikly (2019) reminds us of how different underlying conceptions of modernity and development underlie the self-conception of IOs, which complicates and confuses the reform of national government systems.

In the 2000s, a French consulting firm played a considerable role in the formulation of the decentralisation policy. The Decentralisation Ministry, supported by IOs, commissioned the French consultants Institutions & Développement (I&D) to conceptualise and write the PONADEC. The website content of I&D consultation on the support to decentralisation alludes strongly to the French system as it emphasises de-concentration as much as devolution (Institutions & Développement (I&D), no date), mirrored in the text of the PONADEC itself. As shown in the first column in the table below (cf. Table 8), I&D recommends a National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration (*Politique Nationale de Décentralisation et de Déconcentration*) with the objective of creating competent territorial authorities to ensure the following functions: ‘the development of local services for the population [and] to become the engine of local development, [as well as] a space of local democracy (Institutions & Développement (I&D), no date, own translation)’.⁶⁴ It states furthermore that

[t]he territorial authorities, especially the municipalities, aim to provide the essential services to the population (public service mission) and to be the driving force for development in their territory (Institutions & Développement (I&D), no date, own translation).⁶⁵

As the second column of the table below demonstrates (cf. Table 88), the PONADEC incorporates similar key words, concepts and underlying values that the I&D consultants offer. Both the objective and the vision of the PONADEC refer to the development of local services for the population. The objective relates to ‘boosting grassroots development’ (*dynamiser le développement à la base*), and the vision refers to ‘sustainable local development’ (*développement local durable*) and ‘access to local services’ (*l'accès de tous aux services de base*). Regarding democracy, the PONADEC envisions to ‘make the territorial authorities the democratic spaces at the local level’ (*Faire des Collectivités Territoriales des espaces de démocratie à la base*)

⁶⁴ *Des Collectivités Territoriales (CT) compétentes, assurant leurs fonctions en matière de : développement des services de base à la population, moteur du développement local, espace de démocratie locale.*

⁶⁵ *Les Collectivités Territoriales, notamment les communes, ont pour objet d'apporter des services de base aux populations (missions de service public) et d'être le moteur du développement sur leur territoire.*

(MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 11, 32). These excerpts demonstrate the similarities between the concepts of the consulting firm and the text of the policy. It raises the question of the extent to which the consultancy firm ‘copied and pasted’ the policy of decentralisation into the Beninese context without sufficiently paying attention to the contextual differences.

	I&D Consulting (Institutions & Développement (I&D), no date)	PONADEC (MDGLAAT, 2008)
Title	- The national policy of devolution and de-concentration (<i>Politique nationale de décentralisation et de déconcentration</i>)	- The national policy for devolution and de-concentration (<i>Politique nationale de décentralisation et de déconcentration</i>)
Objective	- to form competent <i>territorial authorities</i> which ensure the following functions: - ‘the development of local services for the population [and] to become the engine of <i>local development</i> , [as well as] a space for <i>local democracy</i> ’.	- Make [of the] the <i>territorial authorities</i> spaces for <i>grassroots democracy</i> , good governance and sustainable local development [...] (pp. 11, 32, italics added).
Strategic orientations		- ‘ <i>access of the population to local services</i> ’ (pp. 7, 28) - ‘ <i>economic growth</i> ’ (pp. 10, 11; 31, 33, 34)

Table 8 Comparative table of the use of language in the PONADEC and the website of I&D Consulting, (author’s compilation, own translation)

Moreover, the language used in the PONADEC and the mission statements of some IOs are unsurprisingly similar. The EC delegation describes the aim of its governance project on the website as follows: ‘a territorial development, sustainable and balanced, based on concerted local governance’ (Délégation de l’Union européenne au Bénin, 2016), which is the exact statement of the PONADEC (MDGLAAT, 2008, p. 11): ‘*sustainable and balanced territorial development based on concerted local governance*’. This similarity raises the question of the extent to which the EC Delegation influenced the formulation of the policy, or how far the EC itself is influenced by global policy formulation processes. In light of the linguistic similarities between the policy text in the PONADEC and that of IOs and consultancy firms, I argue that the Beninese case can

be classified as the 'translation' of a decentralisation policy, i.e. that the reform has selectively borrowed from elsewhere, adapted it to the local context, and implemented accordingly (cf. Steiner-Khamisi, 2012).

5.2.3.3 *The (post-) colonial legacy in the policy of decentralisation*

The Beninese policy, notably the current administrative organisation of the territorial authorities, cannot only be considered as a continuation of the administrative organisation under colonial rule and the subsequent Marxist-Leninist regime, but also draws on the experiences of political and administrative decentralisation in France. The Territorial Administration reform document of 1993, one of the incremental documents leading to the PONADEC, replaced the *sous-préfectures* through elected bodies, that is, the municipalities. The PONADEC (2008) refers to the institutional framework as:

Learning from the experiences of devolution and de-concentration in the world, [and] starting from the territorial specificities of Benin, the legislator conceived a simple institutional framework composed of a single level of devolution with 77 municipalities [...] and a single level of deconcentration composed of 12 departments. The territorial boundaries of the municipalities were defined in relation to those of the former sub-prefectures which were abolished with the advent of the municipalities (MDGLAAT, 2008, pp. 24–15, own translation).⁶⁶

The policy remains silent, however, about the origins of the former sub-prefectures created in colonial times and maintained in the subsequent Marxist-Leninist regime, as explained in chapter 2. In this context, I argue that the 'territorial specificities of Benin', as the policy text states, have been shaped by its colonial history rather than by its endogenous experiences.

Besides the historical influence of France, Benin's current decentralisation reform displays similarities with the contemporary French concept of decentralisation. A representative of the ANCB claims that the decentralisation system of Benin has its foundation in the French one.

From there, the draft laws were elaborated. What were the sources of inspiration for the editors? That, frankly, I do not know. However, I noticed that our decentralisation is close to the French system, so I imagine that French laws inspired the fathers of decentralisation. We wanted to reform many things, including schooling (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Tirant les enseignements des expériences de décentralisation et de déconcentration dans le monde, partant des spécificités territoriales du Bénin, le législateur a conçu un cadre institutionnel simple composé d'un seul niveau de décentralisation avec 77 communes [...] et d'un seul niveau de déconcentration composé de 12 départements. [...] Les limites territoriales des communes ont été définies en lien avec celles des anciennes sous-préfectures qui ont été abolies avec l'avènement des communes.*

⁶⁷ *A partir de là les projets de lois ont été élaborés. Quelles étaient les sources d'inspiration des rédacteurs? Ça, franchement je ne pourrai le dire. Mais j'observe que notre décentralisation est proche*

This perspective was added to in a group interview at the national level discussing the decentralisation reform more broadly.

Yes, we are in the French system. [...] We have only (ever) copied the French system, only the French system. [...] French excellence has influenced all other suggestions. [...] The reform is pegged on the French system (I67, national/ education/ decentralisation, 22 06 2017).⁶⁸

Both quotes suggest that the French form of decentralisation may have shaped the elaboration of the Beninese reform of education decentralisation.

This section harks back to the material dimension of post-coloniality, notably the political element, understood as referring to the ‘institutions that comprise the postcolonial state in Africa [extending to] civil society’ (Tikly, 2019, p. 232). Even though the systems in France and Benin diverge to some extent in their political and administrative organisation, the PONADEC was shaped by the historical and contemporary influences of France. The historical and the current similarity between the administrative decentralisation of Benin and that of France raises the question as to whether Benin’s education decentralisation can be considered as a neo-colonial imaginary rather than a post-colonial one.

5.2.4 Summing-up

The National Policy of Devolution and De-concentration represents a complex network of actors, objectives, concepts, rationales and values. I first argued that the policy presents a shift from the idea of devolution alone to a mixed system of devolution and de-concentration, whereby de-concentration is discursively privileged within the text and discourses, in line with Fairclough’s first dimension. Discursively privileging de-concentration over devolution may be interpreted as a way of maintaining the central state’s control of the lower levels. In accordance with the social analysis (Fairclough’s third dimension), the main features of the policy text are presented in the development discourse and ideas of modernisation in the context of a hybrid mix of socialism, liberalism and neo-liberalism. In line with the processing analysis (Fairclough’s second dimension), the PONADEC can be considered as a policy bricolage in light of the role of the French and German Development Agencies in the development of the devolution laws and the role of the I&D consultancy in the formulation of the policy. The remaining colonial residues in the decentralisation policy, such as the development discourse, ideas of modernisation and the

du système français. Donc j’imagine que les pères de la décentralisation se sont inspirés des lois françaises. On a voulu réformer certain nombre de chose dont l’école.

⁶⁸ *Oui, nous sommes dans le système français. [...] Nous n’avons copié que le système français, que le système français. [...] L’excellence française a influencé les autres propos. [...] La réforme est arrime sur le système français.*

replication of territorial structures from colonial times, ignore the social and cultural capital, as discussed by Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006).

The last part of this chapter provides an analysis of the Ten Year Education Sector Strategy (Ministeres en charge de l'Education, 2012) and the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation (MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015) to show how the PONADEC has been translated and partially resisted by education actors.

5.3 The operationalisation of PONADEC: absence and resistance

I first discuss the extent to which the education strategy addresses questions of decentralisation before analysing the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation, which brings together the operationalised PONADEC and the Education Sector Strategy. As in the analysis of the incremental documents in the first part of this chapter, I focus the analysis on aspects of coherence and intertextuality (Fairclough's second dimension) and the analysis of text structure and vocabulary (Fairclough's first dimension).

5.3.1 Absence of devolution in the Ten Year Education Sector Strategy

The analysis of the Ten Year Education Sector Strategy (Ministeres en charge de l'Education, 2012) reveals primarily the relative insignificance of decentralisation. More specifically, this strategy consists of 104 pages, but only one page addresses the need for de-concentration, in the first place, and devolution, in the second place. The evaluation report of the PDDSE (2012) also points out the virtual absence of decentralisation in the education strategy, as the following quote demonstrates:

First, it must be noted that the issues of devolution and de-concentration are virtually absent from the PDDSE (Bogino and Sack, 2012, p. 159, own translation).⁶⁹

The PONADEC was developed after the PDDSE; however, the decision to decentralise parts of pre-school and primary education had already been instituted in the devolution laws of 1999 and the constitution of 1990 respectively. Therefore, the absence of decentralisation, and more specifically of devolution in the PDDSE, cannot be related to the temporal distance between the PONADEC and PDDSE.

⁶⁹ *Force est d'abord de constater que les questions relatives à la décentralisation et la déconcentration sont pratiquement absentes du PDDSE*

Moreover, most activities relating to devolution concern the transfer of funds from the MEMP to the municipalities. More specifically, three out of five measures address the transfer of funds to the municipalities, mainly how to control these funds. Interestingly, the authors of PDDSE suggest that a provincial mechanism decreed within the devolution laws is necessary in light of the absence of any control mechanism at the level of the ministries, as the following excerpt states.

In the absence of any control mechanism by the ministries over the municipalities recognised by the laws on decentralisation, the deconcentrated device of the prefecture, [which is] the Provincial Administrative Conference, can be used (Ministères en charge de l'Éducation, 2012, p. 76, own translation).⁷⁰

Partly due to pressure from donors, the MEMP transfers proportionately more funds to the municipalities than other sectoral ministries, according to a representative of the National Commission of Local Finances (*Commission Nationale des Finances Locales, CONAFIL*) (I38, national/ decentralisation, 05/04/2017) (cf. chapter 6). In emphasising the need for control of the transferred funds, I suggest, the MEMP reclaims the power it was forced to give up in the decentralisation reform.

The rationale for de-concentration, as given in the PDDSE, is to strengthen the efficiency of the education system through closer management of service delivery to the user, the promotion and development of local initiatives and a better distribution of roles and responsibilities between the different levels of the system. Like the PONADEC, the PDDSE points to a mixture of neo-liberal (efficiency and service delivery to the user) and liberal rationales (distribution of roles between government entities) (cf. Edwards and Klees, 2015). As regards devolution, the authors of the education strategy aim for 'closer and more effective management of the educational service' by 'accentuating the responsibilities and the attributes of the municipalities' (Ministères en charge de l'Éducation, 2012).⁷¹

A closer analysis of the measures to achieve the above-stated objectives shows a sharp tension between autonomy and control.

[G]reater responsibility for de-concentrated services, for primary and general secondary, technical and vocational is through assigning to each level the objectives to be achieved with

⁷⁰ *En l'absence d'un pouvoir de contrôle reconnu par les lois sur la décentralisation des ministères sur les communes, utiliser le dispositif déconcentré de la préfecture, la Conférence Administrative Départementale (CAD).*

⁷¹ *En accentuant les responsabilités et les attributions des communes elle permet une gestion rapprochée et plus efficace du service éducatif.*

indicators that allow for monitoring and regular control (Ministeres en charge de l'Education, 2012, p. 76, own translation).⁷²

The quote starts with the importance of allocating more responsibility to the de-concentrated services, which I understand as giving them more autonomy in the context of de-concentration. The quote, however, links responsibility to the 'objectives to be achieved' in order to 'monitor' and 'control' these. This excerpt from the education strategy implies the empowerment of the local school authorities is connected to a regulated system of accountability and control given to the central level.

The silence concerning decentralisation in the PDDSE also emerged in the interview data, as education officials seemed scarcely aware of the PONADEC. For instance, an education official complained that the education ministries were not involved in the decentralisation forum. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that the decentralisation policy and Plan2D were not taken into account in the development of the post-education strategy 2015 – 2025 (I6, national/ education, 18 01 2017). This statement suggests parallel and separate planning processes at the national level, which may also explain the vast array of operationalisation documents at the lower levels.

Moreover, why the education strategy only timidly mirrors devolution and de-concentration raises issues of political will, ownership and power relations, as further exemplified in the analysis of the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation in the next section.

5.3.2 Non-participation through the non-adoption of Plan2D

The PONADEC's objective is for every ministry in the five priority sectors to develop and implement a programme of devolution and de-concentration (MDGLAAT, 2008; MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015). Plan2D is the National Devolution and De-concentration Policy translated to the education sector and the only document coherently linking the devolution texts to the education texts. The MEMP was the first ministry to elaborate this plan in 2014, supported by the German Development agency. In 2017, the Council of Ministers was not able to adopt this plan because the MEMP did not agree with the MDGL on the latest version. I interpret the non-collaboration of the MEMP as a form of resistance due to the institutional changes that this plan would imply.

⁷² *Une plus grande responsabilisation des services déconcentrés, pour le primaire comme pour le secondaire général, technique et professionnel, en assignant à chaque niveau des objectifs à atteindre assortis d'indicateurs qui permettront un suivi et un contrôle régulier.*

One motive within the PONADEC is the rationalisation of resources, which was substantiated in Plan2D. An interviewee from the MEMP said informally that ‘nobody [within this Ministry] wanted this policy’ and explained the resistance of ministry officials to the rationalisation of resources.

Plan2D was written by consultants from the perspective of rationalising resources. People [from the MEMP] were against it (Informal discussion, national/ education, 04 01 2017).⁷³

The following excerpt from Plan2D illustrates the changes to the organisational structure of the Ministry regarding the principles of subsidiarity between the central and municipal government entities.

At the national level, the structures are reorganised and streamlined; their attributions/responsibilities to be focused on the role of reflection, orientation and management. Concerning the de-concentrated structures, in particular, the six DDEMPs, the transfer of many tasks is planned under the subsidiarity principle, which requires the redeployment of staff from the national level as well as recruiting new staff, in order to carry out these tasks. Consequently, a prerequisite is the re-profiling of positions (MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015 conclusions, own translation).⁷⁴

This excerpt describes a shift of responsibilities and staff allocation: the MEMP ‘reflects, orients and manages’, whereas its sub-units implement the national education policy. The redefinition of roles at the national and sub-national levels also implies the reallocation of staff at the provincial level and perhaps the municipal level, which could entail education officials having to move to geographically distant cities from the capital.

An official of the MPD addressed the relations of power and personal interests involved in the adoption and implementation of Plan2D.

Since there are power struggles and conflicts of interest within the institutions themselves [...], so if you are with these players, be smart about it and see how each player reacts. You will see who the influential players are, and which players are influenced. At that point, you will better understand their game (I56, national/ planning, 24 05 2018).⁷⁵

⁷³ *Le Plan2D a été écrit par des consultants dans une perspective de rationalisation des ressources. Les gens [du MEMP] étaient contre.*

⁷⁴ *Au niveau central, les structures sont allégées réorganisées, leurs attributions étant concentrées sur le rôle de réflexion, d'orientation et de pilotage. Au niveau des structures déconcentrées, notamment les six DDEMP, il est prévu le transfert de nombreuses tâches au titre de la subsidiarité, ce qui nécessite le redéploiement du personnel depuis le niveau central ainsi que le recrutement, afin de pouvoir réaliser ces tâches. En conséquence, un préalable est le reprofilage des postes.*

⁷⁵ *Puisqu'il y a des rapports de force et des conflits d'intérêts à l'intérieur même des institutions. [...] Donc si vous êtes avec ces acteurs-là, astucieusement allez sur ce pan et voyez comment les acteurs, chacun en ce qui le concerne réagit. Vous allez voir quels sont les acteurs influents, et quels sont les acteurs (comment on dit là) les acteurs qui sont influencés. Vous allez comprendre un peu le jeu des acteurs à ce niveau-là.*

Moreover, the interview data raises awareness of global influences and questions the legitimacy of this plan and the political will of the actors concerned, as the following quote of a representative of the ANCB shows:

There are indeed many things that have been put in place. Is this not under pressure from funders? Yes! One wonders if it is not under pressure from donors. Actually, when the documents were developed, *we had agreed to make a 2D plan*, the 2D plan was done. [...] but frankly, we cannot say that we felt any real impact at the municipal level. No! Today, the political will, as my colleague said, has become very, very thin overall, not just for education (I61, municipal/decentralisation, italics added, 06 06 2017).⁷⁶

This quote suggests that the development of Plan2D was under pressure from the IOs, whereas the political will of the government for education decentralisation has weakened. The decline in the political will is also remarkable regarding the re-organisation of the MEMP, which removed its department of education decentralisation in 2016 and re-centralised its local school authorities in 2017 (cf. chapter 6).

I interpret the non-adoption of Plan2D as a form of resistance to the agenda of global actors and strategies, on the one hand, and colonial power, on the other. While the MEMP could not prevent the elaboration of the plan, they found strategies to circumvent its adoption. The authors of Plan2D are aware of these challenges and call for ownership and participation:

[It] is essential that the heads of the [sub-] units and the staff of the ministry take ownership of this plan as well as the managers and the staff with a role to play in the promotion and functioning of the pre-school and primary education sector in each municipality to ensure their constructive participation in the implementation of this plan (MEMP and MDGLAAT, 2015, conclusions, own translation).⁷⁷

This excerpt from Plan2D indicates the lack of participation and ownership of the officials at not only the national, but also at lower levels. However, I question how far the textual emphasis on participation and ownership of Plan2D can be productive in encouraging participation and ownership in practice. Instead, I propose that participation is underpinned by a rationale of instrumentalism in line with a liberal approach. A liberal conception of participation brings individuals and groups into the state. Since the existing institutions, such as the ministries and

⁷⁶ *C'est vrai qu'il y a beaucoup de choses qui ont été mises en place. Est-ce que ce n'est pas sous la pression des bailleurs? Oui! On se demande si ce n'est pas sous la pression des bailleurs. Parce que quand les bailleurs... en fait quand les documents sont élaborés, on a dit le plan 2D, le plan 2D est fait [...] Non ! Aujourd'hui, la volonté politique comme l'a dit [mon collègue] est devenue très, très mince globalement pas seulement pour l'éducation.*

⁷⁷ *Il est important que ce plan soit approprié par les responsables des structures et l'ensemble du personnel du ministère ainsi que les responsables et le personnel ayant un rôle à jouer dans la promotion et le fonctionnement de l'éducation maternelle et primaire dans chaque commune, afin d'assurer leur participation constructive à la mise en œuvre de ce plan.*

donors, ‘fund and manage these policies, they tend to maintain the status quo’ (Edwards and Klees, 2015, p. 488).

5.3.3 Summing-up

This part reviewed the Education Sector Strategy and the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation. The analysis of the PDDSE revealed the relative insignificance of decentralisation in the PDDSE, which addresses decentralisation only vaguely, privileging de-concentration over devolution, coherent with the discourse of education officials. Moreover, most activities relating to decentralisation concern the transfer of funds from the MEMP to the municipalities, which I interpret as reclaiming power and control. A closer analysis of the activities related to decentralisation demonstrated a clear tension between autonomy and control because the local school authorities are empowered, on the one hand, but also controlled through a defined system of accountability, on the other. Finally, education, as decentralisation officials claim no involvement in the planning processes for either decentralisation or education; this may lead to separate and fragmented planning processes.

For Plan2D, I understand the non-collaboration of the MEMP as a form of resistance to the institutional changes that this plan implies. The reason given in the PONADEC is the rationalisation of resources, which was substantiated in Plan2D. The ‘streamlining’ of the central education administration goes back to issues of the power relations and personal interests involved in the adoption and implementation of Plan2D. Moreover, I interpret the non-adoption of Plan2D as a form of non-participation and resistance to the agenda of global actors and the colonial legacy. The data suggests that the development of Plan2D was due to the pressure exerted by IOs, whereas the political will of the government for education decentralisation has weakened.

5.4 Summary

This chapter is a Critical Discourse Analysis of the policy of decentralisation spanning 20 years (1990 to 2010). The policy formulation process includes the incremental policy documents, such as the 1990 constitution and laws (education and decentralisation) in the first part of this chapter; the decentralisation policy in 2010 in the second part; and strategic as well as the implementing documents, the Education Sector Strategy and the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation in the third part.

In this chapter, I first argue that the devolution laws from 1999 did not change the power relations between the actors significantly because they mainly remain limited to what used to be managed locally. Second, the PONADEC presents a shift from the idea of devolution to a mixed

system of devolution and de-concentration, whereby de-concentration is privileged over devolution. An understanding of development, underpinned by the idea of modernisation, informs the PONADEC, pointing to a hybrid approach embracing predominantly social, liberal and neo-liberal values. The decentralisation policy can also be considered as a neo-colonial bricolage in that it builds upon the administrative structure of the colonial period. Third, the relative unimportance of education decentralisation in the education strategy on the one hand and the non-adoption of the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation, on the other hand, show how a policy influenced by global actors and strategies can be resisted by national governments.

The next chapter discusses the social practices of the actors involved in the enactment of education decentralisation from a relational perspective.

6 ‘You gave me a sheep, but you have kept the rope’- The mediation of the decentralisation policy for the provision of schooling⁷⁸

What do the [legal] texts say? How are they implemented? Thus, it is about the social practices. We have made the devolution laws, but we continue to manage the country as if we had not experienced devolution or de-concentration (I18, IO, 21 02 2017).⁷⁹

While the previous chapter analysed the policy text of PONADEC and its policy package, this chapter examines the social practices in the context of education decentralisation as the interviewee (above) suggested what the texts said and what happened in practice were not the same. With reference to Ball’s (1993, 2015) third dimension in policy trajectory studies, this chapter explores the second sub-question of how the actors involved in the provision of schooling mediate the current decentralisation policy. In line with actor-network theory as a methodological approach, this chapter is a study of small actor-networks at the local level in the Southern and Northern field sites to illuminate ‘the strategic, relational, and productive character of particular, small-scale, heterogonous actor-networks’ (Law, 2009, p. 145).

I consider that ANT’s notion of translation is particularly helpful for analysing the discursive and social practices in this chapter because it ‘helps to unpick practices, processes and precepts to trace how things come to be’ (Fenwick and Edwards, 2010, p. 12). It is about the (trans)-formation of meaning in one context to interpretation in another context, the translation and localisation of meaning in the process of becoming something new. I use semi-structured interviews with officials from three different ministries in charge of education, decentralisation or planning, and their sub-units. I also draw on data from focus-group discussions (FGD) with teachers and parents and the visual actor-maps produced by teachers (cf. chapter 4).

Following on from chapter 3, the data in this chapter is from both human and non-human actors. In particular, it draws on the voices and actions of humans collected in the form of interviews, and uses maps for non-humans as part of the documentary review, and participatory and visual maps. According to Fenwick and Edwards (2010), non-human actors can be material things (e.g. classrooms or parents’ meetings), bodies and how they are governed, (e.g. parents, teachers or municipal actors), and textual things, such as policies or development plans. As explained in section 4.4.1.3, the actor-maps proved themselves to be particularly suitable for making explicit the material dimension of associations or the role of non-human processes in this chapter. Besides human actors, these maps include corporate bodies, i.e. the Beninese

⁷⁸ In this chapter, I use schooling to refer to pre-school and primary education to improve the readability.

⁷⁹ *Les textes disent quoi? Comment on les met en œuvre? Donc, c’est les pratiques sociales. On a fait les textes de décentralisation, mais on continue de gérer le pays comme si on n’a pas connu la décentralisation, ni la déconcentration.*

government, a loose aggregate of institutions, i.e. NGOs or individuals as well as the processes of resistance and convergence constituting further assemblages in the broader actor-network.

The first part of this chapter disentangles the discursive and social practices of the actors involved in the delivery of schooling at the local level in the Northern and the Southern field site. More precisely, it deals with the widely diverse social practices as a consequence of the decentralisation policy exemplified in the case of school construction. The second part sheds light on the reconfiguration of the relationships between the municipal government entities, particularly the Local school authority, and the town council, and its citizens, notably teachers and parents. Finally, the third part discusses the reconfiguration of the relationships and networks within the government, notably the central and municipal government entities. This chapter starts start by shedding light on the widely diverse social practices in the context of school construction.

6.1.1 Widely diverse social practices as a consequence of the decentralisation policy - the situation with school construction

The following section explores how actors at the school, the municipal and the provincial level discursively understood what putting in place the de-concentrated and devolved responsibilities involved. The concrete example of school construction - the main devolved responsibility -and comparing the narratives from two different geographical areas: North-South and urban-rural/ centre-periphery (cf. chapter 2) begins the analysis. While I consider both field sites as particular locations [place] of negotiation and the exercise of power as illustrated by the issues of school construction encountered, the discursive and social practices lead to reflections on space as the 'realm of the [...] chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity' (Massey, 1994b, p. 1).

6.1.1.1 The Northern field sites: actors and processes

The rural Northern field site

Based on the visual data, I start with a description of how the research participants⁸⁰ perceived their influence on the provision of school infrastructure in the rural Northern field site. More precisely, the first actor-map captures the perceptions of teachers of which actors were involved in school construction and extension, how influential they were and the processes involved in the new building and the extension of the existing school buildings. As figure 11 illustrates, the teachers in the rural school in the North placed the municipality and the NGOs in the centre of the map, which implies that they are more influential than the actors at the periphery.

⁸⁰ Teachers produced the actor-maps. Interview data with head teachers, students' parents and members of teacher unions complement the visual data

At the same level as the municipality but on the margins of the map are the students' parents. Interestingly, the school and the Government were placed at the same distance from the centre - symbolising decision-making - and likewise, the provincial and local school authorities. The map blurs the lines of a predominantly hierarchical understanding, with the central administration as the centre of decision-making and the lower levels as less influential, because the map 'equates' the school level with that of the Government, and the NGO level with that of the municipality, although the legal framework of the decentralisation reform theoretically strengthens the central Government and municipal structures (MDGLAAT, 2008).

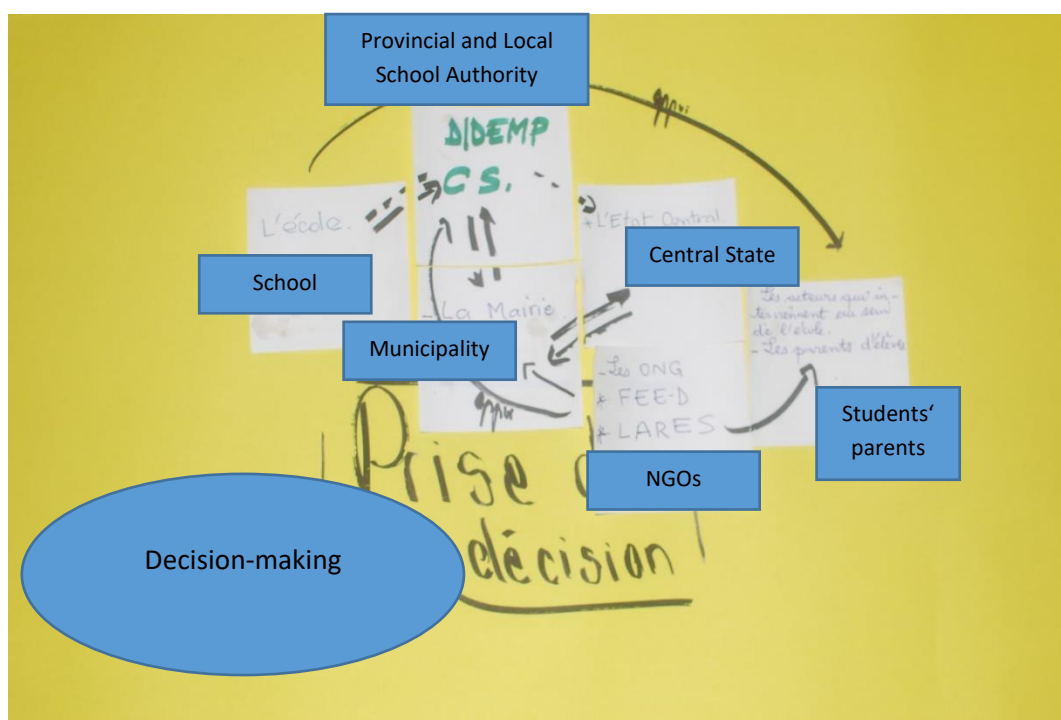


Figure 11 Actor-map of the rural Northern field site⁸¹

The presentation of the map and the explanations from the FGD are different in terms of the process of school construction. The teachers from the focus group explained that the need to extend an existing school stems logically from the concerns of teachers and headteachers, or parents when there is a need to create a new school. The teachers explained that they communicate the need to parents, on the one hand, and, the local and provincial school authorities, on the other. Subsequently, the provincial school authority communicates the need to the central government. In contrast, the interpretation of the map could suggest that the process of constructing schools starts at the level of the NGOs. While the map documents the relationship between the municipality with the central government and the de-concentrated services as reciprocal, the

⁸¹ Original actor-map including translations (blue rectangles)

NGOs seem to communicate with parents, the town council and the local school authority unilaterally. Once the need reaches the MEMP, the ministry contacts the municipality, which then proceeds to undertake the school construction.

Even though school construction is within the responsibility of the municipality, the data from the FGD and the maps suggest the process starts at the school level and then goes up to the central administration. However, the map seems to allocate more importance to NGOs. In contrast, teachers emphasise their role and agency for the process of extending school buildings. The data generated in the semi-urban field site in the North in the next section shows a more multifaceted picture of the school construction process and actors involved.

The semi-urban Northern field site

At first sight, the actor-map in figure 12 looks more multi-layered because of the increased number of actors and the complexity of their relationships to . The map does not tell the reader if more actors intervene in this semi-urban field site or if the teachers identified more actors than the previous FGD. On closer inspection, the map reveals two levels in a circular arrangement: first, going from centre left to centre upper right, they list NGOs, the municipality, parents, teachers and the local school authority. Second, the map documents the Ministry, the Government and the provincial school authority in a half circle below the other actors.

In comparison with the previous map, the teachers identified those potentially powerful actors geographically close to them. Actors in the inner circle (NGOs, municipality, parents, teachers and local school authority) seem to relate to each other in various, and most often, in harmonious ways, with the exception of the relationship between parents and the local school authority. The relationship between the actors in the outer circle (the Ministry, Government, provincial school authority) are only partially mutual. This observation suggests a perceived closer collaboration between actors at the school and municipal levels, whereas their perception of the collaboration between the provincial and central administration remains somehow distant.

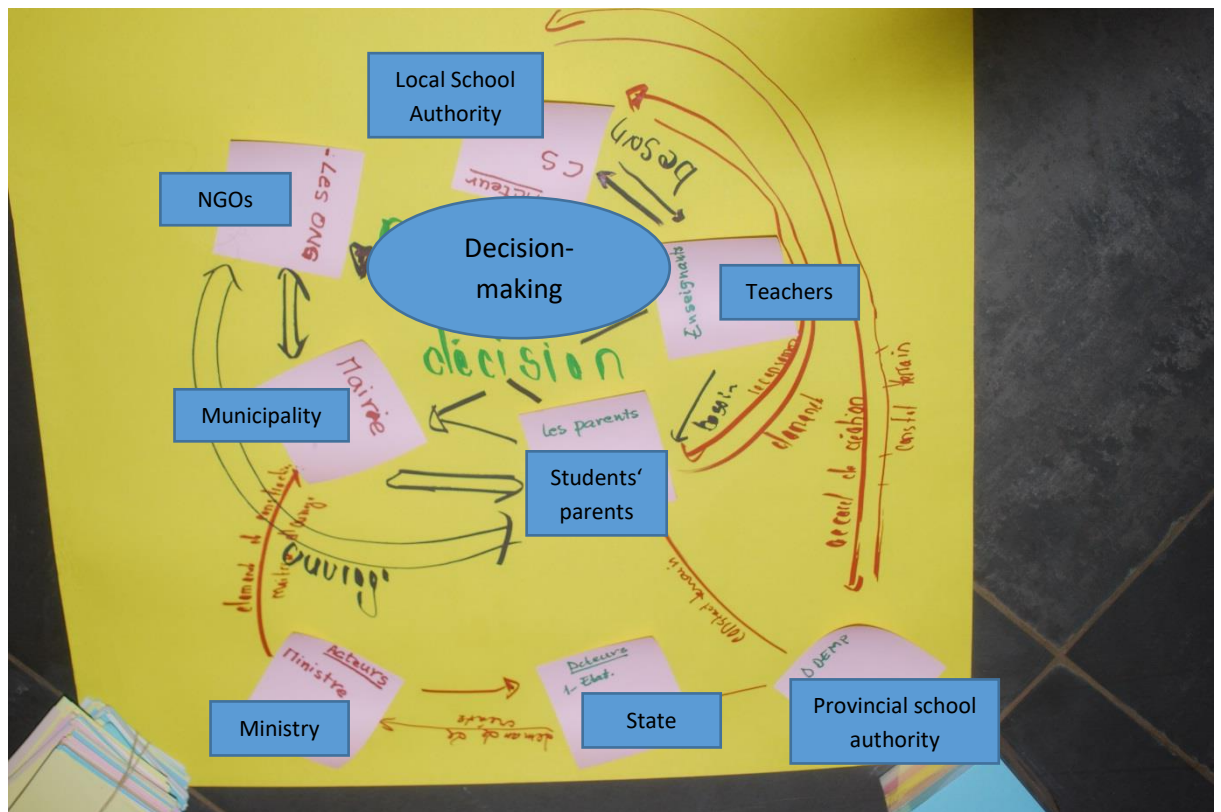


Figure 12 Actor-map of the semi-urban Northern field site

Teachers from the FGD reported the school construction and extension process in the semi-urban Northern field site as follows: the teachers identify the need to extend or repair and equip a school building, which they communicate to both the local school authority and the parents, while the local school authority double-checks the needs of the teachers and parents are reasonable, the teachers and parents contact both the town council and NGOs. After that, the provincial school authority comes to check the proposed development is necessary, and if so, they communicate this to the minister, as the following discussion between teachers illustrates.

The DDEMP also comes to inspect the [identified] place, and when they see that there is potential, they ask the minister directly "can we create a school in such place?" [...]. Right now, the minister gives the order to the DDEMP [...] (I27, school, North, 21 03 2017).⁸²

Not only does the provincial school authority have to validate the need, according to the research participants, some suggested that even the council of ministers has to validate the decision.

When the ministry grants the request, [...], it builds [a school] (Participant a). No, he [the minister] is accountable to the government (Participant b). The ministry already is the government.

⁸² La DDEMP aussi vient à l'inspection sur le lieu et quand il voit qu'il y a opportunité, il demande directement au ministre « ah on peut créer une école dans tel lieu ». En ce moment, le ministre donne l'ordre à la DDEMP.

[...] The ministry says that it requests the creation [of a school] in such a locality and there is the council of ministers which approves the creation. [...] It is the council of the minister that decides to create [a school] (Participant a) (I27, school, North, 21 03 2017).⁸³

The dialogue of the two interviewees indicates the centralisation of school construction decisions, presumably, more in discursive than in practice terms. Where the municipality is legally responsible for school infrastructure, teachers perceived the school construction as an even more centralised process, as the quote above evidences. The perceived centralisation of education may emerge from the still highly centralised system of government, on the one hand, and its historical roots in political centralisation on the other (cf. chapter 2). It points to the various discursive and social practices, which suggest a tendency towards centralisation, and the negotiation of power between multiple actors.

Summing-up the perceptions of teachers about school construction in both Northern field sites, it can be stated, first, that practices diverge from the legal and policy framework significantly. Second, NGOs play an important role in funding school construction, particularly in the rural site. In line with Fichtner's (2012) argument, I interpret the central positioning of NGOs next to the central and municipal government entities as the parallel functioning of governmental and non-governmental structures. Third, albeit with the general perception of an uneasy collaboration between the municipality and the local school authority, the data is mixed; the Northern field site suggests there is a strong and constructive connection in the rural area, while links are more distant in the semi-urban site. Fourth, even though school construction is legally codified as a responsibility of the municipality according to the devolution law 99-029 (MDGLAAT, 2010, article 97), the data from the FGD and the maps suggest the involvement of the provincial and central administration of education in approving the need for new or more building identified by teachers and parents.

The next two sections discuss the actors and processes in the context of building schools in the Southern fieldsite, which is divided into two settings again: urban-centre and urban-periphery.

6.1.1.2 *The Southern field sites: actors and processes*

The Southern periphery field site

⁸³ *Quand la demande est accordée par le ministère, c'est fini, il crée. Non il [le ministre] doit rendre compte à l'Etat. Le ministère déjà, c'est l'Etat. [...] Le ministère dit qu'il veut la création dans telle localité et il y a un conseil des ministres qui sanctionne la création. [...] C'est au conseil de ministre qu'il y a décision pour création.*

appears to be disconnected or absent. This observation suggests stronger collaboration between benefactors, NGOs and school actors, and raises a question about the role and cooperation of other actors, particularly the municipality and the local school authority.

In contrast to the map, teachers from the FGD and parents considered themselves in a position to identify the need for new constructions or extending an existing school building. As in the North, they communicated their needs to the local school authority, benefactors and NGOs at the same time, presumably to improve their chances of accessing funding as well as approval.

The school identifies the need [...] because everything starts from the school. [...] If the school does not ask [...], not everyone has to play a role. Therefore, the school is of vital importance [...] because it is the starting point [...] (I43, school, South, 20 04 2017).⁸⁴

The quote above demonstrates that school actors consider the school to have a potentially influential role regarding the school extension process as they claim that they have to identify and communicate the need. Similar to the data from the Northern field sites, teachers, headteachers and parents tend to emphasise their role in the school construction process in their oral account but tend to neglect it in their visualisation of the process. This observation may suggest that they consider their voice is not highly influential, as documented in the actor-maps, but they reclaim it discursively in the FGD. I now move on to the last school setting, which is centrally located in an urban setting.

The Southern centre field site

Based on the visual map (cf. figure 14), the school actors in the 'centre school' in the South positioned the municipality in the decision-making centre. In addition to already known actors, they also mentioned the role of the chief of the district and the provincial school authority, whereas the students' parents sit between the provincial and the local school authority. This is the only focus group that included the district chief on their map. The district chief is elected as are the mayor and the town council, but has no legal personality or financial autonomy according to the devolution law 97-029 (MDGLAAT, 2010, article 5).

Nonetheless, the district chief can be considered a potentially powerful person due to his professional and political closeness to the mayor. The research participants expressed the chief's

⁸⁴ *L'école identifie le besoin [...] parce que tout part de l'école. [...] Si l'école ne demande pas, [...], tout ceux-ci-là n'ont pas de rôle à jouer. Donc l'école a une certaine importance [...] parce que c'est le point de démarrage. [...]*

power by positioning him at the same level as the provincial school authority. Teachers, nearby the headteachers, are closer the margins, likewise NGOs and economic operators.

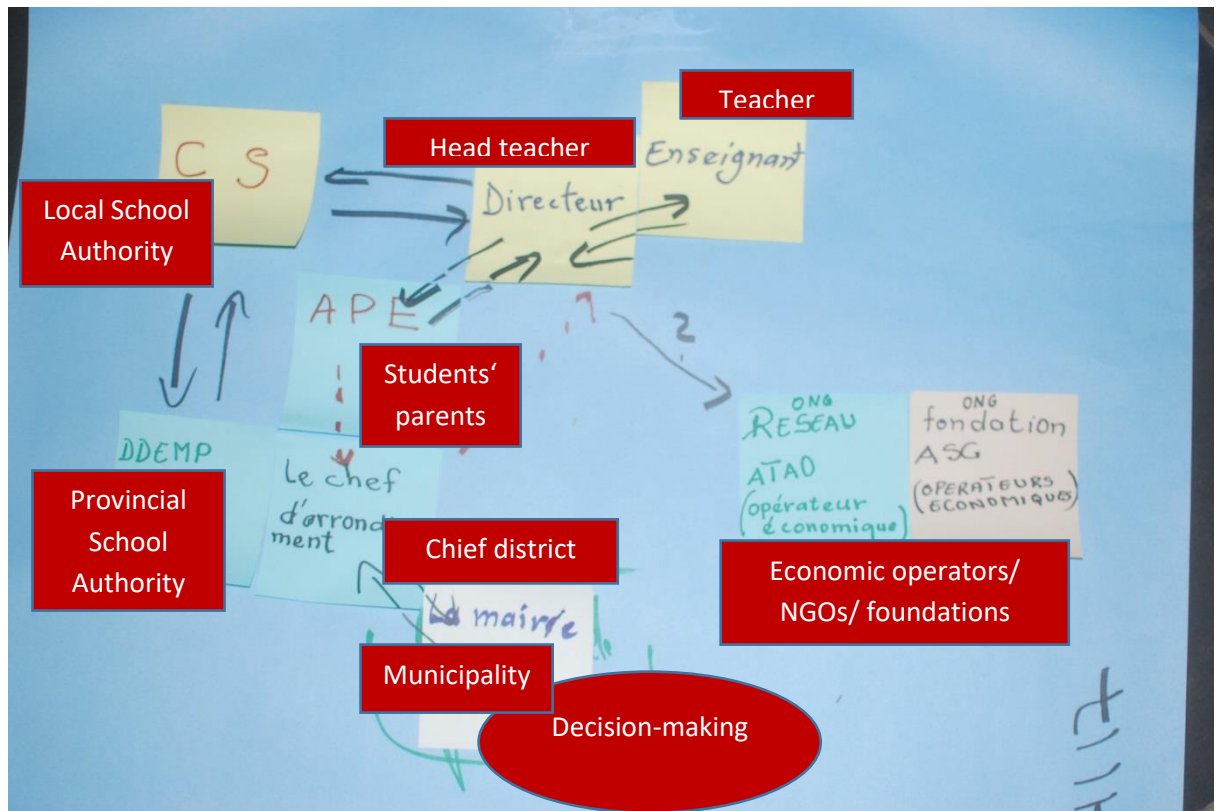


Figure 14 Actor-map of the Southern centre field site

This map suggests that teachers and head teachers communicate with each other as well as head teachers and parents. The head teacher refers the school's needs to the local school authority, which then follows the hierarchical order to pass it on to the provincial school authority. While parents discuss the needs with the district chief and the district chief communicates with the town council, the research participants did not document how the local school authority relates to the municipality. As in the other school in the Southern field site, the teachers evaluated the relationship between the de-concentrated actor, the local school authority, and the devolved actor the municipality, as being disconnected. In contrast to all the other maps, these research participants did not include the ministry or the Government. This observation particularly contrasts with the other school in the periphery in the South, which situated the MEMP in the centre of the map.

Crucial in this focus group (FGD 27, institutional, 21 03 2017)⁸⁵ is the discussion of who has access to funding for constructing schools and how they get hold of it. The teachers discussed

⁸⁵ This FGD was neither audiotaped nor transcribed, following the request of the research participants.

the roles of municipalities and NGOs but also pointed out the importance of the head teacher having a political link to the mayor. For preference, the teachers of this focus group call the municipality to account concerning their devolved responsibilities. They suggested that the town council has access to income through local taxes, which could be unlocked to pay for school construction purposes if the government did not transfer the necessary funds. However, political proximity to the mayor was a central theme in this group discussion. The research participants argued that the approval of applications for new school buildings or extensions and their funding mainly depended on the principal or students' parents being supporters of the same political party as the mayor. This argument is in line with the example in Rasmussen's (2011, 2013) study whereby local election results shift the priorities of the town council to build schools in urban rather than in rural areas because the majority of voters lives in the more densely populated urban areas. Similarly, Bierschenk and de Sardan (2003, p. 165) state that '[a]ccess to local government representatives can become an important element of the political processes in various situations'.

Summing-up the perceptions of teachers regarding school construction in both Southern field sites, it can be stated, first, that what happens in practice significantly diverges from the legal and policy framework. As in the North, perceptions were mixed about the level of collaboration between the local school authority and the municipality, but there was the suggestion of tensions. In the periphery Southern field site, the relationship between both actors (school authorities and the municipality) was documented as disconnected, whereas in the centre Southern field site, the tension was less visible. However, the geographical particularities of their locations influenced the perceptions and practices of the actors involved in the mediation of education decentralisation. Presumably, due to the better socio-economic situation of the Southern field site and better educational outcomes (cf. chapter 2), NGOs are considered as less important actors; instead, schools there rely on individual economic operators and benefactors. Third, the data in both the Southern field sites diverges significantly concerning the perceived role of the central administration. Whereas the periphery field site emphasised the role of the Ministry, the centre field site did not mention the central administration. It is impossible to explain the divergence in both Southern field sites, but it can be assumed that the central administration plays a more important role in the South than in the North, because of its geographical proximity.

This section has frequently addressed the divergent perspectives that emerged. Mannay (2016) suggests embedding the visual data into a more comprehensive narrative, which I did through the combination of the actor-maps with the FGD. The combination of the data collected resulted, however, in divergent perspectives as explained. Sometimes, the data from the actor-maps provided a different perspective compared to the data from the focus groups; at other times,

the FGD in the Southern or Northern field site revealed contradictory narratives, which could not be related to the particular geographical locations, such as urban, semi-urban or rural. In light of the hierarchical context in Benin and the particular interview situation, I privileged the reading of the map over the oral data because the interview data was likely to align with the dominant discourses, whereas the map may have allowed for a more subtle documentation of the diverse social practices. The divergence between the interview and the visual data may indicate the possibly widely diverse social processes at the local level.

6.1.1.3 Summing-up

In this part of the chapter, I discussed the multiple perceptions of the school actors on the topic of school infrastructure, the mainly devolved responsibility of the municipalities. To sum-up this part, I discuss it from the ANT perspective of three moves; localising the global, redistributing the local and connecting sites (Latour, 2005). This study of small-scale actor-networks at the local level in the Southern and Northern field sites exemplified the mediating role of the decentralisation policy. Albeit the singular discourses that decentralisation is saturated with, the data from the focus groups with teachers and the participatory visual data demonstrated that the discourses and practices around school construction are multiple and messy. The data collected in the North as in the South, drew a picture of disorderly networks deliberating and negotiating to have their say and influence in the education sector.

In using ANT, I followed the actors and their connections -the teachers, parents, NGOs, appointed and elected officials - to understand how they discursively and socially connected with each other to bring about education decentralisation. Networks, such as education or development fora, bringing together different human actors from different geographical settings, are further actors in this excerpt. Even school buildings and the quality norms required to build these schools are vital to the discussion of how education decentralisation is enacted. Documents, such as the education and devolution laws as well as the implementation plans form further assemblages, connecting with human actors and bringing about certain social practices, some of which are more dominant than others. Fenwick and Edwards (2010) remind us to be aware of materially induced changes, e.g. digital or on paper, which can distract us from focusing on the information and discourse a text or document conveys; the focus needs to be not only on what they mean but what they do.

In comparing the sites, I noted certain tendencies in how power was exercised through networks, even though the data was varied. Some discursive and social practices had become more dominant than others. Among other things, I also stated that the government- non-

government actor relationship was different in each field site. The Northern field site seemed to rely more heavily on the support of NGO, while the Southern field site seemed to communicate its needs directly to the DDEMP or the MEMP rather than through cooperating with the municipality. School actors in the South may tend to circumvent the municipalities as they depend upon the transfer of funds from the Education Ministry, and then the necessary funds are only partially transferred. However, these social practices are not permanent, but reflect a particular moment in time.

I interpreted the different constellations in terms of their geographical location, e.g. the presence of NGOs in the North makes funding accessible through non-government actors. In the South, in contrast, the physical proximity of the central and provincial administration makes funding more likely to be accessed from them rather than the municipality. In using different field sites and adopting a spatial lens, I brought out how the analysis of the local, focusing on the spatial power dynamics, is more informative than a single temporal focus on the achievement or enactment of decentralisation as a policy imperative (Massey, 1994b). Instead of considering the local as a deficit, it can be rather found in the universalised policy informed by dominant development discourses.

In the Beninese context, Fichtner (2012, p. 114) referring to Gluckmann (1955) suggests the local level to be a 'social arena structured by an institutional pluralism and "multiplex" relationships', i.e. relationships which serve many interests. Similarly, Oussou (2017), comparing school management before the Beninese decentralisation reform and today, describes the municipality as an arena where actors compete for the control of transferred abilities. He states that the logic and social practices of the actors will have not changed. I challenge this statement in the next two parts of this chapter, arguing that the relationships between government and non-government actors had been altered, at least temporarily. I will unpack more carefully some of the connections between the actors, notably between the government and its citizens, and within the government. In doing so, I acknowledge that I reduce the discussion to the human actors, and also emphasise that the discursive and social practices are not stable, but reflect a particular moment in time.

The next part starts with a discussion of the reconfiguration of the relationships between government and non-government actors.

6.1.2 Reconfiguring the relationships between government and non-government actors at the local level

This part analyses how government and non-government actors relate to each other (cf. figure 15). It first unpacks the roles of the appointed and elected officials; it then sheds light on the role of NGOs and benefactors; and finally discusses the role of parents in the historical context of education in Benin. As previously pointed out, I consider these trends to be temporary stable practices which are subject to change.

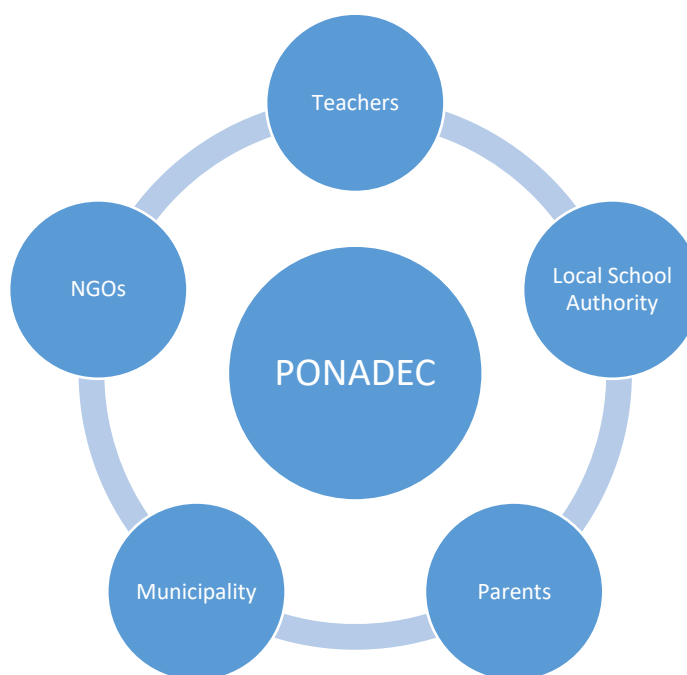


Figure 15 Changing relationships between government and non-government actors

6.1.2.1 PONADEC empowers elected officials and silences appointed education officials

From a legal perspective, the town councils only exist because of the decentralisation reform, which has its foundation in the 1990 constitution, and became 'effective' during the first elections in 2002/03 (cf. chapter 2). The devolution laws and PONADEC clarify primarily the responsibilities of the prefectures at the provincial level (devolution laws N°97-028) and the municipalities at the municipal level (devolution laws N°97-029). They allude only occasionally to the role of the sectoral authorities and if so, only to the provincial level as being the only formally de-concentrated level. Hence, the policy of devolution and de-concentration has not addressed the role and responsibilities of the appointed education officials at the municipal level.

In terms of the social practices, the interview data remains unclear because the appointed and elected officials have different perspectives. The data may suggest the potential

empowerment of the elected officials to the detriment of the influence of the appointed officials since the decentralisation reform. For instance, a senior official of the local school authority in the Northern field site complained that the municipality does not involve him in the management of the devolved responsibilities. He considered himself to be the technical advisor of the mayor, as the following quote demonstrates.

The head of the local school authority is the technical advisor of the mayor. [...] [However,] it is as if the municipality takes decisions without us (I23, municipal/ education, North, 09 03 2018).⁸⁶

Although the heads of both local school authorities claimed to be the technical advisors of the mayor, the municipal officials in the Southern field site clearly stated that the head of the local school authority does not advise the mayor.

The role of the head of the school authority concerns teachers. It is not at the level of the town council. [Instead], it is about teachers. [...] He plays the role of supervisor of all the activities that take place in the area of education. So he is there as a supervisor, to supervise the teachers in the field. [...] To return to the town hall, the head of the local school authority does not have a right [to advise], but he has the power to advise the teachers who are on its territory (I47, municipal/ decentralisation, South, 05 05 2017).⁸⁷

As the legal and policy framework only makes provision for one de-concentrated level, notably the prefecture and sectoral authorities at the provincial level, the role of the local school authority is not clear, which may explain why the heads of local school authorities experienced resistance from the elected officials.

However, the Northern municipality introduced a consultation framework for the elected and appointed officials at the municipal level. The officials of the municipality explained the coordination mechanism, justifying its existence as being in accordance with the legal framework, as the following quote illustrates.

Once a month, the mayor of the municipality of N'dali and all the heads of the de-concentrated units come together in a consultative framework. That is also in the [legal] texts. [...] This is the place for each of them to say the difficulties they face (I29, municipal/ decentralisation, North, 22 03 2019).⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Le C/CS est le conseiller technique du maire. [...] C'est comme si la mairie prend des décisions sans nous.*

⁸⁷ *Le rôle que le C/CS joue, c'est à l'endroit des enseignants. Ce n'est pas au niveau de la mairie. C'est à l'endroit des enseignants. [...] Il joue un rôle de superviseur de toutes les activités qui se mènent au niveau de l'enseignement. Donc il est là en tant que superviseur pour encadrer les enseignants sur le terrain. [...] Pour revenir à la mairie, le C/CS n'a pas un droit mais il a le droit de conseil sur les enseignants qui sont sur son territoire.*

⁸⁸ *Une fois, par mois, le maire et tous les chefs-services déconcentrés de la commune de N'dali se retrouvent dans un cadre de concertation. Ça, ce sont également les textes qui le disent. [...] Et c'est le lieu pour chacun d'eux de dire les difficultés auxquelles ils font face.*

As previously noted, the devolution laws, and the corresponding policy, make only provision for de-concentration at the provincial level. Education, however, has been historically, the most de-concentrated sector, which may be explained by the necessity to manage and monitor schools at the village level (cf. chapter 2).

I have discussed how the elected officials from the municipality perceived their role to have been strengthened, while the appointed officials from the local school authority felt largely ignored by them, with little or no involvement. Okanla (2013) noted a similar point, saying that the municipalities in Benin have increased their authority because of the decentralisation policy. According to him, the municipalities are in a better position today to manage their devolved responsibilities and respond to the needs and demands of the local population compared to the arrangement before the current decentralisation reform.

The role of NGOs and benefactors is the subject of discussion in the next section, in which I examine the differences in the field sites concerning the role of non-government actors.

6.1.2.2 The role of NGOs and benefactors in the North and the South

The data shows that NGOs hold an influential position in the Northern fieldsite, while benefactors appear to be more significant in the Southern field site for funding school construction. Moreover, the research participants in the rural field site in the North emphasise the role of NGOs more than those in the semi-urban site. As explained in chapter 2, the provinces Alibori/ Borgou are known to have the poorest school results in terms of access, retention and achievement. This kind of situation tends to attract NGOs supported by national and international donors and, hence, NGOs are powerful actors for delivering education at the local level. Parents appreciate the existence of NGOs; one interviewee commented ‘in this respect, we are not unhappy’ (I26, school level, 21 03 2017).

However, the role of NGOs is outside the formal legal and policy framework of education decentralisation. Therefore, NGOs can and do intervene in various ways in the provision of school infrastructure, as the discussion of the teachers in the Northern field site demonstrated:

When the decision comes to the [...] town hall, the mayor, in collaboration with the parents brought about [the construction of the school building]. So we can already establish this relationship: Parent-town council for the construction work. Alternatively, town council-NGO for

the construction work. Alternatively, again NGO-parents for the construction work (I27, school, North, 21 03 2017).⁸⁹

This quote not only indicates the prominent place of NGOs in school infrastructure but also points out the various ways NGOs can intervene in the system.

Similarly, municipal officials highlighted the important role of technical and financial partners⁹⁰ in the implementation of the education strategy in the Northern field site.

Fortunately, the technical and financial partners are there to help us, [...]. I will say that for our ten year plan for the development of the education sector; this plan is well-designed, but we cannot afford to execute this plan wisely. That is why, at any time, I will say we appeal to our financial and technical partners to help us (I23, municipal/ decentralisation, North, 09 03 2017).⁹¹

However, they also point to the problem of the sustainability of external support and call themselves to account.

However, the problem that Benin faces is that we rely so much on the partners that we can no longer even demonstrate our strengths. Also, when the partners leave us, we have serious problems. This [behaviour] is what we will have to correct. At the same time as the partners are helping us, we have to get on with it ourselves. We have to develop the capacity to take care of ourselves from when the technical and financial partners leave us (I23, municipal/ decentralisation, North, 09 03 2017).⁹²

Education officials at the national level shared this concern. The following quote addresses the powerful role of NGOs in determining the development agenda, notably regarding decentralisation. The interventions of NGOs can be disruptive at times, leading even to the degradation of local development as the respondent explained.

So, as we also know that NGOs and other funders provide finance, we theoretically align ourselves with their choice of decentralisation. However, we adopt strategies to circumvent the things we have set ourselves up for implementation. [...] However, the weight of IOs can be good or maybe negative. I believe that the pressure of governmental and non-governmental organisations can sometimes lead to the downgrading of some decisions. At the same time, it can

⁸⁹ *Quand la décision vient au niveau de la mairie, soit la mairie en collaboration avec les parents, réalise l'ouvrage. Donc on peut déjà établir cette relation. Mairie-parents pour l'ouvrage. [...] Ou mairie-ONG pour l'ouvrage. Ou bien encore ONG- parents pour l'ouvrage.*

⁹⁰ The thesis uses the terminology 'partner of the international community' and IOs interchangeably.

⁹¹ *Heureusement, les partenaires techniques et financiers sont là en train de nous aider, [...]. Je dirai qu'avec notre plan décennal pour le développement du secteur de l'éducation ; ce plan là est un plan bien conçu mais nous n'avons pas les moyens pour exécuter ce plan là à bon escient. C'est pour quoi à tout moment je dirai nous faisons appel à nos partenaires financiers et techniques pour qu'ils nous aident.*

⁹² *Mais c'est que le problème auquel le Bénin fait face, c'est que nous comptons tellement sur les partenaires que même nous n'arrivons plus à démontrer nos propres forces. Et lorsque les partenaires nous quittent, nous avons de sérieux problèmes. C'est cela qu'il va falloir corriger. Au même moment que les partenaires sont en train de nous aider, nous devons nous même nous mettre à la tâche, nous devons nous-mêmes développer des capacités d'activités en mesure de nous prendre en charge dès que les partenaires techniques et financiers vont nous laisser à nos propres comptes.*

be disruptive for some innovations when people sometimes try to meet local needs (I6, national/education, 18 01 2017).⁹³

This quote simultaneously expresses alignment and resistance to donor priorities. As Koyama and Varenne (2012, p. 159) suggest 'playing was part and parcel of daily works in education' regarding the NCLB policy in the US. In this regard, PONADEC becomes 'part and parcel of daily works in education' in the (re-)negotiation of power relationships. Koyama and Varenne (2012, p. 159) borrow the term 'socio-technical controversies' from Callon, Lascoumes & Barthe (2001) to explain how 'multiple actors are playing not only with their roles but also with each other, their policy contexts, and the policy itself'.

In the Southern field site, benefactors rather than NGOs acted with the municipality as potential funders of school constructions. The reason for the less notable presence of NGOs may lie in the relatively good socio-economic situation of the field site, as previously explained. Teachers from the FGD reported that they did not need to address the town council if there were benefactors willing to help out.

If the school wants [to extend or repair] without these [central or municipal government] actors, it can work with benefactors, with the good will. [...] The school can [cooperate] with the help of benefactors. The school can go even without the town hall, without the MEMP [...] (I43, school, South, 20 04 2017).⁹⁴

Even though the NGO landscape in the South differs from that of the North, this quote indicates how NGOs could bypass the government in both field sites. It links back to Fichtner's (2012) argument: she considers the support for NGOs to education as a vital phenomenon to the government acting in a global system. The 'NGOisation' of education is not a process of developing a privatised welfare system in the shadow of the government. This statement implies that NGOs do not replace government actors, but intervene in parallel and various ways, as the data from this study indicated.

⁹³ *Donc comme on sait également que ce sont les ONG et les partenaires financiers qui financent, on s'aligne sur leur choix en matière de la décentralisation théoriquement. Mais on joue des stratégies d'acteur dans la mise en œuvre pour contourner les choses qu'on a soi-même mises en place. [...] Mais il y a toujours un poids des acteurs des organisations internationales qui peut être en bien ou qui peut-être aussi en négatif. Je crois que les pressions des PTF et des organisations non gouvernementales peuvent parfois une dégradation à certaines décisions. Et en même temps, ça peut être un perturbateur de certaines innovations au cas où les gens tentent parfois de répondre aux besoins des localités.*

⁹⁴ *Si l'école veut sans ces acteurs-là, elle peut avec les bonnes volontés. [...] Même sans la mairie, sans le MEMP, l'école peut.*

Whereas the influence of NGOs does not seem to be contested, the influence of parents appears to have been weakened since the advent of education decentralisation, which I explain in the next section.

6.1.2.3 Students' parents reclaiming their role: stronger in the North than in the South

Emerging from the previous analytical chapter (cf. Chapter 5), the role of parents in the provision of schooling shifted significantly after the democratic renewal in 1990. The data suggests that parents' influence has become weaker compared to before the advent of decentralisation. However, parents in the Northern field site positioned themselves differently to the parents in the Southern field site: parents in the North perceived themselves to be more influential than parents in the South.

Albeit within a general trend of fading influence, parents in the Northern field site form a relatively important actor in the landscape of education. A senior representative of the municipal association for students' parents considered the local school authority, the town council and the association of students' parents as the three most important actors as the following quote illustrates:

There is the local school authority that is closer to the decision-making as they collaborate with the central administration. After them, there is the town hall. Moreover, at the level of the town hall, the mayor of the municipality can be said to be the minister of education. After that, there is the coordination [of students' parents]. At the level of the municipality, there are these three. Education cannot move forward without them: the town hall, the CS and the CAP. They are actors who have to agree [with each other] (I26, school, North, 21 03 2017).⁹⁵

This quote indicates that the local school authority is the first decision-making instance as it is 'close' to the ministry regarding its attributes, organisation and operation. I consider the role of the local school authority referred to in this quote as an example of traditional power-holding before the introduction of the reform of education decentralisation. Nonetheless, this students' parent acknowledged the importance of the municipality in second place, and the students' parents in third place, suggesting that all three actors have to collaborate.

From the perspective of municipal officials in the North, however, parents have become disengaged from supporting schooling, as the following quote indicates. This municipal official

⁹⁵ *Il y a la circonscription qui est plus proche de la décision. Puisse que c'est eux qui travaillent avec l'administration centrale. Après eux, il y a la mairie. Et au niveau de la mairie, c'est le maire de la commune qui est on peut dire comme le ministre de l'éducation. Après, il y a la coordination. Au niveau de la commune il y a ces trois-là. Sans eux l'éducation ne peut aller de l'avant. La mairie, la CS et la CAP. C'est des gens qui doivent nécessairement s'entendre.*

of the Northern field site saw the reason for the disengagement of parents the 2006 which decreed schooling free.

The free schooling we speak about is only in name, not a reality. In spite of everything, it has flown away. The parents, too, as soon as they heard talk about free [schooling] [...] gave up any obligation. They do not do their duties, as they should. They have given up, I can say somehow, since, according to some, the state must provide everything for their children. That is, however, not the freedom we are talking about - it is about no tuition fees (I23, municipal/ education, North, 09 03 2018).⁹⁶

Moreover, this research participant used the perceived disengagement of parents as an argument for drawing in the government again.

Parents no longer actively engage in the education of their children [e.g. school construction, recruitment of community teachers]. This is why the town council asks the [central] government to [financially] help the system (I23, municipal/ education, North, 09 03 2018).⁹⁷

I consider the debate around the (dis-)/ engagement of parents within the broader political climate of Benin. Since 1975, parents had been organised in networks covering school concerns at all levels. Although Benin had a socialist government until 1989, the World Bank, among others, had already intervened with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the late 80s because of Benin's economic and financial breakdown. During the SAPs of the late 80s and early 90s, community schools became common, and parents paid different levels of fees to cover for teachers' salaries, buildings and recurrent costs (Rasmussen, 2011, 2013). As chapter 5 discussed, the decentralisation reform strengthened the role of the government again from 1990 onwards. Education has been legally codified as shared between the municipality - responsible for school construction - and the central government, responsible for teacher recruitment and management, among other areas.

Unlike the students' parents in the North, the students' parents in the Southern field site considered their influence as fading. More specifically, they did not feel any involvement in education prompted by either the schools themselves or the municipalities. As the next quote suggests, parents may be involved in working sessions with the town council, but they perceive their involvement as only symbolic.

⁹⁶ *La gratuité dont on parle, la gratuité là ce n'est que de nom en réalité. Malgré tout ce qui se fait, ça prend de l'aile. Les parents aussi, comme ils ont entendu qu'on parle de la gratuité, les parents aussi en tout cas ont abandonné leur devoir. Ils ne font plus leurs devoirs comme cela se doit. Ils ont démissionné je vais dire en quelque sorte puisque selon certains, c'est l'Etat qui doit fournir tout à leurs enfants. Alors que ce n'est pas ça. La gratuité dont on parle, c'est par rapport aux frais de scolarité.*

⁹⁷ *Les parents ne participent plus activement à l'éducation de leurs enfants. C'est pourquoi le conseil municipal demande au gouvernement d'aider le système.*

Do the municipalities involve anyone? No! No! At most, they set up a working session and call the students' parents to say, "come". We do not agree with them, but they do not accept any discussion with us (I40, school, South, 12 04 2018).⁹⁸

Moreover, the school budget has become the subject of a complex interplay between the local school authority, the head teacher and students' parents. The representative of the parents' associations in the South claimed that the parents' signature of agreement on the school budget is only symbolic.

When it is like that, the municipal parents' association cannot say anything. Then, the head teachers claim for themselves the right to manage and everything is managed [without us]... It is true they need our signatures for this and that, but, in reality, we do not carry much weight [...] (I40, school, South, 12 04 2018).⁹⁹

The Education Ministry initiated a reform in 2014 to employ accountants within local school authorities, for the co-management of the budget by these newly appointed accountants, headteachers and parents. Previously, parents had co-managed the local financial grants along with the headteacher and hence, had felt they had more influence on how money was spent. I suggest that the employment of accountants in the local school authority presents a shift of power from the parents to de-concentrated officials. The MEMP may have taken this reform as a reaction to PONADEC in order to recentralise power in the central administration. Unsurprisingly, the Education Sector Strategy (Ministères en charge de l'éducation, 2012) insists on the control of transferred funds, aiming to strengthen the role of accountants (cf. chapter 5).

Within my argument about the weakened role of students' parents, I revisit three reasons or events which have reshaped the role of parents: first, the launch of the decentralisation law in 1999, stating the municipality is responsible for school construction, equipment and repair, implying that parents are discharged of their former, but informal responsibility for school infrastructure. Second, the former president, Yayi Boni decreed primary school fee-free in 2006, which many officials, from the municipal to the national level, regret. The fee-free decree implies that parents do not need to pay tuition fees anymore, but they tend to consider this means the government has responsibility for all expenses related to schooling, such as textbooks and uniforms. This contributes to government officials' perception that parents have become disengaged from the formal education of their children. Third, the Education Ministry brought in

⁹⁸ *Mais est-ce que les mairies associent quelqu'un ? Non ! Non ! Tout au plus, tout au plus ils font une séance de travail et appellent les parents d'élèves pour dire « venez ». Mais nous ne convenons pas avec eux. Ils n'acceptent pas trop discuter avec nous.*

⁹⁹ *Quand c'est comme ça, l'APE ne peut plus rien dire. Donc les directeurs s'arrogent carrément le pouvoir de leur gestion et tout se gère... C'est vrai qu'ils requièrent nos signatures pour ci et pour ça. Mais en réalité on n'a pas trop de poids.*

a reform in 2014 to employ accountants within local school authorities to co-manage school budgets with headteachers and parents.

All three events, over 15 years, suggest ‘centralisation’ at the municipal level: parents at the school level have been legally discharged of their previous responsibilities, notably co-managing the school budget, employing community teachers and building schools. This observation is in line with Rasmussen’s (2011) argument that

[t]he implementation of decentralisation reform also reveals the existence of local power centres below the new municipal level. In this sense, the decentralisation reform implies local centralisation processes, and it is also sometimes resisted from below (Rasmussen, 2011, p. 10).

In this context, I consider parents together with the traditional (religious and ethnic) leaders as ‘power centres from below’ as the quote suggests.

In this study, the strengthening of municipal government actors contrasts with the marginalisation of parents, who had historically been involved in enabling their children to access and attend school. The reduced voice of parents is noteworthy as the dominant argument in the literature claims that decentralisation empowers parents (e.g. Gershberg, González and Meade, 2012). The scholarly literature focusing on the Beninese context is divided: Odushina et al. (2008) state that that parents associations represented an essential institution for the management of the school. Rasmussen (2011) also confirms that parental initiatives continued to be powerful, although the devolution laws do not give them a formal role. In contrast, Oussou (2017) argued that students’ parents were willing to build schools and pay contract teachers in the past, but they are reticent today because they consider the municipality as being responsible for these functions.

6.1.2.4 Summing-up

I have argued in this part first, that the decentralisation policy reinforces the role of the municipalities as government entities and, more specifically, as responsible for the provision of school infrastructure for pre-school and primary education. Revisiting Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, I suggest that elected municipal actors enjoy the greatest freedom in terms of participation, ‘citizen control’, which implies that citizens can govern an institution. In contrast, the role of the local school authority remains unchanged as an effect of PONADEC. The structure of the local school authorities as de-concentrated units of the MEMP seems to cohere most with Arnstein’s concept of delegation, where power is delegated to appointed officials for a particular purpose, such as school inspection, in which they have the power of decision-making (Arnstein, 1969).

Second, NGOs, particularly in the North, and benefactors in the South, tended to be influential and intervened in various ways. They navigated the system in parallel with government structures, as demonstrated in the North, or influenced the practice of school actors to exclude municipal and central government entities in the South. I propose that NGOs' degree of participation can be situated somewhere on the continuum between partnership and delegation. For example, NGOs, elected and appointed officials as well as civil society actors shared planning and decision-making responsibilities through specific structures (Arnstein, 1969), such as education or development fora, in the case of partnerships. Pinkney (2009) explains how NGOs are used by international development agencies to simultaneously benefit from more development assistance by channelling development funds through service delivery or advocacy.

Third, more parents reported feelings of disempowerment in the South than in the North. I argued that the reasons for their loss of power are three-fold: the adoption of the devolution laws in 1999, the introduction of free primary education in 2006, and the reform of employing accountants at the municipal level to control the school budget in 2014. I consider the involvement of parents as consultation which serves as a forum for bringing people together with different levels of power, but in Arnstein (1969, p. 217) words, the 'have-nots' 'lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful'.

I consider, however, that these relationships are only fixed in particular moments as power and hence participation may be negotiated on a daily basis and thus are of a changing nature. The next part discusses the reconfiguration of the relationship between central and municipal government entities.

6.1.3 Reconfiguring relationships and networks between central and municipal government entities

In this last part of the chapter, I review how the relationship within the government, notably between central and municipal government entities, has been reconfigured. The analysis of the legal framework for decentralisation in chapter 5 revealed the potential tension over autonomy and control between the municipal and provincial levels and the devolution and de-concentration forms of decentralisation. The first section discusses devolved responsibilities as a competition between the national and local levels from the perspective of the national and provincial officials. The second section debates the attitude of the governor to the mayor, alluding to how the central government controls the activities of the town council through the specific functions of the prefect. Finally, the third section contends that the strengthening of de-concentration to the detriment of devolution empowers the central government at the local level.

This part also revisits the proverb in the title of the chapter: ‘You gave me a sheep, but you have kept the rope’, which repeatedly emerged in the interview data. In theory, the mayor has a statutory position and financial autonomy, but in practice, officials at the national and provincial level often contest the idea of autonomy to maintain power at the central level. This proverb represents the legally devolved responsibilities as the sheep: the rope is hung on to the central government, with the governor representing the head of the government at provincial level. I use the sheep metaphor throughout this last part to demonstrate the dialectic of autonomy and control between central and municipal government entities. It starts by discussing how national and local actors negotiate power in devolved responsibilities for resources and control.

6.1.3.1 Devolved responsibilities as a competing game between the national and the local level

In this section, I extend my argument from the local complexities to the role of the central level, exploring the concept of devolved responsibilities as a competing game between the central and municipal government entities. This section links back to issues that teachers and parents raised in section 6.1.1. I borrowed the idea of a competing game from a senior education official from the STP/ PDDSE who considered the responsibilities for maintaining school infrastructure as a competition between the national and local levels in which the national level still dominates.

In the game of competition between nationally elected officials and locally elected representatives, I perceive that the national officials are not playing fairly. They have held on to issues of school buildings and equipment at the national level (I6, national/ education, 18 01 2017).¹⁰⁰

I illustrate the competing game through three points mainly made by central government officials themselves: firstly, the MEMP continues to build schools; secondly, the national level exercises power by not transferring the necessary resources; and, thirdly, in its control of any transferred funds.

Data from the interviews at different levels confirmed the practice of the Education Ministry continuing to build pre-school and primary schools, even though the devolution laws transferred this responsibility entirely to the municipalities. To this end, the following quote from a central education official states that there are several school building projects which his ministry manages.

¹⁰⁰ *Dans le jeu de concurrence des élus nationaux et des élus locaux, je vois que les élus nationaux ont pris plutôt la précipitation. Ils ont maintenu à leur niveau national la question des constructions et des équipements scolaires.*

There is an abundance of projects that the central level continues to carry out. They go directly to the municipalities and build schools without even informing the mayor. Even the Ministry of Decentralisation [does] the same [thing] (I5, national/ education, 17 01 2017).¹⁰¹

This quote suggests that the central administration carries out tasks that on paper have been devolved to the municipalities, and this is not only prevalent in the Education Ministry but also in other ministries, such as the Decentralisation Ministry.

The underlying rationales for maintaining responsibility for school infrastructure at the central level are several. For example, it can be due to the fear of losing power and privilege when the national level effectively transferred responsibilities, including the necessary resources, as the following quote from an ANCB representative indicates.

However, there is some reluctance by high-ranking officials, especially those of the central administration. They do not want to transfer resources because they fear losing their prerogative to the benefit of the municipalities (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹⁰²

However, the MEMP is only part of a wider network sustaining the centralisation of school infrastructure. Some IOs continued to transfer their funds for school construction to the Ministry rather than the municipalities. For example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supported the centralisation trend of the Ministry, according to a CONAFIL representative.

I believe that the MEMP needs to go beyond what it does since it is no longer rare to find construction projects within the MEMP budget. Yes! I have witnessed this. Nevertheless, the law says that the municipality is competent to put up buildings. If we respect the law, these different projects should not exist anymore, and these different partners [IOs] should no longer transfer resources to the MEMP but use the [financial mechanism] FADeC to transfer resources [to the municipalities] (I38, national/ decentralisation, 05 04 2017).¹⁰³

Moreover, the national level exercises control over the municipality through not transferring to it the necessary human, financial and material resources as having overall control of the transferred funds. I elaborate the insufficient transfer of resources only briefly because other studies and reports (Odushina *et al.*, 2008; Sembene, 2012; MDGLAAT, MEF and MERPMEDER, 2014) have made this argument.

¹⁰¹ *Il y a plein plein de projets qui continuent par être conduits depuis le niveau central. Ils vont directement dans les communes sans même informer le maire et érigent des modules. Même au ministère de la décentralisation, c'est pareil.*

¹⁰² *Mais on sent certaine réticence au niveau des cadres surtout qui animent l'administration centrale. Ils ne veulent pas transférer les ressources qui craignent de perdre leur prérogative au profit des communes.*

¹⁰³ *Je crois que le MEMP doit aller au-delà de ce qu'il fait. Parce qu'il n'est pas encore rare de trouver dans le budget du MEMP des projets de construction. Oui ! J'en suis témoin. Or la loi a dit que c'est la commune qui est compétente pour construire. Si nous devons respecter la loi, ces différents projets ne doivent plus exister et ces différents partenaires ne doivent plus remettre les ressources au niveau du MEMP mais plutôt passer par le FADeC. Pour transférer des ressources.*

Even though all the IOs participating in this study emphasised the willingness of the Education Ministry to transfer funds to the municipalities, the MEMP did not fulfil the conditions set out by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine, UEMOA*). A CONAFIL representative explained that the amount transferred to the municipalities was still relatively low in light of the relative cost-intensive responsibility to build schools.

When the MEMP says it is the ministry that transfers the most, it is in terms of volume; however, it is not much [...] [as the] MEMP has a big budget. [...] So, I think it is right in terms of volume. The MEMP transfers a bit more than the other [ministries]. However, the MEMP does not transfer everything that it could. [...] I do not think the MEMP transfers 10% of what it needs to transfer (I38, national/ decentralisation, 05 04 2017).¹⁰⁴

Finally, the central government exercises power by assuming control of the transferred funds. More precisely, the various ministries regularly monitor the municipalities to check how they spent the funds. The monitoring missions by the Education Ministry, the Decentralisation Ministry and the Finance Ministry as well as donors, do not complement each other but rather repeat the same tasks. Officials from different ministries feel entitled to control the municipalities because their understanding is that 'they' transferred the money, as the following quote from a CONAFIL representative illustrates.

It is the role of the sectoral ministry to transfer and monitor [funds]. However, since the sectoral ministry has de-concentrated services to the municipal level, it should delegate the mission to these de-concentrated services. Since we should not leave Cotonou first, to build in Malanville, which is more than 700 kilometres from here; secondly, supervise a construction site that is in Malanville because that requires monitoring from nearby. So the MEMP ought to transfer [the responsibility to its provincial and local school authorities] (I38, national/ decentralisation, 05 04 2017).¹⁰⁵

This interviewee suggests, on the one hand, that the MEMP should just transfer the funds, but delegate the monitoring to its provincial and local school authorities. On the other hand, he considers the Ministry of Finance and the CONAFIL, which he represents, entitled to control what funds are spent on at the local level.

¹⁰⁴ *Quand le MEMP dit, qu'il est le ministère qui transfère le plus ; c'est qu'en termes de volume, ce n'est pas beaucoup hein. [...] Mais c'est le MEMP qui a un grand budget. [...] Donc je pense que c'est vrai en termes de volume le MEMP transfère un peu plus que les autres. Mais le MEMP ne transfère pas tout ce qui est transférable. [...] Je ne pense pas que le MEMP transfère 10% de ce qu'il doit transférer.*

¹⁰⁵ *C'est d'ailleurs le rôle du ministère sectoriel de transférer et suivre. Mais étant donné que le ministère sectoriel a des services déconcentrés au niveau des communes, le ministère sectoriel devrait déléguer cette mission de suivi à ces services déconcentrés. Parce qu'on ne doit plus quitter Cotonou (1) pour aller construire à Malanville qui est à plus de 700 kilomètres d'ici. (2-) pour aller superviser un chantier de construction qui est à Malanville parce qu'il faut un suivi de proximité. Donc le MEMP doit transférer et suivre simplement.*

We do the monitoring ourselves to avoid slippage. We do this to allow different structures to coordinate their activities better. Moreover, some departments of the Ministry of Finance want to follow up [the expenditure] since, after all, they allocate the resources to different ministries. They just want to see clearly, what is done with the resources allocated to different ministries. So we are coordinating this follow-up by the Finance Ministry. We carry out joint missions (I38, national/ decentralisation, 05 04 2017).¹⁰⁶

Besides the overlapping of control mechanisms, an ANCB representative explained that the legal framework includes provisions to reduce the likelihood of funds being misappropriated, which contrasts with the widely held view by central state officials that the aim of control is to reduce the risk of corruption.

We finally wonder if people are serious. Three percent of the [national budget is transferred to the municipal level] and we set up ten commissions to control it. Three percent of resources [at the municipal level and] 97% per cent [at the central level]. [How is that controlling? [...]] Frankly, we wonder if people are serious. [...] Not only is the accountant of the town hall, an agent of the government. He is a treasury agent. Even if the mayor wants to do something, he is there to say, "Mr Mayor, it does not follow procedures". So, there are many guardrails at the municipal level. The rest is a question of willingness (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹⁰⁷

This section discussed how the central and the municipal level compete for control of devolved responsibilities, whereas the next section deals with the dialectic relationship between the governor and the mayor when navigating questions of autonomy and control.

6.1.3.2 The central state at the local level: the role of the governor and the relationship with the mayor

The analysis of the devolution laws in chapter 2 stated that the prefect, who is the representative of the state at the provincial level, supervises the mayor, who is a legal personality and has financial autonomy. The governor checks the legality of the acts performed by the mayors according to the devolution law 97-028 (MDGLAAT, 2010, article 14). In this context, I suggest that the legal framework risks the ineffective transfer of power to mayors because governors can control the activities of the mayor. This is even more problematic if the mayor represents a

¹⁰⁶ *Nous-mêmes, nous suivons pour éviter les dérapages. Nous suivons pour permettre aux différentes structures de mieux coordonner leurs activités. Maintenant il y a les structures du ministère des finances aussi qui veulent suivre. Parce qu'après tout, c'est eux qui font les allocations de ressources aux différents ministères. Mais ils souhaitent souvent voir claire dans ce qui est fait avec les ressources allouées aux différents ministères. Alors ce suivi par le ministère des finances, c'est nous qui coordonnons cela. Nous faisons des missions conjointes à ça.*

¹⁰⁷ *On se demande finalement si les gens sont sérieux. 03% et on met dix commissions pour contrôler. 03% des ressources. 97% pourcent ici, comment est-ce que c'est contrôler ? Combien de commissions de contrôle il y a ici. Franchement on se demande si les gens sont sérieux. [...] Non seulement la mairie mais le comptable de la mairie, c'est un agent de l'Etat. C'est un agent du trésor. Même si le maire veut faire du n'importe quoi, lui, il est là pour dire « monsieur le maire, ça ne respecte pas les procédures ». Donc il y a énormément de garde-fou au niveau communal. Le reste c'est une question de volonté.*

different political party to that of the head of state, as the following quote from a provincial representative of a teachers' union points out.

If the governor is not in agreement with the mayor, he can block his/her actions [...] and prevent him/her from working [...]. Since politically, if the mayor is not on the same side as the President of the Republic [...], but the governor is [...], the mayor can easily be defeated and his place taken by someone who is (I51, school, South, 16 05 2017).¹⁰⁸

This interviewee argues that the governor can influence the activities of the mayor through his/ her role make sure municipal acts are in accordance with the national legislation, potentially politicising his/ her role alongside that of the political party of the central government.

Surprisingly, the majority of critical voices came from the national and provincial level, whereas officials at the municipal level tended to defend the role of the prefect. The following quote illustrates how the municipal officials of the Northern municipality assumed that control by the governor was necessary to ensure that mayors respected the national legislation.

Imagine that the prefectures do not insist [on controlling], it will be a disaster. It is the prefectures that are there to see our activities are legal [...] within national guidelines to see if an action taken respects the legal requirements (I29, municipal/ decentralisation, North, 22 03 2017).¹⁰⁹

Similarly, municipal officials in the Southern municipality did not think that the role and the activities of the governor got in the way of their autonomy.

It does not disturb the autonomy of the municipality. [...] Well, decentralisation started not long ago. Moreover, many do not understand the operation of the laws [...]. If we put the prefecture there to control the legality [of the acts], it is to avoid any leakage [...]. Otherwise, the municipality is autonomous. The municipality is autonomous. It is not for the governor to come and say how the town hall should ... It is just to see ... (I47, municipal/ decentralisation, South, 05/05/2017).¹¹⁰

The municipal officials in this quote, however, displayed some resistance towards the prefecture, emphasising the autonomy of the municipality.

¹⁰⁸ *Si le préfet n'est pas d'accord avec le maire, il peut bloquer ses actions [...] et l'empêcher de travailler [...]. Car politiquement, si le maire n'est pas du même côté que le président de la République [...], mais que le préfet est [...], le maire peut facilement être battu et sa place prise par quelqu'un qui est.*

¹⁰⁹ *Imaginez que les préfetures n'insistent pas, ça va être une catastrophe. C'est les préfetures qui sont là pour voir la légalité des actes que nous prenons, que nous produisons avec des dispositions nationales pour voir si tel acte qu'on a posé, si tel document qu'on a pris respecte les dispositions légales.*

¹¹⁰ *Ça ne dérange pas l'autonomie de la commune. Mais ça permet à... Puisque nos communes, c'est des communes qui sont... Bon la décentralisation a commencé il n'y a pas longtemps. Et beaucoup n'ont pas le sens de la gestion des lois. C'est pour vous dire que si on a mis la préfecture là pour le contrôle de la légalité, c'est pour qu'il n'y ait pas de débordement. [...] Sinon, la commune est autonome. La commune est autonome. Ce n'est pas à la préfecture de venir dire comment la mairie doit C'est juste pour voir...*

Recalling the proverb 'You gave me a sheep, but you have kept the rope', I suggest that the governor may represent the invisible hand holding the sheep, which represents the devolved responsibilities. Thus, the guardianship of the governor could be considered a solid mechanism of the central state to control the activities of the town council. Nanako (2016) supports this argument, explaining that governors predominantly practised control over the legality of activities, while their advisory support to the municipalities is only minor. Interestingly, most municipalities respected the constitutional principles of the prefecture's actions as being according to the laws of devolution. Similarly, Schneiderfritz (2016, p. 5) explained that even though the governor is nominated according to national policy criteria and, a degree of politicisation prevents him to continue impartially 'in the regular exercise of their technical/ administrative supervision of the municipalities'. The political role of the prefect, I suggest, therefore, poses a risk to the autonomy of mayors as governors may advise and control them according to national politics to the detriment of the needs of the local population.

The next section deepens the current discussion in light of recent political reforms, notably how de-concentration helps to strengthen the control of the central government at the local level.

6.1.3.3 Strengthening central government control locally through de-concentration

In 2016, the government increased the number of provincial capitals and governors from six to 12, which I consider strengthens de-concentration, likely to counterbalance the devolution of education governance. Even though the General States of Territorial Administration instituted this territorial reform in 1993, I question its pertinence in light of the previous discussion in which I argued that the government still over-exercises power at the local level through the role of the prefect. Moreover, this reform raises the question of to what extent the current discursive and social practices interact with and reinforce the reform.

I consider decentralisation understood as de-concentration as an attempt to optimise government control at the lower levels. The following quote from a senior education official suggests that the expansion of the number of prefectures serves to strengthen the central government's control over the municipalities: 'it is a way of multiplying the influence of the state on municipalities and provinces' (I4, national/ education, 11 01 2017). Similarly, his colleague agreed that strengthening de-concentration through the appointment of further governors meant strengthening the central government.

When the population voted for its president, it voted for 13 presidents: the president himself and 12 governors (I16b, national/ education, 11 02 2017).¹¹¹

Moreover, this senior education official pointed out that 'the governor is called the authority of guardianship' and that the strengthening of the de-concentration is to continue 'total centralism' (I16b, national/ education, 11 02 2017). Rondinelli (1990, p. 494) points out the risk that administrative decentralisation may not only promote greater political participation but also risks extending 'state control to territorial units as to decision making'. I consider the example of the guardianship of the governor in the Beninese case as one such a mechanism helping to extend state control at the municipal level. From a different perspective, a retired official from a bilateral agency argued that decentralisation does not work without strengthening the central government. Consequently, the role of the prefecture as the government's 'local service' and the increase in the number of prefectures because 'Benin is under administered' was essential (I60b, IO, 04 06 2017).¹¹²

Inspired by Berkhout's (2005, p. 316) comparison of a functional analysis of decentralisation with a Foucauldian analysis in a comparative study of South Africa and Belgium, I argue that the Beninese decentralisation reform is an 'amalgamation of decentralisation and concealed centralisation measures' rather than a shift from the centre to the periphery, from a functional perspective. For instance, a senior education official pointed to the interconnectedness of decentralisation-centralisation.

We are in a centralised position, and we are strengthening centralisation by saying decentralisation. [...] Instead of decentralising the school, the school is politicised as an aspect of decentralisation (I4, national/ education, 11 01 2017).¹¹³

If I consider the de- and re-centralising trends from a Foucauldian perspective understanding power 'as manifested only in relations' (Berkhout, 2005, p. 315), decentralisation takes place within interactive actor-networks in a setting of pluralistic policy-making. Moreover, I suggest that strengthening centralisation through de-concentration, for instance, through the role of the prefect, among others, means that the governor is part of a more extensive network of actors (re-)interpreting the decentralisation policy and (re-) negotiating power in their various ways. Hence, power remains relational and fluid.

¹¹¹ *Quand la population a voté son président, elle a voté 13 présidents: le président lui-même et 12 préfets.*

¹¹² This interview was neither audiotaped nor transcribed.

¹¹³ *Nous, on est dans une centralisation et on renforce la centralisation en disant décentralisation. [...] Au lieu de décentraliser l'école, on politise l'école en parlant de décentralisation.*

6.1.3.4 Summing-up

In this section, I have argued that relationships have also changed within the central and municipal governments. First, I revisited some aspects of the beginning of the chapter, providing the perspectives of national and municipal officials on questions of devolved responsibilities, resources and their control. I argued that the national level still exercises power over the devolved responsibilities by not transferring or taking control of the necessary resources. Second, I argued that the legal framework, reinforced by social practices, gives the governor (appointed) a particularly powerful function over the mayor (elected). The predominantly practised control over giving advice questions the legitimacy of political decentralisation and democracy more broadly. Third, there is a tendency to re-centralise power, notably through strengthening de-concentration to the detriment of devolution. However, borrowing from Berkhout (2005), I suggested going beyond the centralisation- decentralisation debate to consider the re-configuration and re-negotiation of power between the actors as moments of temporal stability, which can be changed as an effect of the broader actor-network.

6.2 Summary

This chapter has weaved together how actors connect to form social practices around education decentralisation across all levels and sectors. After a description of the social practices in the Northern and the Southern field sites, based on the actor-maps and focus groups with teachers, I disentangled the relationships and power dynamics among the actors from a comparative perspective. I argued that the local is a social arena allowing institutional and relational pluralism in the form of a bewildering array of networks, mechanism and relationships. Ball (1994a) captures the messiness pertinently through what he calls the ‘wild profusion of local practices’.

Policy is both text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map onto a government of local practice (Ball, 1994a, p. 10).

The social practices around the de-concentrated responsibilities, such as school inspection, and devolved responsibilities, such as school construction, extension, maintenance and equipment, emerged as disorderly and diverse. From the ANT perspective, the devolved and de-concentrated processes, actors, planning documents and understandings of these, the formal and informal relations all form assemblages. They are particular and fixed to specific geographies and territories, but simultaneously, fluid and exchangeable (Latour, 2005).

The second and third parts are extractions from the wider actor-network, identifying the reconfiguration of the relationships between government and non-government actors. More precisely, the second part explored how municipal government actors, notably the town council and the local school authority, (dis-) connected with non-government actors, especially NGOs and parents, but also how relationships have changed with state and non-state actors. While the decentralisation policy has not directly influenced the voice of the local school authority, it has strengthened the municipality to the detriment of parent's voices. Moreover, school actors across field sites, and in particular parents, shared feelings of being disempowered. In contrast, NGOs, a 'vital phenomenon to the government acting in a global system', as Fichtner (2012) puts it, continued to navigate the space, particularly in the North.

The third part examined the actors within the government, notably the relationship between the central and the municipal government entities. I argued that the decentralisation policy reinforced rather than reconfigured the previous power relations. First, I considered the absence or over-control of the resources in the context of the devolved responsibilities as part of a competing game between the national and the local levels. Second, I discussed the dialectic relationship between the governor and the mayor, and how they related to each other about issues of autonomy and control. Third, I reflected on how the government tended to privilege de-concentration at the expense of devolution and engaged in various ways to re-centralise power.

However, I also suggested that power relations are dynamic and multi-directional, hierarchical, asymmetrical and non-egalitarian, fluid and potentially changeable (Foucault, 1978, 2003b, 2003a). As a result, I understand the tendencies of centralisation and disempowerment as an 'interactive force of networks and other structures and actors in a world of pluralistic policy-making' (Berkhout, 2005, p. 318). This theorisation implies that particular discourses and practices, such as centralisation trends, are fixed at a particular moment in time, but they may constantly change.

The next chapter sheds light on the agenda setting of education decentralisation in 1990. I take the National Conference of the Active Forces as the starting point to unfold the historical, political and socio-economic formations to explain why education decentralisation became influential at this particular moment in time.

7 The emergence of the education decentralisation reform as a complex web of assemblages¹¹⁴

This chapter investigates the third sub-question which is how human and non-human actors connected to bring about education decentralisation in 1990 as a complex web of assemblages. While the previous chapter 6 focused on two local sites of enactment in the Northeast and the Southeast in Benin, this chapter examines the phenomenon across different places, - Cotonou (Benin), La Baule (France) and Berlin (Germany). It relates to the context of influence of Ball's framework of policy trajectory studies (cf. chapter 3), exploring the agenda setting of education decentralisation in Benin. The interview data, particularly with officials from the MEMP, the MDGL, and the MPD, and their sub-units, as well as policy documents, inform this chapter.

This chapter draws on ideas of ANT (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010) to trace the connections between assemblages that contributed to the emergence of the decentralisation policy in Benin. As Latour (2005, p. 54) explained, an actor can be a structural trait (e.g. colonialism), a corporate body (e.g. the Beninese government), an individual (e.g. Francois Mitterand), or a loose aggregate of individuals (e.g. participants at the 1990 conference). This chapter traces how the lived events (cf. section 7.1 and 7.3), individuals, groups and social formations (cf. section 7.2) and historical processes (cf. section 7.4) acted upon one another to make education decentralisation powerful at a particular moment in time. As I previously pointed out in my critique of the human/non-human divide, this chapter considers non-human actors in the analysis to the extent that they are part of the broader network (cf. sections 7.1, 7.3 and 7.4), but privileges the voices and actions of human actors in section 7.2.

Following ANT, this chapter has three aspects, starting with the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 and the unfolding of its actor-network, second, focusing on local and global events on and beyond this conference, and third, its historical formations. The first move in ANT is to localise the global, or in Latour's words 'to lay continuous connections leading from one local interaction to the other places, times, and agencies' (Latour, 2005, p. 173). and, thus explain how education decentralisation became temporarily powerful and stable in 1990.

¹¹⁴ As explained in the introduction, I use assemblage and actor interchangeably, whereby I understand assemblage as an analytical focus on the dynamic networks of material and discursive practices (Koyama and Varenne, 2012).

7.1 The National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 as the starting point for decentralisation.

The first part sheds light on the central role of the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 in introducing a new political regime, namely democracy and decentralisation. I first unpack the underlying concepts of the conference, which are the citizen, the nation, and the principle of sovereignty. Second, I analyse how the agenda setting for education decentralisation is framed by global discourses. Overall, I use the 1990 conference as a non-human actor to unfold the actor-networks in space and time, whereby I consider neither time as linear nor space as flat.

The National Conference of the Active Forces, held in Cotonou in February 1990, had a crucial role in the transition from a socialist government to a multi-party western-style political system (cf. chapter 2). Most of the research participants saw the 1990 conference as the turning point from socialism to a liberal democratic government, implying the decentralisation reform. The following two quotes are representative of this argument. A representative of ANCB describes the transition from one political regime to another through the event of the 1990 conference.

We were in a Marxist regime from 72, 75 to 89. From there, we went to the national conference, where we decided to return to democracy. So, the foundation of the reform is that. It is the decisions of the national conference (I61, national/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹¹⁵

While this interviewee describes the political change, the next quote from a senior official of the Decentralisation Ministry explicitly mentions the decision taken to decentralise the governance system.

Following this conference, it was decided to implement decentralisation like many other countries (Interview 10, national/ decentralisation, 24 01 2017).¹¹⁶

The conference proceedings also state that the national conference aimed to establish a new constitution involving separation between the Party and the State (the multiparty system), the creation of the post of prime minister, and the decentralisation of power (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994).

Gisselquist (2008, p. 792) stresses the significant role of the National Conference as an active force, 'a practice that soon adopted a model for democratic transition in other countries', in

¹¹⁵ *On était dans un régime marxiste à partir de 72, 75 jusqu'à 89 où on est allé à la conférence nationale où on a décidé de revenir à la démocratie. Donc le fondement de la réforme, c'est ça. C'est les décisions de la conférence nationale.*

¹¹⁶ *À la suite de cette conférence, il a été décidé de mettre en œuvre la décentralisation comme dans beaucoup d'autres pays.*

the move from a relatively centralised government to a presidential representative democratic republic. In contrast, Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan (2003) argue that it was not the democratic renewal in 1990 that signalled a significant change, but rather, the Marxist-Leninist regime introduced in 1974. They explain that state officials and other now elected officials have mostly been reconfirmed in their previous functions of 1990 and before, such as village chief and mayors at village and municipal levels, respectively. They argue, furthermore, that the '[f]reedom of the press, a multi-party system or a strong emphasis on the rule of law is of little import[ance] to rural populations' (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003, p. 166).

I propose that the different understandings of the central role of 1990 conference in introducing education decentralisation found in this study is the result of the focus on predominantly urban and mostly elite populations. I assume that rural people have different views to urban people about democracy and decentralisation as they are affected differently, as pointed out by Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan (2003). The reason for this divergence may be traced back to the education system under colonial rule, when urban elites and rural people had differing access to education. At that point, 'urban elites [were] subject to the power of the colonial state, [...] rural dwellers [...] were [...] subject to traditional forms of authority' (Tikly, 2019, p. 232). In other words, the urban elites can be considered as 'citizens' of the modern state or indigenous agents of modernity, whereas rural people are regarded as the 'subjects' of more traditional forms of authority.

7.1.1 The citizen, the nation and the principle of sovereignty: semantic features of the conference

The nation-state, the citizen and the sovereignty surrounding the 1990 conference are key themes in this study. De-constructing the conference title, the 'Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation', I suggest that the term 'active forces' refers to 'Beninese citizens', for example in the summary of the objectives in the conference proceedings and the opening discourse of former president Kérékou (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994).¹¹⁷ Objective eight, for example, calls all Beninese citizens, referred to as 'active forces', to contribute to the implementation of the decisions and measures of the conference.

¹¹⁷ The Historical Dictionary of Benin (Houngnikpo and Decalo, 2013) translates 'forces vives' in French into 'active forces' in English, while other translation software also refers to 'major players, powerful forces for change, driving forces, the strength, active forces, stakeholders, active civil population, active political forces', among others.

[The National Conference of the Active Forces] calls upon all the Active Forces of the Nation to contribute fully to the diligent and full implementation of these decisions and measures (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 33, own translation).¹¹⁸

Houngnikpo and Decalo (2013) relate 'active forces' to a variety of citizens, from the government, armed forces, trade unions, non-government groups, the community in exile and academics, among others.

Moreover, sovereignty was a recurrent theme in the conference proceedings and the interview data. The conference proceedings affirm the claim of *sovereignty* in objective six of the Declaration of the aims and competences of the conference.

Solemnly proclaims its sovereignty and the executive power over these decisions (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 33, own translation).¹¹⁹

The interviewees explained that the 'sovereign character' of the conference enabled the participants to carry out the decisions taken at the conference.

The National Conference wanted this reform. [...] The conference proclaimed itself sovereign. It imposed its decisions on the government of that time (I10, national/ decentralisation, 24 01 2017).¹²⁰

I understand the emphasis on the sovereignty of the conference against the background of the previous regime and the former president, Kérékou, and his entourage. The conference and the actors present at the conference had the power to decide what was to happen to their country independently of the previous political regimes and possibly, without the influence of external actors.

Conventionally, sovereignty is a defining characteristic of the modern nation-state, 'the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community' (Hinsley, 1986, p. 1 in Held, 1989, p. 215). Following Held's (1989) development of sovereignty, the Marxist-Leninist regime of the previous form of authority in Benin was no longer legitimate. That is, the idea of sovereignty, represented through the 1990 conference, 'provided a fresh link between political power and rulership'. Hence, the policy elites, religious leaders, and the international community, formed a powerful assemblage, and 'sovereignty offered an alternative way of conceiving the legitimacy of claims to power' (Held, 1989, p. 219).

¹¹⁸ ...demande à toutes les Forces vives de la Nation de contribuer pleinement à l'application diligente et intégrale de ces décisions et mesures.

¹¹⁹ Proclame solennellement sa souveraineté et la force exécutoires de ces décisions.

¹²⁰ C'est la Conférence Nationale qui voulait cette réforme. [...] La conférence s'est proclamée souveraine. Donc, elle a imposé ses décisions aux gouvernements d'alors.

Finally, the title of the conference – ‘conference of the nation’ emphasises the concept of the nation, as does the alternative ‘national conference’. I link this emphasis on the national character of the conference to the observed ownership claimed by many interviewees, which I discuss in section 7.2 in this chapter. ‘Nation’ in this sense could contain a patriotic vision, in particular after the long period with a Marxist-Leninist regime influenced by the Soviet Union. I propose that both terms, the active forces and the sovereign character of the conference, are a call to *all* citizens and authority is given to their actions. The term ‘all citizens’ contrasts with the elites, previously in power; the term ‘sovereignty’ contrasts with the previous *hegemony* of Kérékou and French colonial masters.

Dunne et al. (2017) find fault with the Western origins of the nation-state, above all, those states emerging from colonial histories, such as Nigeria and Senegal, among others. In their examination, they distinguish between the ‘nation’ as ‘a community of people who aspire to be politically self-determining’ and the ‘state’ as ‘the set of political institutions that a particular community may aspire to achieve’. The authors consider the nation as not only being a construct but as actualising cultural narratives, such as colonial and postcolonial discourses, which then become naturalised. They argue that these postcolonial countries have a relatively short period of nation-building and are influenced by ‘particular extra-national, colonial and postcolonial configurations of power’ (Dunne *et al.*, 2017, p. 32). Dunne et al.’s (2017) analysis is relevant to the Beninese context as well in terms of its postcolonial setting. Colonial discourses of development, as the following argument about the discursive linkage between decentralisation, democracy and development in the next section demonstrates, shaped the cultural narrative surrounding education governance in Benin.

7.1.2 Global discourses framing the conference and the democratic renewal

Different motives underlie the introduction of education decentralisation in the context of the National Conference of the Active Forces. The first motive, I argue, is the promise of decentralisation as a way to foster democracy and development. The analysis of the conference proceedings reveals that ‘developing and adopting a Charter of National Union for *democratic renewal* and the economic, social and cultural *development* of Benin’ (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 20, italics added)¹²¹ constitutes the main objective of the conference. Moreover, the report demands ‘a government based on democracy, and endogenous and self-

¹²¹ D’élaborer et d’adopter une Charte d’union Nationale pour le renouveau démocratique et le développement économique, social et culturel de notre pays.

centred development' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 45).¹²² Self or people-centred development refers to improving local communities' self-reliance, social justice, and participatory decision-making (Korten and Klauss, 1984).

This report also alludes to ideas of participation and subsidiarity, which are common rationales for decentralisation. It states that 'some can no longer highjack power to the detriment of others' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 37); 'the mankind is to be at the centre of development; the mankind is to be at the heart of economic growth and the division of goods' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 41).¹²³ These elements were equally reflected in the interview data and call for the redistribution of power, giving the Beninese citizen an active role in contributing to the country's development. Likewise, officials from the MEMP and the MDGL respectively emphasise the role of the conference in handing power over to the population as an important principle of decentralisation.

Therefore, we went to the national conference and decided to give up power to the population, so that the community itself decides its future (I67, national/ education/ decentralisation, 22 06 2017, italics added).¹²⁴

Most research participants offered different conceptions of development and participation at different points in time, e.g. an elitist notion of development anchored in a centralised and command regime before 1990, but afterwards, the idea of empowering people at the local level or transferring power to the local level. A senior official from the Education Ministry suggested that the elitist concept of development prevented the population from participating and benefiting from progress, as the following quote shows.

The *development* of Benin was conceived in a somewhat elitist manner; all the enormous means, all the efforts made, hardly ever touched the population. Therefore, [...] the decision to *decentralise* was taken at the conference of February 1990 (I4, national/ education, 11 01 2017, italics added).¹²⁵

¹²² *Un système de gouvernement fondé sur la démocratie, et sur un développement endogène et autocentré.*

¹²³ *Le pouvoir ne peut plus être confisqué par quelques-uns pour l'écrasement des autres. [...] L'homme au centre du développement; l'homme au cœur de la croissance économique et du partage des biens.*

¹²⁴ *C'est comme ça que nous sommes allés à la conférence nationale et est ressortit que désormais il faut laisser le pouvoir au peuple, que le peuple lui-même décide de son avenir.*

¹²⁵ *[Vous savez avant], le développement du Bénin était conçu d'une manière un peu élitique. Les programmes de développement, les projets de développement, les moyens pour réaliser ces projets étaient gérés par les élites au niveau central, au niveau supérieur. [...] Donc c'est à partir de la synthèse de toutes ces situations qu'à la conférence des forces vives de la nation du février 1990 l'option de décentraliser a été prise.*

This interviewee considered participation as a precondition for development. Similarly, a junior official from the Decentralisation Ministry argued that decentralisation empowers people at the local level to decide the kind of development they want and, hence, their empowerment leads to the development of the country and the reduction of poverty.

The national conference saw that this mode [central governance] is not the one that could boost development. Therefore, we wanted to make the *grassroots people more empowered* by giving them the power to decide their *development* through the election of a mayor or councillors who could stimulate development. So, for the majority, it was to solve the problem of *poverty* and *development* (I7, national/ decentralisation, 19 01 2017).¹²⁶

Even though the dominant discourse in the interview data reflects the relationship between decentralisation, democracy and development, scholars generally diverge from the interview data view, as pointed out in the literature (cf. chapter 3). In particular, Bierschenk (2009) points out the problematic relationship between democracy and economic development in the case of Benin. He questions whether it is possible ‘to transform a structurally deficient rent-based [economy] into a productive economy’ through democratisation in a context where ‘[p]olitical relations are characterised by neopatrimonialism, and widespread corruption, ethnicity and regionalism’ (Bierschenk, 2009, p. 2).

Even though development, democracy and decentralisation are not necessarily related to each other, as suggested by the broader scholarly literature, they are discursively linked in the interview data and policy texts in this study. In other words, the review of the interview data and policy documents suggests that the respondents and producers of the policy document perceive development, democracy and decentralisation as related to one another; on the other hand, the literature suggests that democracy and decentralisation lead only conditionally to development.

7.1.3 Summing-up

So far, I have argued that the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 as a non-human actor has been presented as the event marking the political transition leading to democracy and decentralisation. The sovereign character of the conference with its strong emphasis on the modern nation-state and its citizens provided the authority required for introducing a liberal form of democracy and decentralisation. Moreover, global discourses, linking together development,

democracy and decentralisation, can be found within the interview data and the documentary review.

The next section unpacks the role of different actor groups at the 1990 conference and how they contributed to the outcome of the conference, acknowledging that I reduce this discussion to the human actors.

7.2 The role of individuals and groups at the 1990 conference

I first discuss the national aspirations before considering other social groups, such as elites returning from exile and high-ranking politicians in the Beninese context. Finally, I shed light on the external influences on the conference outcomes.

7.2.1 National aspirations

Most interviewees in this study suggested that the Beninese citizens themselves decided to opt for decentralisation, pointing to the 1990 conference as a national initiative. They emphasised the national ambitions of Beninese citizens in initiating the conference to decide on Benin's future. The quote below from a senior education official not only explicitly mentions decentralisation as a product of the 1990 conference, but also emphasises the role of the 'brilliance of Beninese mankind' in holding this conference.

The national conference of February 1990, which prescribed decentralisation, is the fruit of the *brilliance of the Beninese humankind*. That had never happened before. It was an unprecedented experience in Benin (I4, national/ education, 11 01 2017, italics added).¹²⁷

This quote has to be understood in the context of the importance of the national conference for the region. The conference has been described as a conference with model characteristics, which other countries in the region have copied because of its success (Gisselquist, 2008).

Other interviewees give credit to the incumbent president Mathieu Kérékou in initiating the conference. To this end, a retired official of the government, explained that 'the conference, which united the political class with the religious leaders, was the decision of president Kérékou' (I9, national/ decentralisation, 24 01 2017).¹²⁸ Taking a different perspective to the interview data, Laloupo (1993 in Gisselquist, 2008) argues that France recommended Kérékou organising this conference, which they promised to support financially.

¹²⁷ *La conférence nationale de février 1990 qui a prescrit la décentralisation est le fruit du génie de l'homme béninois. Car cela ne s'était jamais encore passé nulle part. C'était une expérience inédite au Bénin.*

¹²⁸ This interview was neither recorded nor transcribed.

In terms of the representation of the actors at the conference, most interviewees, particularly the senior officials, emphasised that Beninese citizens from all sectors, regardless of their social position, were present at the conference. The following quote from a senior decentralisation official emphasises the role of all social groups, as he puts it.

That we come together, *Beninese people from all social groups*, to think about the ways and means to undertake or to bring back to every citizen what we call peace, freedom of expression, [and] the opportunity to organise ourselves (I67, national/ education/ decentralisation, 22 06 2017, italics added).¹²⁹

The proceedings of the conference (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994) confirm that more than 500 participants attended the 1990 conference, notably

peasants, workers of all kinds, administrators, political parties and groups, development associations, non-governmental organisations, religious representatives; influencers who have held leading positions at national and international levels (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 34, own translation).¹³⁰

The interview and documentary data suggest that different social groups were present at the conference, but such a large presence of a different range of groups does not mean that they participated equally or that their views were taken seriously. Thus, I come back to my argument that the elites, on behalf of the general population, significantly influenced the outcome of the conference. For instance, a former senior decentralisation official pointed out that 500 participants was too large a number to take any decisions and that is why a smaller group decided on behalf of the population (I50, national/ decentralisation, 12/05/2017).¹³¹ Another interviewee from the Decentralisation Ministry also pointed out that only a ‘small nucleus’ influenced the outcome significantly, as the following quote illustrates.

The conference was sovereign. It made decisions that were imposed on the rulers of that time. It is true in any reflection, there is always a *small nucleus* that launches ideas (I10, national/ decentralisation, 24 01 2019).¹³²

Moreover, 500 participants in relation to the nearly five million overall population in 1990 (World Population Review, 2019) indicates that the Beninese citizens were represented, but not themselves present as the 500 only amounted to 0.01% of the overall population. This observation

¹²⁹ *Qu'on se retrouve tous les béninois quelques soit leurs couches sociales pour réfléchir sur les voies, les moyens et les pistes pour entreprendre ou ramener au niveau de chacun des citoyens ce que nous appelons la paix, la libre expression, la possibilité de s'organiser.*

¹³⁰ *Paysans, travailleurs de tous ordres, cadres de l'administration, partis et sensibilités politiques, associations de développement, organisations non-gouvernementales, représentants des cultes; personnalités ayant exercé des fonctions de premier plan sur le plan national et international.*

¹³¹ This interview was neither audiotaped nor transcribed.

¹³² *La conférence a été souveraine. Elle a pris des décisions qui se sont imposées aux gouvernants d'alors. C'est vrai dans toute réflexion il y a toujours un petit noyau qui lance les idées.*

leads to the exploration of the question of precisely who was included in the small nucleus of decision-makers, whereby the interview data points to the powerful role of the elites in exile, which the next section explores.

7.2.2 Elites in exile vs all Beninese citizens

Following the previous section, I suggest that the conference attendees in themselves were an elite. On the one hand, they included elites returned from exile, and on the other, high-ranking politicians in Benin. As a first response to the economic and financial breakdown, the conference proceedings state that 'the diaspora has to return' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 43). Those belonging to the diaspora may have had characteristics in common with how elites can be defined, as outlined in chapter 4, such as having had higher social positions, more knowledge, better education, money and status (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002).

A few interviewees explained that Beninese intellectuals, who had either studied and lived outside the country or were persecuted and exiled to foreign countries, had decided to decentralise the Beninese State, as a junior decentralisation official suggests.

To my knowledge, I would say that, while the national conference had been externally influenced [...], it is perhaps the *Beninese* who came from *outside* to the conference. [...] I will say that these were the intellectuals [who introduced the decentralisation idea at the conference]. As I said, decentralisation was decided at the national conference. Once the constitution was passed by referendum, all [decisions] were adopted. So, the decision was taken at the time of the conference. *Intellectuals* were present at the conference (I7, national/ decentralisation, 19 01 2017).¹³³

This quote states clearly that the decision to decentralise was taken at the conference, but he also implicitly alludes to the assumption that the returning elites from exile may have exercised a particular influence on the outcome of the conference.

Moreover, the data and secondary literature reveal disagreement between the elites. Besides the elite returning from exile, high-ranking politicians from the previous government formed a powerful actor group. Kérékou, the then president, who entrusted the organisation of the conference to Robert Dossou, a Beninese lawyer and politician, and the Archbishop of Cotonou, led the conference (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994) and formed a powerful network of elites

¹³³ *A ma connaissance je dirai que s'il y a une influence, c'est par rapport à la conférence nationale. Parce que la décision de décentraliser est partie de la conférence nationale et s'inscrit dans la constitution du Bénin. Je ne dirai pas que ça vient de l'extérieur. Si ça vient de l'extérieur, c'est peut-être les béninois qui sont venus de l'extérieur à la conférence. [...] Je dirai que c'est les intellectuels. Puisse que comme je l'ai dit, la décentralisation a été décidée à la conférence nationale. Une fois que la constitution a été votée par référendum, on a adopté tout. Donc la décision est prise depuis la conférence. Et à la conférence c'était les intellectuels qui y étaient présents.*

deciding on the agenda to decentralise Benin's government. Robert Dossou, president of the preparatory committee of the National Conference, was an influential politician and lawyer. The Archbishop of Cotonou, Isidore de Souza, was elected as president of the presidium of the conference. Some interviewees alluded to his role as a mediator throughout the conference, in particular, when the conference was in danger of failing because Kérékou did not want to recognise the sovereign character of the conference. Hounnikpo and Decalo (2013) agree with this claim, explaining that only the diplomacy of the Archbishop and pressure from France prevented the conference from failing. These key players disrupted the then Marxist-Leninist regime and, borrowing the expression of Koyama and Varenne (2012, p. 158), 'opened up new routes for participation and resistance'.

Besides the powerful network of Beninese elites, external actors equally influenced the agenda setting, as discussed in the next section.

7.2.3 External influences

The interview data and the documentary review provide different perspectives of the roles of external actors and influences. From the analysis of the conference proceedings, it emerges that NGOs and country representatives while not significantly represented in terms of numbers at the conference, occupied a prominent place. Only four NGOs were admitted to the conference, while about ten foreign countries were present, including France, the Soviet Union and the United States of America (USA) (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994).¹³⁴

In particular, the conference proceedings quote an excerpt of the speech of the then French Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, which emphasises the necessity for the political will, democracy and human rights to solve the financial and economic crisis.

There is no cure for situations of economic and social crisis that do not stem primarily from the political will, notably through a deepening of democracy and respect for human rights (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 45, own translation).¹³⁵

The French Prime Minister is given an 'authoritative position' and his voice seems to legitimatise the political turn. It also helps to create a perceived consensus of the aims of the conference in the context of international solidarity and cooperation.

¹³⁴ In addition, Egypt, Nigeria, Germany, Switzerland, Algeria, Ghana

¹³⁵ *Il n'y a pas de remède à des situations de crise économique et sociale qui ne procède d'abord d'une volonté politique passant notamment par un approfondissement de la démocratie et du respect des droits de l'homme.*

Moreover, the report frequently mentions 'financial and technical partners' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, pp. 40, 43; 45–48) as well as SAPs (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, pp. 14, 16, 19). The assistance of IOs and the implementation of SAPs are proposed as the third and fourth remedy measures for the economic and financial breakdown of the country. In addition, the report mentions education and health - among other sectors - as a priority for external aid (third priority), and IOs are called upon to support the education system (fourth priority) (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, pp. 43–44). The positioning of IOs and SAPs in the conference proceedings suggest that external actors exercised an influential role to produce the outcome consensus to democratise and decentralise Benin's governance system.

From the interview data, however, most interviewees at the national level argued that external actors did not pressurise the institution of the decentralisation reform, but a few acknowledged the external influence in the agenda setting for decentralisation in Benin:

No! There are indeed *external influences*, but we ourselves gave us our devolution laws. [...] We developed devolution laws by ourselves. [...] It is possible that *external pressures* contributed to this or that. It is possible, but not to the extent that they interfered with the proceedings (I4, national/ education, 11 01 2017, italics added).¹³⁶

The interviewee emphasises the role of Beninese citizens in developing the devolution laws, but at the same time, by contrast, acknowledges the possibility of external pressure. This contradiction could be traced back to the sovereign character of the conference, giving authority to the decisions made. However, the conference not only represented national but also global actors and their aspirations, as previously discussed.

Other interviewees referred to the external influences more explicitly, as the words of a junior decentralisation official show.

It is possible [that there was an external influence], highly possible because African countries are not autonomous as such. Most policies are even *externally* implemented. So I cannot exclude the 'invisible hand' from outside that may have said 'go in this direction'. You alluded to France-Africa and *your* Bretton Wood institutions. In particular, France and those institutions which have the most influence on French-speaking countries, the same thing happened with the SAPs. [It is] a dictate, the leaders of the time were stuck and were offered a remedy that did not allow them to get out of their situation (I7, national/ decentralisation, 19 01 2017, italics added).¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Non ! C'est vrai qu'il y a des influences extérieures, mais c'est nous- mêmes qui nous sommes donnés nos lois sur la décentralisation. [...] Nos lois de la décentralisation ont été élaborées par nous-mêmes. [...] C'est possible que les pressions extérieures contribuent pour ceci ou pour cela. C'est possible. Mais dans une proportion qui ne puisse mettre l'expérience en échec.*

¹³⁷ *C'est possible. C'est fort possible. Parce que les pays africains ne sont pas autonomes en tant que tel. La plupart des politiques sont mises en œuvre par l'extérieur même de façon directe. Donc je ne peux pas*

This interviewee acknowledged the influence of global actors and interventions, providing the example of SAPs, which he considered not only as a dictate but also as a remedy without effect. He also alludes to Bretton Wood institutions and the influence of France on its former colonies. Hence, he does not exclude the possibility that IOs influenced the agenda setting.

Similarly, a senior official of the MDP argued

so it is from this perspective that I say that the international environment makes decentralisation a requirement for the states today. It is even a condition for receiving development aid (I56, national/ planning, 24 06 2017).¹³⁸

This planning official went further, arguing that decentralisation is a precondition for accessing development aid. Steiner-Khamsi (2012, p. 5) explains that external funding may support policy borrowing: 'a condition for receiving aid', as she puts it, and concludes that 'policy borrowing in developing countries is coercive and unilateral'. Similarly, Bierschenk (2009, lines 561-562) points out that 'the political discourse is easily adapted to the latest fashion emanating from the West' and he quotes, among other terms, 'decentralisation and poverty'.

7.2.4 *Summing-up*

Although most interviewees emphasised the national aspirations of Beninese citizens in initiating the conference and deciding on Benin's future, I suggest that the elites, on behalf of the population, together with external actors, influenced the outcome of the conference. In particular, the interviewees argued that the citizens of Benin themselves decided to opt for decentralisation, seeing the 1990 conference as a national initiative from the former president, Kérékou, and 'wide-ranging' representation of different social groups at the conference.

I challenge this view since the conference attendees were themselves an elite of 500 representatives, including in that number elites returning from exile and influential politicians from the former government. Extending the argument about the role of elites, I refer to Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006, p. 256) who argue that the so-called 'global culture' has largely reproduced the colonial structures of inequality, with postcolonial elites playing a major role in

exclure la main invisible de l'extérieur qui peut-être a dit bon allez dans ce sens. Vous faites allusion à la France-Afrique, vos institutions de Bretton Wood. Surtout la France et ces institutions-là qui ont surtout d'influence (pour la France) sur les pays francophones. C'est la même chose qui s'est passé avec les PAS (les Programmes d'Ajustement Structurel). C'est un dicta, les dirigeants d'alors étaient coincés et leur a proposé un remède qui n'a pas bien permis à les faire sortir de leur situation.

¹³⁸ *Donc c'est dans cette optique que je dis que l'environnement international fait de la décentralisation une exigence aujourd'hui pour les Etats. C'est même une conditionnalité pour avoir l'aide au développement.*

their reproduction. Likewise, while NGOs and other country representatives were not present in significant numbers, they occupied a prominent place in the conference proceedings. Together with the Beninese elites, they formed a powerful assemblage to decide upon education decentralisation.

The next part examines the question of why the agenda for education decentralisation was set at that moment in time, exploring further formations, which contributed to the conference and the political transition.

7.3 The reform of education decentralisation as an assemblage of local and global events

I now introduce the second move in tracing the actor-network, which is the redistribution of the local or, in Latour's words, the path 'to trudge toward the many local places where the global, the structural, and the total were being assembled and where they expand outward' (Latour, 2005, p. 191). In this part, I situate the agenda setting of education decentralisation as a network of further local, national and global assemblages. In extending the actor-network in space (and time), I discuss the role of the economic and financial breakdown in Benin in the 80s and how it contributed to the holding of the 1990 conference; and how this conference was embedded in a wider global network of events in and around 1990, such as the fall of the Berlin wall and the democratisation discourse at La Baule. Acknowledging that the actor-network cannot be reduced to these events only, I use them only as an example of non-human actors aiming to redistribute the local.

7.3.1 The breakdown of the Beninese economy in the late 80s

The national conference and the democratic renewal in Benin in 1990 can be considered in the context of the breakdown of the economy at the time of the then Marxist-Leninist government, as some senior officials from MEMP and MDGL discussed.

While we arrived in Benin at this stage, we started from the socio-economic situation and the socio-political and colonial experience that we had lived through in the 80s. Moreover, there were economic problems where the state was not able to pay wages anymore [particularly to the army and to teachers] (I67, national/ education/ decentralisation, 22 06 2017).¹³⁹

The quote above suggests the democratic renewal was anchored in the economic and financial breakdown of the country. According to Bierschenk & Olivier de Sardan (2003), the

¹³⁹ *Alors que nous sommes arrivés au Bénin à cette étape à partir de la situation socio-économique que nous avons socio-politique et colonique que nous avons vécu dans les années 80. Et il y a eu des problèmes effectivement économiques où l'Etat arrivait même plus à payer les salaires.*

financial crisis, as well as the global 'de-ideologisation' and the relaxation of the hold of Marxism, all contributed to the unfolding of the concept of democratic renewal. The crisis meant the recruitment of civil service positions was disrupted, school and university diplomas were devalued and finally, the State was unable to pay its civil servants, and began laying off workers, which led to an urban exodus.

The conference proceedings also labelled the economic and financial crisis as one of 'exceptional gravity' (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 41). The suggestions for how to respond to this crisis covered five areas. Of relevance to this study is the development of emergency relief measures for the education sector, in particular, the sciences. In terms of financial relief, the report calls upon the services of the Beninese diaspora and the need to maintain a relationship with the international community, particularly NGOs, to contribute to the recovery of Benin. Implementing the SAPs and the National Economic Recovery Program were further mechanisms to promote development (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994). Drawing on ANT, this is an example of how groups (Beninese diaspora, international community) and policy documents (SAP, National Economic Recovery Program) form assemblages, which only become powerful through the process of connecting in the emergence of education decentralisation.

In the next section, I discuss the local changes which took place in Benin within the remit of geopolitical power changes.

7.3.2 *The geopolitical world shift and the democratisation discourse at La Baule as further assemblages*

Most respondents with official positions in this study emphasised the view that Beninese citizens had decided on the decentralisation reform at the 1990 conference. As a few mentioned, however, global events also influenced the emergence of education decentralisation. Thus, education decentralisation did not emerge as a strong concept because of local events in Benin alone, such as the 1990 conference, but also because of other 'local' events, which had a global impact through connections with other assemblages.

The political transformation process in Benin took place at a time when geopolitical change was occurring, exemplified by the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 - before the 1990 conference - and the end of the cold war between the West/ US and the East/ Soviet Union (Grugel, 2002). Kérékou in his opening speech, as documented in the conference proceedings, stated:

We appreciate the definitive symbol of liberation that the destruction of the Berlin Wall is today. We know what it means for Europe and for the people in reunified Germany. This lesson of tenacity and hope that you thus give to the whole universe will mark our time. Our conference wanted me to tell you how much we are counting on you [the representatives of Germany present at the conference] so that our awakening and rebirth can be sustained by the same clarity of political choice as yours (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 47, own translation).¹⁴⁰

In this quote, the destruction of the Berlin Wall' is considered as a 'definitive symbol of liberation', linking back to the section on global discourses (cf. section 7.1.2).

The geopolitical world shift was also mirrored in Benin. The Soviet Union's influence in Benin faded, while France and the US became key players in influencing the political direction of Benin, as shown in the analysis of Kérékou's opening speech. Kérékou, addressing France first, asked for a closer and franker cooperation, asked 'Mr Mitterrand to be the first guarantor of the Solidarity Contract that we have negotiated and sealed here'¹⁴¹ (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 46). The US was considered as a 'a witness; ... partner; ... friend.'

Please convey to President Bush our sincere hope that he will be with us in our struggle for freedom, democracy and development (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 46).¹⁴²

In contrast, Kérékou states the following regarding the former Soviet Union:

Our conference has more than once referred to Perestroika. We believe in it and we ask you, as the wish of the Assembly, to convey to Mr Gorbachev our sincere admiration (Fondation Friedrich Naumann, 1994, p. 46, own translation).¹⁴³

While the Soviet Union only receives Benin's admiration, France is considered to be 'the guarantor of the Solidarity Contract', which indicates an expected commitment by France. Largely, Kérékou's speech reflects the changing power relations, from the Soviet Union to France and the US, for Benin. Pinkney (1993, p. 15) suggests that the 'collapse of the Soviet Empire, and the limited achievements of Third World [...], have hastened support for less centralized, more participatory brands of socialism'.

Moreover, I argue that the democratisation discourse of Francois Mitterrand at La Baule in June 1990 forms a further assemblage contributing to the emergence of education decentralisation

¹⁴⁰ *Nous apprécions à sa juste valeur le symbole définitif de libération que signifie aujourd'hui la destruction du mur de Berlin. Nous savons ce que signifie pour l'Europe et pour le Monde en Allemagne réunifiée. Cette leçon de ténacité et d'espérance que vous administrez ainsi à tout l'univers marquera notre temps. Notre conférence a voulu que je vous dise combien nous comptons sur vous pour que notre réveil et notre renaissance soient soutenues par la force de votre détermination et la lucidité de vos choix politiques.*

¹⁴¹ *M. Mitterrand d'être le premier garant du Contrat de Solidarité qu'ici nous avons négocié et scellé.*

¹⁴² Original quote is in English, therefore no translation.

¹⁴³ *Notre conférence a plus d'une fois fait référence à la Pestroika. Nous y avons foi et nous vous prions, c'est le vœu de l'Assemblée, de transmettre à Monsieur Gorbatchev notre sincère admiration.*

in Benin. Several interviewees referred to this speech, as the following quote of a senior official, representing the mayors at the national level, illustrates.

Benin does not live in a vacuum. You know that there was this famous speech by François Mitterrand, at La Baule, calling upon African countries to [opt for] democracy. After this speech, all these countries threw themselves into the dynamics of democracy according to their understanding and ability. In some places, there is peace; other places went for democracy, but peace took a hit; social cohesion took a hit. So, it is clear that international agendas also affect the rhythm of internal events. I cannot [exactly] know what is behind the speech at La Baule. However, what is clear, [...] that this was the speech where François Mitterrand called on African countries to go towards democracy (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹⁴⁴

Mitterrand's speech, which urged African countries to engage with democracy, forms an assemblage underpinning peace and social cohesion in some cases, but unrest in other cases, as exemplified in the quote. This quote requires revisiting a short excerpt of Mitterrand's speech in which the underlying assumption is the interdependence of the concepts – development and freedom/democracy, implying that each is a necessary condition for the other – but not necessarily a sufficient condition for each other.

I speak to you as a citizen of the world to other citizens of the world: when you take the path to *freedom*, at the same time, you advance along on the path of *development*. We could also reverse the formula: taking the road to *development* will put you on the road to *democracy* (Mitterrand, 1990, own translation, italics added).¹⁴⁵

Mitterrand equates freedom with development and development with democracy. The notion of freedom alludes to a liberal understanding of democracy and citizens. The report of the Department of Education of the Province of the Eastern Cape Department (South Africa) states that decentralisation has been a dominant policy reform in many developing countries for years. It was a typical theme in the democratisation of nation-states and institution-building efforts, especially in the African continent, alongside the SAPs in the 1980s and 1990s (Province of the Eastern Cape Department, 2004).

¹⁴⁴ *Le Bénin ne vit pas en vase clos. Vous savez qu'il y a eu ce fameux discours de François Mitterrand à La Baule qui a appelé les pays africains à la démocratie. Après ce discours, tous les pays se sont lancés dans la dynamique de la démocratie. C'est vrai que chacun y allait comme il comprenait, comme il pouvait. Certains endroits, il y a la paix ; d'autres endroits, on est allé à la démocratie mais la paix a pris un coup. La cohésion sociale a pris un coup. Donc c'est clair que les agendas internationaux rythment aussi ce qui se passe à l'interne. Tout ce qu'il y a derrière le discours à La Baule, ça là, je ne peux pas le savoir. Mais ce qui est clair, au moins ça on sait qu'il y a eu ce discours où François Mitterrand a appelé les pays africains à aller vers la démocratie.*

¹⁴⁵ *Je vous parle comme un citoyen du monde à d'autres citoyens du monde : c'est le chemin de la liberté sur lequel vous avancerez en même temps que vous avancerez sur le chemin du développement. On pourrait d'ailleurs inverser la formule : c'est en prenant la route du développement que vous serez engagés sur la route de la démocratie.*

However, the Beninese conference took place before Mitterrand's famous speech, linking freedom, development and democracy to French aid (Gisselquist, 2008). This suggests that while the development discourse from La Baule may have reinforced the democratisation and decentralisation process in Benin, other assemblages could also have contributed to bringing education decentralisation onto the agenda of the Beninese government.

7.3.3 Summing-up

Even though the National Conference of the Active Forces has been predominantly presented as the main political transition leading to decentralisation, I demonstrated in this section that other 'local' events of non-human nature, such as the economic and financial breakdown in Benin, the fall of the Berlin wall and the democratisation discourse at La Baule contributed. In particular, the global world shift and the democratisation discourse impacted globally on the actor-networks of IOs and geopolitical scenarios such as the democratisation of many African countries, giving rise to local actors forming and reforming networks through liberally and neo-liberally shaped decentralisation reforms.

7.4 Historical determinations and lived events in and beyond Benin before 1990

The last part of this chapter extends the actor-network in time, going beyond the 1990 conference, its actors and the global influences at that time. As previously pointed out by Latour (2005), actors can also be structural in nature, such as historical processes, which is the focus of the narrative of this last part of this chapter. In particular, the analysis traces the different and contradictory narratives about the endogenous and exogenous origins of the policy of devolution and de-concentration. As highlighted in chapter 3, I do not consider time as linear nor space as flat. This means that I do not think through education decentralisation to be chronologically built upon previous experiences, but consider it rather, as an assemblage of different experiences, which mash-up and overlap in the current policy. In this part of the chapter, I argue that the representative democracy including decentralisation was built up incrementally based on the previous political regimes, such as the participatory mechanisms under Marxism-Leninism (1974-1989), the attempts at devolution to some municipalities under late colonial rule (1955s) and the traditional chieftaincies from before the colonial rule (before 1894).

7.4.1 *Community participation during the Marxist-Leninist regime*

As chapter 2 explained, Benin adopted a socialist regime between 1974 and 1989 informed by the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. The research participants were divided in their opinion as to whether the Marxist-Leninist state was a centralised and command-driven regime or a first

attempt to devolve power. The majority of interviewees did refer, however, to democratic and devolved elements during the Kérékou government. For example, a senior official, representing the mayors at the national level, explained that the chiefs at the village level were democratically elected.

At the village level, the elections of the village chiefs were democratic, at least for elections at the time before democracy. These were elections where people put themselves in front, and we chose them (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹⁴⁶

This quote illustrates that the village level adhered to a form of democracy for the free election of village chiefs.

At the municipal and provincial levels, the interviewees referred to some form of democratic principle that translated into elections; however, these elections took place within the party in power. The following extensive quote explains the administration system under Kérékou, pointing to a hybrid form of devolution and de-concentration; the quasi-elections took place within the political party in power.

The reforms started from 1977 onwards; different arrangements created the territorial administration and local power organs of the State. They put in place another form of decentralisation with its administrative authorities at the same time. [...] It was a *hybrid* regime. We talked about the local power organs of the State; the central power appointed the overall head of the administration, the sub-governor and the head of the district. They were under the titular authority of the prefect, but they had a fully functioning unit. [...] There was a form election within the political party in power. The people elected the political party in power as well as the authorities appointed; they collaborated to some extent. The same procedure took place at the district level. At that time, we called them municipalities. In addition, the Revolutionary Municipal Commission (*Commission Communale Révolutionnaire*) [...] was an organ which came together to think about development problems in the municipality. [...] There was a form of local democracy implying the level of the village, district and provincial (today's councils). There was [also] the Provincial State Committee of Administration (*Comité d'Etat d'Administration de Province*) [...]. However, the post holders were all members of the political party in power (I11, national/ decentralisation, 26 01 2017, italics added).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ *Parce qu'au niveau des villages, les élections des responsables de village, c'était des élections démocratiques. Ça au moins pour les élections au temps avant le temps de la démocratie. C'était des élections où les gens se mettaient devant et on les choisit.*

¹⁴⁷ *Les réformes ont commencé si bien qu'à partir de 1977 ; des différentes ordonnances ont créées l'administration territoriale, et les organes locaux de pouvoir d'Etat. Ils ont mis en place une autre forme de décentralisation avec en même temps les circonscriptions administratives. C'était un régime hybride. On a parlé des organes locaux de pouvoir d'Etat ; le chef de circonscription administrative, le sous-préfet ou le chef de district est nommé par le pouvoir central. Il est placé sous l'autorité tutelle du préfet mais il a un organe délibérant qui est composé de tous les chefs services déconcentrés de pouvoir d'Etat au niveau de ces circonscriptions administratives. Il y avait des formes d'élection avec les organes du parti au pouvoir. Et c'était le parti unique. Donc les organes du parti au pouvoir, étaient élus et à côté de ces autorités nommées, il y avait une certaine collaboration. Au niveau des arrondissements c'était un même procédé. A l'époque on les appelait commune. Et à côté il y avait les CCR (Commission Communale Révolutionnaire) qui réunissait l'ensemble de tous les chefs de village de la commune c'est-à-dire de l'arrondissement et était présidée par le maire. C'était quand-même un organe qui se réunissait*

This interviewee summarises nicely 'There was still a form of democracy from the bottom up'. Le Meur (1998) confirms that Kérékou's reform of 1977 introduced significant steps towards decentralisation and democratisation. He explains that the village, the village council and the village chief had a legal existence after the colonial period.

The interview data also suggests that the local population was more involved in the management of schools during the revolutionary period compared to today. 'The school was their thing', as one senior official of the MEMP put it (I21, national/ education, 06 03 2017). Kérékou's slogans, like 'power to the people' empowered people at the local level to participate actively in different areas of social life (education, health, among others), as he argues.

I experienced decentralisation when I was a pupil during the revolution: the 'Ecole nouvelle' was good. [...] You know, the slogan was 'honour to the people, the power to the people, and all the power to the people'. That was the slogan at the time of the revolution. It was then that the school became the object of the people (I21, national/ education, 06 03 2017).¹⁴⁸

Fichtner (2012) and Jarroux (2017) propose that the dominant approach to education 'Ecole nouvelle' during the revolutionary period served to democratise access to schooling, decolonise the curriculum and secularise education.

Not surprisingly, education officials in particular, emphasised the role of parents in the delivery of pre-school and primary education, but officials from other disciplines, such as a senior official of the ANCB, also pointed out the relative power of parents during this period. Parents, represented in associations at all levels of the governance system, were empowered to give guidance, as the following quote suggests.

The other element is the involvement of parents' associations. They were indeed, associations, but with some influence over the management of the school; they could provide guidance (I61, municipal/ decentralisation, 06 06 2017).¹⁴⁹

pour réfléchir sur les problèmes de développement de la commune. [...] Arrivé au niveau des villages ou quartier de ville, nous avons les CRL par exemple. Ils sont appelés comité Révolutionnaire Local. Ça c'est au niveau des quartiers ou des villages (conseil du village aujourd'hui). Il y avait quand-même une forme de démocratie depuis la base jusqu'au sommet. Donc vous avez le niveau quartier/village, le niveau arrondissement, le niveau district ou le niveau provincial ou départemental aujourd'hui. [...] Il y avait un conseil départemental qu'on appelait le CEAP (Comité d'Etat d'Administration de Province) qui est un peu ce qu'on peut appeler ailleurs les conseils généraux. Mais c'était les membres du parti au pouvoir.

¹⁴⁸ *La décentralisation avait été vécue quand j'étais élève au temps de la révolution: l'école nouvelle, c'était bon. Personne n'a voulu aujourd'hui... Vous savez, le slogan était: « honneur au peuple, pouvoir au peuple, tout le pouvoir au peuple ». C'était ça le slogan au temps de la révolution. C'est en ce moment-là que l'école est devenue la chose de la population.*

¹⁴⁹ *L'autre élément c'est l'implication des associations des parents d'élèves. C'est vrai que c'est une association mais qui avait certains regards sur la gestion faite au niveau de l'école et qui pouvait donner des orientations.*

As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, parents felt more influential in the provision of the education of their children during the revolutionary regime.

The majority of officials suggest that the Revolutionary period included 'good' elements of democracy and community participation, but that the transition to a democratic system replaced the previous system without taking account of these elements.

Nevertheless, when we rejected Kérékou and his revolution, and democracy arrived, we threw away everything. There were good things we could draw upon from then. Unfortunately, we threw everything away (I21, national/ education, 06 03 2017).¹⁵⁰

This perspective contrasts with the views of a few interviewees identification of the Marxist-Leninist regime as 'command-driven' and 'centralised'. A junior official from the Decentralisation Ministry suggested the transition to a democratic government was a response to this centralised regime.

By the way, before 90, [...], the central State managed everything. The representatives of the State alone were responsible for [...] the administration at the level of the municipalities, which we called sub-prefecture at that time. I would not say there was much preoccupation with development ... So the central State asked them to do what they did. It was just a command administrative system from the top (I7, national/ decentralisation, 19 01 2017, added italics).¹⁵¹

Jarroux (2017, p. 72), referring to Alderfer (1964) explains that Kérékou described his regime as 'democratic centralism' referring to Lenin. His 'democratic centralism' promoted free discussion within the party and absolute discipline simultaneously, whereby the 'local government' in communist regimes is part of the overall system. Following on from this analysis, Bierschenk and Sardan (2003, pp. 148–149) argue that Benin's 'socialism' of the 1970s and 1980s 'aimed at eliminating the instances of local mediation in place at the time and establishing direct and systematic state power within village communities'. In this regard, they consider decentralisation as an 'alternative project being implemented against a background of different ideological orientations and the aim of improving the embeddedness of the central state in local societies' (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2003, p. 149).

Overall, the respondents had different perspectives of the Kérékou regime, suggesting it brought either empowerment at grass-roots level or the dominance of a command-driven

¹⁵⁰ *Mais quand nous avons rejeté Kérékou et sa révolution, et que la démocratie est arrivée, on a tout jeté. Il y avait encore de bonne chose qu'on peut aller puiser là-bas. Malheureusement on a tout jeté.*

¹⁵¹ *Au fait, avant 90 [...], c'était l'Etat central. Donc tout se gérait depuis l'Etat central. Et au niveau des communes d'alors qu'on appelait sous-préfecture, il n'y avait que les représentants de l'Etat qui assuraient le fonctionnement de l'administration légère ; je ne dirai pas de développement mais qui se préoccupaient par... Donc c'est ce que l'Etat central leur demande de faire qu'ils faisaient. C'était juste une administration de commandement d'exécution des ordres venus du haut.*

system. Most research participants referred to the Revolutionary period under Kérékou as a period of grass-roots involvement. This perspective contrasts with the views of other interviewees perceiving the Marxist-Leninist regime as 'command-driven' and 'centralised' and the transition to a democratic regime as a response to this centralised regime. In order to explain the tension between the arguments of the majority of senior officials and those of some junior officials, it is helpful to draw on Berger and Luckmann (1991), who argue that a new generation constructs historical events differently. Although I did not collect data relating to respondents' ages, I observed that research participants could be categorised into a senior generation who had experienced and possibly helped shape the political transformation in 1990 and the Marxist-Leninist legacy on the one hand, and a mid-career generation who had grown up within the democratic system. This younger generation drew their knowledge about the emergence of the democratic system, including decentralisation, from their parents, teachers and other individuals and institutions. The observations of the different generations about the emergence of education decentralisation and their different perspectives of the contribution of the Marxist-Leninist period drawing on Berger and Luckmann (1991), may be related to their age and experience.

I view the late colonial period as a further assemblage which has connections with other assemblages to give rise to education decentralisation today, which the following section elaborates.

7.4.2 Decentralisation as a response to the centralised system under colonial rule

Like the revolutionary regime, the colonial period divided the interviewee's understanding of decentralisation as a response to a centralised system on the one hand and building up incrementally upon an initial experience of devolution, on the other. Colonial rule may have provoked decentralisation in two ways: on the one hand, the current decentralisation reform can be considered as a response to a highly centralised system of governance under French colonialism. On the other hand, Benin experienced the devolution of five municipalities in the late colonial period before its independence. In that regard, I see education decentralisation as not only inspired by community participation elements during the Marxist-Leninist period but also building upon Benin's experience of partial devolution under colonial rule.

I divide the argument considering the current reform of decentralisation as building upon experiences under colonial rule into two sub-arguments. On the one hand, the current territorial organisation of Benin has its roots in the colonial organisation (cf. chapter 2). On the other hand, France made concessions by devolving some responsibilities to some municipalities in the later period of colonial rule. First, I discuss the similarities between the current, the colonial and

subsequent Marxist territorial organisation. This quote of a junior education official explains the structure under colonial rule.

Since we had a long tradition of de-concentration, even before the advent of decentralisation... [...] Well before that, we had sub-prefectures; there were the municipalities and districts within [the sub-prefectures]. We used to call [them] municipalities, what we call boroughs today. The sub-prefecture was at the macro level and subdivided into municipalities; each municipality was subdivided into villages so on (I15, national/ education, 17/01/2018).¹⁵²

After the Second World War, the colonial rule divided Dahomey (previous name of Benin) into *départements* governed by a central prefect, *sous-préfectures* governed by assistant governors or *sous-préfets*, and the necessary administrative unit, which was the *arrondissement* (Decalo, 1987; Ki-Zerbo and Holenstein, 2003). As outlined in chapter 5, the decentralisation reforms, in the Territorial Administration of 1993, mostly kept the administrative organisation of the colonial rule, replacing the *sous-préfectures* by elected bodies, the municipalities.

On the other hand, France made concessions by devolving responsibilities to some municipalities in the later colonial era¹⁵³, as this quote from a senior decentralisation official indicates.

There was already a strong desire for colonial emancipation. In 1958, France already felt that the phenomenon of autonomy would arise. Facing this strong demand from the colonised people to strive for their independence, France had already given the green light to show their willingness to adhere to these demands. [The ambition for independence] is what justified the creation of these municipalities from 1955 there, all over francophone Africa. It is mainly in the big cities that there were these municipalities (I11, national/ decentralisation, 26 01 2017).¹⁵⁴

Following this quote, I interpret France's concession as a mandatory step in light of the forthcoming independence in 1960. However, the same interviewee also acknowledged that France only allocated limited autonomy to these municipalities.

In reality, when you read the [legal] texts, one immediately feels that they were guided municipalities where full autonomy does not exist. [...] They conferred [some] responsibilities on these municipalities, but in reality [...] they did not really exist. There was the strong arm of

¹⁵² *Parce que nous avons eu l'ancienne tradition de déconcentration, bien même avant l'avènement de la décentralisation. [...] Bien avant ça on avait les sous-préfectures ; à l'intérieur d'elles il y avait les communes et des arrondissements. Ce que nous on appelait commune entre temps, ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui arrondissement. C'était la sous-préfecture qui était au niveau macro et subdivisée en commune ; les communes subdivisées en villages ainsi de suite.*

¹⁵³ Porto-Novo, Cotonou, Ouidah, Abomey et Parakou anchored in the decree n 57-461 of 04 April 1957

¹⁵⁴ *Il y avait déjà une forte volonté d'émancipation des colonies. La France sentait déjà de 1958 avec le phénomène de l'autonomie venir. Et face à cette forte revendication des peuples sous colonie à aller à l'indépendance, la France, pour montrer sa volonté avait déjà envoyé les signaux pour montrer quelle adhérait les revendications. C'est ça qui a justifié à partir de 1955 la création de ces communes-là. C'était dans toute l'Afrique francophone. C'est principalement dans les grandes villes qu'il y a eu ces communes.*

colonial rule in the functioning of these municipalities (I11, national/ decentralisation, 26 01 2017).¹⁵⁵

This quote also exemplifies the risks of decentralisation, where the State may use the de-concentration of its administration as a way to exercise control at the local level (Rondinelli, 1980).

In contrast to the previous argument about the initial experience of devolution under late colonial rule, some officials argue that the decentralisation reform as a national aspiration was the response to the centralised organisation during the period of the French empire. From this perspective, Benin was governed not only by, but also mainly from France before 1960, as a senior education official at the national level explains:

Benin has known a long tradition of centralisation. The smallest village in Benin was administered from Paris, later from Dakar. The only contribution the population was asked to make was to send their children to school (I16b, national/ education, 16 02 2017).¹⁵⁶

This quote points to the highly centralised system under colonial rule.

Decentralisation often alternates with centralisation trends (Conyers, 1984). Lauglo (1995) explains that most countries struggling for independence tend to devolve power, but once these countries gain their freedom, they tend to recentralise for social cohesion. This statement confirms the findings of the study that Benin sought partial devolution in the late colonial period and re-centralised after independence. The study has shown so far that the origins of decentralisation can be partially found in the French empire - as a response to the centralised administration or as an expression of devolved authority to a few municipalities in 1955 - and in the revolutionary regime for similar motives.

A further constituent in the assemblage of education decentralisation stimuli today is the traditional organisation of Benin in pre-colonial times. The traditional chieftaincies provoke a debate about their form - whether de-concentrated or devolved - and their role in the current decentralisation reform.

¹⁵⁵ *Mais en réalité lorsque vous lisez les textes, on sent tout de suite que c'était des communes guidées où l'autonomie même n'existe pas. Parce que quand vous lisez les textes, il y a des compétences qui ont été conférées à ces communes créées mais en réalité pour ce qui doit être pour les communes, ce n'est pas réellement ça. Il y a un lien fort de la mainmise du colon dans le fonctionnement de ces communes.*

¹⁵⁶ *Le Bénin a connu une longue tradition de centralisation. Le plus petit village du Bénin était administré depuis Paris, plus tard depuis Dakar. La seule contribution qu'on a demandé à la population était d'envoyer ses enfants à l'école.*

7.4.3 Traditional chieftaincies: precursors of de-concentration or devolution?

Most interviewees emphasise the distant past of de-concentration in Beninese history and considered the first attempt to decentralise the system of governance was in the traditional chieftaincies in pre-colonial times (before 1894). Before French colonisation, Benin was called the Kingdom of Dahomey and had a strategic geopolitical role in the region. Benin could be characterised as being based on both political and geographical traditional chieftaincies (cf. chapter 2). Although interviewees acknowledged the importance of traditional forms of organisation within the current decentralisation policy, they do not agree whether the organisation of these regional kingdoms is closer to the idea of de-concentration or devolution. The following excerpt of the debriefing with officials of the Decentralisation Ministry and the Education Ministry demonstrates the ambiguity of the discussion.¹⁵⁷

Junior decentralisation official: What I wanted to say- [...] not in terms of participation, but in historical terms- when I take the case of the kingdoms I know, that they are devolved structures [...]. There is the king; there are the chiefs of the land who have [...] a defined territory for which they are accountable. [Therefore], it can be said that it is a form of de-concentration or devolution of power.¹⁵⁸

The junior decentralisation official (above) argues that, for example, the local kingdoms of Save or Nikki represented a form of de-concentration or devolution, whereas the senior official in the group argues (below) that they represented forms of de-concentration, not devolution.

Senior decentralisation official: If we start from the definition that the law provides us with for devolution [and] de-concentration, devolution, it is the creation of [a local government].
Junior decentralisation official: [...] no, I am talking about kingdoms ...
Senior decentralisation official: but then, you cannot talk about devolution.¹⁵⁹

The discussion suggests that some interviewees tended to classify traditional chieftaincies as models of de-concentration, rather than devolution, because regional kingdoms had their representatives at village level who were still accountable to and dependant on the king. Understanding traditional chieftaincies as a form of de-concentration rather than devolution is in

¹⁵⁷ The following discussion is an excerpt of the group interview 67, national/ decentralisation/ education, 22 06 2017.

¹⁵⁸ *Ce que je voulais dire, hm, [...] pas en terme de participation, mais en terme historique, quand je prends le cas des royaumes que je connais, qu'ils sont des structures de façon décentralisées carrément : il y a roi, il y a des chefs de terre qui ont, les chefs de terre ont un certain territoire ou ils rendent compte, on peut dire que c'est une forme de et déconcentration ou de décentralisation du pouvoir qui a été fait. Donc, quand vous prenez les royaumes de Save ou les royaumes de Nikki, [...] qui étaient une forme de décentralisation ou bien de déconcentration du pouvoir parce que [...]*

¹⁵⁹ *II : Si nous partons de la définition que le texte nous donne de la décentralisation/ déconcentration, décentralisation, c'est la création d'état identité...*

I3 : ...non, je parle des royaumes...

II : mais la la, vous ne pouvez pas parler de décentralisation.

line with Rondinelli's (1980) definition of decentralisation: devolution is understood as transferring particular responsibilities and resources to the local government, whereas de-concentration means delegating specific responsibilities to field offices.

Whereas the interview data showed consensus about the importance of traditional chieftaincies as the precursors of the decentralisation reform today, the literature discusses the role of traditional chieftaincies in a different way. Schneiderfritz (1989) underlines the importance of traditional chieftaincies for the current decentralisation reform, while Bierschenk and de Sardan (2003, p. 148) point to 'the relative unimportance of traditional chieftaincy in Benin, despite laborious attempts at rehabilitation by the chiefs in particular'. They explain that these local chieftaincies gained their renaissance only after 1989, as a parallel structure to the town councils. Nanako (2016) considers traditional chieftaincies as a form of auto-organisation, which could have the potential to develop into real, local authorities if the colonial legacy, on the one hand, and the state power, on the other, had not been to their detriment. The literature points to either the (conditional) importance or insignificance of the traditional chieftaincies in terms of the governance structure of today, while the data from this study contends that education decentralisation was built up incrementally based on the experience of the traditional organisation of society, notably for de-concentration.

The previous discussion showed how the interviewees debated whether the traditional chieftaincies formed an important assemblage in the networking of education decentralisation and whether they presented a form of devolution or de-concentration. I consider the traditional chieftaincies to be a form of de-concentration that has influenced the design of the current decentralisation policy, consisting of a mixed system of devolution and de-concentration. Although the data in this study and the literature shows consensus about the non-institutionalisation of these traditional forms of governance in the recent constitution, some point to the potential they could have had in the current governance system.

7.4.4 Summing-up

This part discussed the multiple material assemblages that led to the decentralisation reform in 1990, resulting from the historical, political, socio-economic and cultural processes of their formations. The historical determinants point to the de-concentrated organisation of local kingdoms, attempts to devolve authority to a few municipalities in the late colonial period, and community participation in the Marxist-Leninist period that followed. More specifically, I have argued that the representative democracy, including decentralisation, has been built up incrementally on previous political regimes, such as the participatory mechanisms under

Marxism-Leninism (1974-1989), attempts to devolve power to some municipalities under late colonial rule (1955s) and to the traditional chieftaincies from before the colonial rule. From a post-colonial perspective, acknowledging the endogenous experience of, and knowledge about decentralisation is important, as this perspective shows the legacy of European imperialism (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006).

7.5 Summary

This chapter showed how decentralisation emerged powerfully in 1990 as part of a network traced through the connections between local and global actors. The third move in ANT combined the two previous moves - localising the global and distributing the local at the same time - to trace 'connections, vehicles, and attachments' [as] variously entangled and varied (Latour, 2005, p. 220). The policy of decentralisation emerged from a complex web of connections of lived events (1990 conference), historical determinations (endogenous precursors of decentralisation), concepts (devolution and de-concentration), individuals (the former president, and Archbishop of Cotonou, among others), groups and social formations (elites in exile). Moreover, the political instability in the fading authority of the Marxist-Leninist regime in Benin on the one hand, and the end of the cold war in 1989 on the other, point to the political determinations underlying the agenda setting for education decentralisation in Benin.

In the first part, I showed how the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 was significant in bringing about the education decentralisation reform. More precisely, I argued that this conference reflected the shift in Benin from a socialist democracy, ideologically influenced by Marxism-Leninism, to a liberal form of democracy. The emphasis on the nation-state, the citizen and sovereignty framed this shift as well as the discursive interdependence of decentralisation, democracy and development. In the second part, I discussed the role of human actors at the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990. Even though there is a strong narrative suggesting that Beninese' citizens decided themselves to opt for decentralisation pointing to the 1990 conference as a national initiative, my contention is that elites and external actors influenced the outcome of the conference. Particularly the elites returning from exile and influential politicians formed a powerful assemblage together with NGOs and country representatives to bring education decentralisation onto the agenda of the Beninese government in 1990.

In the third part, I extended the actor-network in space (and slightly in time), to consider the emergence of education decentralisation as a network of local and global assemblages. Besides the fading authority of the Marxist-Leninist regime and the economic and financial break-

down in Benin, I drew attention to the global world shift symbolically represented by the fall of the Berlin wall, which globally led to a decrease in the number of social democracies in favour of liberal and neo-liberal forms of democracy in the 90s. Moreover, I embedded the political transition of Benin within the democratisation discourse of Mitterrand at La Baule in 1990. In the final part, I pointed out that decentralisation has been present since pre-colonial rule through local kingdoms as a form of de-concentration. The colonial rule may have provoked the official decentralisation reform in 1990 as a reaction to the centralised system. Alternatively, it may have built upon the experience of devolving responsibilities to five municipalities in the mid-50s. Officials framed their discourse in similar ways regarding the Marxist-Leninist period, where they argued that decentralisation presented a response to a highly centralised system, while also acknowledging the mechanisms of community participation.

Following Sayed's (1999) argument about the introduction of education decentralisation in South Africa in the 90s, I suggest that the decision to decentralise Benin's governance system also happened in a state of fragile consensus. Each moment represents a consensus around an agreement that later ruptures due to contextual and historical factors. The decentralisation policy as a temporary agreement captured in a moment of fragile consensus also contains within itself the ever-present possibility of rupture inimical to the consensus then, and visible within the current government of Talon (2016-today).

The next chapter is a synthesis of thesis, discussing the contribution to knowledge and implications of this study.

8 Conclusions

This study explored the discursive and social practices surrounding education decentralisation in the context of pre-school and primary education in Benin. Using the framework of Ball's (1993, 2015) policy trajectory studies, it traced the origins, the formulation processes and the mediation of education decentralisation in the Beninese context. Discursive and social practices in the context of this thesis refer to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, aiming 'to address the structures and rules that constitute a discourse rather than the texts and utterances produced within it' (Ball, 2015, p. 311). Ball considers policy as discourse 'produced and formed by taken-for-granted and implicit knowledges and assumptions about the world and ourselves' (Ball, 2015, p. 311). In other words, discourse embodies the history of a society, whereas social practices refer to the 'processes of interpretation and translation of policy through which school actors enact policy' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p. 10 in Ball, 2015, p. 307).

The conclusions provide a synthesis of the main findings of this study: firstly, the discursive analysis of the policy of decentralisation, its incremental documents and the broader policy ensemble; secondly, the mediation of education decentralisation from a relational perspective in two local field sites; and thirdly, the emergence of the decentralisation reform as a complex web of assemblages. The second part outlines the contribution to knowledge from the theoretical and empirical aspects, and the final part considers the practical and political implications and offers suggestions for future research. The next section answers the main research question which asks how the policy of education decentralisation is discursively constituted, and how it is mediated by the diverse actors involved in the provision of pre-school and primary education in Benin.

8.1 Summary of main findings

This thesis traced the discursive and social practices of the actors involved in the pre-school and primary education back to the policy adopted in 2010 and the agenda setting of 1990. These actors, both human and non-human, have agency: they 'compare, produce typologies, design standards [...] actively, reflectively, obsessively' (Latour, 2005, p. 149). In that regard, this study focused on how the actors discursively constructed the emergence, formulation and enactment of the decentralisation policy.

8.1.1 A discursive analysis of the decentralisation policy

This section first revisits chapter 5, the discursive de-construction of education decentralisation and its incremental and implementation documents to answer the first sub-question concerning how the policy of decentralisation is discursively constructed, and how it relates to the broader ensemble of policies. This focus refers to the second dimension of Ball's (1993, 2015) policy framework, the policy production process and is informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013). As regards the formulation process, this study used a narrower understanding, focusing on the textual and discursive features of education decentralisation and its policy ensemble.

Findings

1. Despite a tendency to strengthen the role of the state actors at the municipal and central levels, the legal framework did not significantly change the power basis between actors.
2. The policy of decentralisation can be considered as being underpinned by the discourses of development and modernisation and reflects Benin's colonial and post-colonial legacies and development trajectory.
3. Concerns surrounding devolution are insignificant in the Education Sector Strategy, whereas the non-adoption of the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation can be seen as a form of resistance.

8.1.1.1 Finding 1

In terms of the incremental documents, this study stated that the constitution of 1990 remained silent about how education and decentralisation related to each other, even though it laid out the bedrock of decentralisation as through elected bodies at the municipal level. It was only in 1999 that the devolution laws specified how education was to be shared between the central and municipal government entities: the municipality is in charge of school infrastructure and the promotion of activities for young people, while the Ministry of Education and its sub-units are responsible for all other areas, such as the curriculum, teacher recruitment and management, school inspection. The analysis of the education and devolution laws revealed that devolved responsibilities remained firstly, limited to what used to be managed locally; secondly, they were vague and were not translated into regulations; and thirdly, the vague legislation in relation to a weak judiciary posed a challenge to putting the decentralisation policy into practice.

Despite a tendency to strengthen the role of state actors at the municipal and central levels, the devolution laws did not change the power basis between actors significantly.

8.1.1.2 Finding 2

The discursive de-construction of the policy of decentralisation revealed first, a textual shift from devolution to a mixed system of devolution and de-concentration, whereby de-concentration had become discursively powerful. Second, this study discussed the underlying ideologies of decentralisation, namely development and modernisation in the context of a hybrid mixture of social, liberal and neo-liberal ideologies. Third, the decentralisation policy as part of a broader policy ensemble is a product of the powerful connections between the Beninese government, bilateral development agencies and consulting firms. Overall, the policy of decentralisation can be considered as a policy underpinned by the discourses of development and modernisation, reflecting Benin's colonial and post-colonial legacies and development trajectory.

8.1.1.3 Finding 3

Finally, the analysis of the strategic and implementation plans revealed the relative absence of devolution in the Education Sector Strategy, and second, interpreted the non-adoption of the Implementation Plan for Education Decentralisation as a form of resistance. More precisely, the analysis of the Education Sector Strategy showed that this strategy addressed decentralisation only erratically, privileging de-concentration over devolution. The rationalisation of resources, and hence, institutional changes at central level, on the one hand, and the agenda of global actors and strategies, on the other, may have led to the Implementation Plan not being appropriately adopted, resulting in the non-participation of both politicians and administrators in education decentralisation.

The next section revisits the understanding and mediation of education decentralisation in the context of two local field sites.

8.1.2 The mediation of education decentralisation from a relational perspective

Chapter 6 explored the second sub-question of how actors involved in the provision of schooling mediated the current decentralisation policy from Actor-Network Theory perspective (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). The mediation of education decentralisation refers to Ball's (1993, 2015) third dimension of policy trajectory studies, whereby discursive and social practices can be considered as small-scale actor-networks in both field sites.

Findings

1. The mediation of education decentralisation can be considered as a social arena allowing institutional and relational pluralism at the local level: the actors in the Northern field site tended to privilege the collaboration with Non-governmental Organisations, while the actors in the Southern field site tended to collaborate with the provincial and central education administration.
2. The policy of decentralisation affected the power and possibilities for actors to participate differently: it tended to strengthen the municipalities (elected), whereas the power of the local school authorities remained unchanged. Non-governmental Organisations remained powerful in their role of navigating the system, while parents felt they had been disempowered.
3. The mediation of education decentralisation between central and municipal government entities can be considered as a competing game. The current government tends to privilege de-concentration over devolution in discursive and in practical terms, reinforced by the legal and policy framework.

8.1.2.1 Finding 1

This study compared the discourses and social practices of the actors involved in the provision of schooling in two local field sites in the Northeast and the Southeast in Benin. First, the mediation of the decentralisation policy can be conceived as a social arena allowing for institutional and relational pluralism or in Ball's (1994a, p. 10) terms for a 'wild profusion' of social practices. However, this study also identified some differences particular to each field site. While in the North, Non-governmental Organisations navigated the system powerfully by connecting with parents, teachers or the town council, according to their objectives, local actors in the Southern field site tended to collaborate with the provincial and central administration of education, rather than the municipality, for school construction projects.

8.1.2.2 Finding 2

Second, the decentralisation policy privileged the relationship between the central administration and the newly elected bodies, whereas the influence of local school authorities and Non-governmental Organisations remained unaffected by the decentralisation policy. In particular, the Non-governmental Organisations tended to be influential and intervened in various ways. They navigated the system in parallel to government structures, as demonstrated in the North, or lead to the practice of school actors excluding the municipal and central government entities in the South. In contrast, the influence of parents has decreased since the advent of

decentralisation. Their previous, albeit informal, responsibilities for school construction and community teacher employment have been ‘re-centralised’ to the municipality.

8.1.2.3 *Finding 3*

Finally, this study has demonstrated how actors from central and municipal government entities (re-)negotiate their power base. In particular, the devolved responsibilities between the national and the municipal actors can be considered as a competing game. Moreover, the influential role of the governor shows how the state has continued to control the elected bodies at the municipal level. The predominantly practised control questions the legitimacy of the political decentralisation and democracy more broadly. Lastly, the current government privileges de-concentration over devolution measures, which suggests centralisation tendencies. However, borrowing from Berkhout (2005), this study suggested the need to go beyond the centralisation-decentralisation debate. The actors’ reconfiguration and re-negotiation of power can be conceived as a moment of temporal stability which can change depending on the actions of the broader actor-network.

The next section revisits the emergence of education decentralisation as a complex web of assemblages.

8.1.3 The emergence of education decentralisation as a complex web of assemblages

This section revisits chapter 7, which explored the agenda setting of education decentralisation in Benin from Actor-Network Theory perspective (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). It relates to the context of influence in Ball’s (1993, 2015) framework of policy trajectory studies and examined the third sub-question, which is how human and non-human actors connected to bring about education decentralisation in 1990.

Findings:

1. This study presented the National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 as a compelling event instigating the education decentralisation reform. This conference has been framed as the way to democracy and development in the context of the global world shift and democratisation discourses linking development aid to democracy in the Global South.
2. Besides national influences, global events and actors impacted upon the decision of the Beninese government to opt for democratic renewal. Policy elites, together with

external actors, influenced the political decisions concerning democracy and decentralisation significantly.

3. However, education decentralisation has also been building up incrementally since pre-colonial rule, e.g. the de-concentrated organisation of local kingdoms, attempts to devolve authority to a few municipalities in the late colonial period and community participation in the subsequent Marxist-Leninist period.

8.1.3.1 Finding 1

The National Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 has been presented as a compelling event stimulating the education decentralisation reform in Benin. In particular, this conference offered a powerful assemblage in the shift of Benin from its social democratic system, ideologically influenced by Marxism-Leninism, to a liberal form of democracy. This shift was framed by the concepts of the nation, the citizen and sovereignty, and the underlying rationale of linking decentralisation to economic development.

8.1.3.2 Finding 2

Besides national influences, global events and actors impacted upon the decision of the Beninese government to opt for democratic renewal. Even though the conference assembled 500 participants across all social strata, this study demonstrated that the elites, together with external actors, influenced significantly the political decisions concerning democracy and decentralisation. Moreover, education decentralisation can be considered as an assemblage of further local and global events. First, the global world shift, symbolically represented through the fall of the Berlin wall, globally led to a decrease in social democracies in favour of liberal and neo-liberal forms of democracy in the 90s. Second, the democratisation discourse at La Baule in 1990 may have re-enforced the democratisation trend in the Global South, particularly in Francophone Africa, when Mitterrand advised developing countries to adhere to democratic principles if they wanted to receive the benefit of development aid.

8.1.3.3 Finding 3

This study also emphasised how decentralisation has been historically present from before colonial rule. Historically, the organisation of local kingdoms was de-concentrated, then there were attempts to devolve authority to a few municipalities in the late colonial period, and then community participation in the subsequent Marxist-Leninist period. In particular, the earlier colonial rule may have influenced the official decentralisation reform in 1990, as a reaction to the centralised system on the one hand and building upon the experiences of responsibilities having

been devolved to five municipalities in the late colonial period, on the other hand. Officials framed their discourse similarly when referring to the Marxist-Leninist period, arguing that decentralisation presented a response to a highly centralised system or acknowledging the earlier mechanisms for community participation.

This study not only traced the historical process of the decentralisation policy to its mediation today, with its web of assemblages leading to particular events and documents, but also de-constructed the policy itself, shedding light on the dominant concepts, such as participation and power. So far, this chapter has provided a synthesis of the analytical chapters, which leads to a discussion of the theoretical and methodological choices of this study.

8.2 Theoretical and methodological reflections

This section critically reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of the theoretical and methodological approach adopted, starting with Critical Discourse Analysis in relation to the documentary review and interview data, and Actor-Network Theory in relation to the interviews, focus groups and visual participatory methods. I first outline what each theoretical and methodological choice offered in terms of the aims of this study, and second, identify what they did not, before reflecting on how this combination contributed to this study.

Critical Discourse Analysis was particularly suitable for critical policy analysis because it allowed texts to be analysed within the interplay of broader social processes involved (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Fairclough's three-dimensional model made the policy of decentralisation possible to be examined on three levels: the text, the discourses and the social process (Fairclough, 2013) thus permitting the examination of the broader social processes from a normative and explanatory stance.

The semiotic CDA analysis (at the textual or descriptive level) based on Halliday's functional analysis of grammar was too restrictive to fully interpret and understand the policy. Consequently, I only used CDA at a comparatively superficial level, relying instead on a Foucauldian influenced understanding of discourse to address the underlying structures and rules that constitute discourse to de-construct the 'taken-for-granted and implicit knowledges and assumptions about the world and ourselves' (Ball, 2015, p. 311). Further caution was necessary to avoid (mis-) using the social analysis (third level) and jumping to the conclusion that particular values, worldviews or events, such as neo-liberalism, democracy or (neo-)colonialism, served as a clear, direct and straightforward explanation of a particular phenomenon, such as a policy text concerning education governance. I suggest that Critical Discourse Analysis, particularly at the

textual/ descriptive level, while appropriate for analysing (policy) text, was less fruitful for interpreting oral data (interviews/ focus groups), particularly in multi-linguistic research, where the translation process added a further layer of interpretation.

Inspired by the collected data, I looked for different kinds of suitable theories to grasp the complex dynamics of local policy implementation. Actor-Network Theory turned out to be suitable as a method to learn from actors without imposing on them any a priori definition of their world-building capacities (Kanger, 2017). The inclusion of non-human actors and the relational ontology built from its network characteristic provided a more holistic understanding of the data. How a given element became strategic or less important and was able to bring about certain temporarily stabilised discourses and practices indicated the messiness, but also the fluidity and connections between actor-networks in this study.

However, the Actor-Network Theory was not without limitations in this study. The first limitation concerned the nature of the data produced for this study, which was too limited to shed light on the material dimension of actor-networks. Even though the actor-maps included non-human elements, the oral data privileged the agency of human actors. Second, the analysis centred more on human rather than non-human actors. Although chapter 3 clearly identified human and non-human actors, overall, the study focused more on the voice and agency of human actors. Third, it was particularly difficult to reconstruct the actor-network of an event in the past in chapter 7 since this approach centres on the current situation as its analytical focus.

Despite the limitations of the analytical approaches for this study, both Critical Discourse Analysis and Actor-Network Theory presented potential avenues for deepening and extending the understanding of this topic since they keep in play the dynamic between actors in their network formations. More precisely, the combination was useful for tracing actors' trajectories and how they connected to one another, while analysing the policy text and discourse from a discursive and linguistic perspective. Using both frameworks enriched the data collected and the understanding of policy. I was thus able to provide a more compelling and comprehensive narrative of the policy of education decentralisation in Benin (cf. also section 8.3.2.3).

8.3 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis is the first study focusing on education decentralisation at all levels of the Beninese governance system, offering a holistic account exploring the emergence, formulation and mediation of the national decentralisation policy in the context of pre-school and primary education in Benin. A few studies have focused on decentralisation in Benin, covering education

among other sectors (Rasmussen, 2011, 2013) or a particular aspect of education and decentralisation (Odushina *et al.*, 2008; Fichtner, 2012; Jarroux, 2017; Oussou, 2017). Most of them are ethnographic studies and offer in-depth insights, capturing particular aspects, predominantly at the local and municipal level. Globally, many studies on decentralisation focus on the implementation of particular issues, such as inequality or quality, not acknowledging sufficiently the permeability and interaction between the local and the global. The strength of this work lies in its temporal but also spatial perspective of education decentralisation, providing a deeper understanding of how this ‘cross border’ understanding of decentralisation policy actually happens.

This section is divided into the empirical and theoretical contributions, starting with the former.

8.3.1 Empirical contribution

8.3.1.1 Local insights have relevance for global policies

In light of the unequal and uneven relationships between previously colonised and colonising countries, and the resulting development machinery (Escobar, 2012) perpetuating these uneven relationships, it is time to question them through examining popular and widely travelled education reforms involving governance and decentralisation. In the global context, International Organisations change the temporal and spatial relationships of nation-states and have become essential vehicles for ideas around good governance and decentralisation. Cheema and Rondinelli point out the need to conceive of government in terms of governance institutions in the context of globalisation. In this way, this study examined how the global and the local interact in policy processes, thereby contributing to a wider understanding of policy not usually considered by policy-makers. More specifically, this study has provided insights specific to the particular context of Benin, some of which are relevant to other post-colonial contexts in the African continent and the Global South, more broadly. As such, this research has contributed to the understanding of education governance in the Global South, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, and provided insights into how the policy of education decentralisation in Benin has been influenced by local, national and global factors. It offers a holistic understanding of the emergence and implementation of the decentralisation reform in Benin, so contributing to a deeper understanding of how local policy knowledge can be discounted by policymakers.

8.3.1.2 How this study speaks back to the post-colonial condition

What is striking in the particular context of Benin is how deeply the current governance reform is infused with colonial and neo-colonial legacies. Overall, the discussion has shown that

the contemporary governance system in Benin and the discursive and social practices of the actors involved in the provision of schooling remain saturated with colonial and neo-colonial ideologies. Moreover, it points out that questions of power and discourse are imbricated with both the colonial legacy and the post-colonial condition. In analysing the dominant discourses of education governance, notably decentralisation, modernisation and development, and in discussing their material effects on the polity, culture and the economy, this study argued that both the policy text and the practices of actors are infused with the colonial experience and development discourses. In terms of the material dimension of the post-colonial condition (Tikly, 2019), this study analysed the similarities between the territory's administration under colonial rule and the administration today, for example. In discursive terms, it showed how decentralisation is underpinned by ideas from modernisation and (neo-) liberal development discourses. Moreover, decentralisation has fostered particular forms of democracy in the Global South, such as liberalism, which maintain the unequal relationship between the previous colonisers and the colonised. These relationships, however, have been dialectic and continue to be dialectic, with a post-colonial elite reproducing the colonial structures of inequality (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia, 2006).

Overall, this study offers a holistic understanding of the dynamics of decentralisation reforms in a globalised space and hence contributes to the understanding of policy knowledge as unaccounted for by policymakers.

8.3.2 Theoretical contribution

The theoretical contribution is the use of a spatial and temporal lens in the context of a post-development framework and the combination of two distinct analytical approaches.

8.3.2.1 A spatial and temporal lens on policy studies

No study has studied education decentralisation in Benin using a policy trajectory conceptual framework (Ball, 1993, 2015). In line with Massey (1994b), who argues that space and time are integral to one another, this thesis provided a historical exploration of education governance in two different regions in Benin (Northeast and Southeast, cf. chapter 2). Hence, this study draws on a temporal and spatial lens, beginning with research in two local field sites in 2017 and extending this (retrospectively) to the analysis of national and global influences on policy formulation and mediation in Benin from 1990 onwards. While Ball's framework prioritises a temporal perspective for policy trajectory studies, Massey privileges the spatial over the temporal. On the one hand, the study has provided a holistic understanding of education

decentralisation through a temporal perspective in how the colonial legacy, among others, is implicated in the present discourses and practices of governance reforms in the Global South. On the other hand, this study illuminated how the analysis of the local with a focus on the spatial power dynamics in this context is more informative than the one dimensional temporal focus on the achievement of decentralisation as a policy imperative (Massey, 1994b). Instead of considering the local as a deficit, it can be found as part of universal policy prescriptions informed by the dominant development discourses.

8.3.2.2 Spatial and temporal reflections in the context of a post-development framework

From a Foucauldian influenced post-development perspective, it could be argued that the ‘wild profusion of local practices’ taking place in the context of a constrained development policy can be considered as a multiplicity of ‘localised hierarchizations’ (DuBois, 1991). This idea is exemplified in chapter 6, discussing the empowerment of some actors (e.g. municipal governments and NGOs) and the disempowerment of other actors (e.g. parents and teachers). It refers back to the developed/ underdeveloped binary- a structural pattern from early development discourse, which persists until today (Ziai, 2017) and is taken from Dubois as follows.

The hierarchization of cultures that characterizes the categorization of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations is not imposed from the top down but is the sum (effect) of a multiplicity of localized hierarchizations or judgments regarding economic, political, social, and cultural aspects (DuBois, 1991, p. 22).

The analysis of the local practices and discourses surrounding the policy of education decentralisation illustrates how the development paradigm is resisted through contestations whilst at the same time being sustained through localised hierarchizations (cf. also section 8.4.2).

Development proponents may object to this viewpoint, arguing that the messiness of local practices illustrates the inadequate implementation of the decentralisation policy. This counterargument implies that development necessarily serves the ‘common good’, and if it does not, it is an implementation issue. This hypothesis leads development agencies to employ a recurrent cycle of diagnosis, consisting of prescribing, promising, and if not successful, re-diagnosing, leading to changing patterns in the development discourse, while maintaining the claim that the function of development is to serve the common good (Ziai, 2017).

8.3.2.3 Actor-Network Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis in conversation

The study also combined two different analytical approaches, Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2010, 2013) and Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1996, 2005; Fenwick and Edwards, 2010). They have the potential to deepen the understanding of the topic

under study and to keep in play the dynamic actors in their network formations. Combining both approaches contributes to a richer, multi-dimensional, in-depth analysis through engaging with the tensions and convergences. More precisely, the combination is useful for tracing actors' trajectories and how they associate with one another, while considering the policy text and discourse through a discursive and linguistic in-depth analysis.

Both analytical approaches are also useful when adopting a post-development paradigm; the discursive aspects of development discourse were addressed through CDA and the material aspects through ANT. In other words, CDA helped to critically de-construct the embedded development discourse in the policy of education decentralisation (cf. chapter 5), while ANT shed light on the uneven power relations that produced material inequalities, as discussed in chapter 6. This positioning lays the foundation for the argument in section 8.4.2. i.e. that discourse analysis in the context of the post-development paradigm can only partially address issues of material inequality.

8.4 Implications

This final section discusses some implications for the quality of education, policy-formulation as well as suggestions for further research.

8.4.1 A concern with quality

This section considers further areas to consider in the context of the de-/recentralisation of the Beninese education system informed by the empirical data, on the one hand, and the concerns about the quality of global agendas, on the other. It suggests that governance studies should include questions of the quality of education and learning, in particular.

Research participants across the sectors and levels shared divergent perspectives of how they envision education decentralisation in the future. While some had a far-reaching view of education decentralisation, suggesting that the municipality alone should manage school provision, others doubt its responsibility or even criticised decentralisation as having worsened education provision. However, the majority of research participants envisioned education as a shared responsibility in line with the literature on decentralisation, e.g. McGinn and Welsh (1999), recommending devolving, firstly, school construction and, secondly, teacher recruitment and management, which again raises questions of how the global governance agenda affects the discourses of national and local actors in particular contexts.

8.4.1.1 Teacher recruitment, management and development

Good quality teachers are commonly associated with the delivery of good quality education (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). The de-concentration or devolution of teacher recruitment and management has been and is a constant and recurring discussion within the Beninese government, as the Education Sector Strategy (2006-2015) and regular education reviews show. It became increasingly a matter of concern in light of the strikes that periodically paralyse the education system in Benin. For example, the first recommendation of the government-led review of education policy of 2014 states the need to ‘accelerate the process of strengthening the de-concentration/ devolution process, especially regarding the recruitment of teachers’ (Ministères en charge de l’éducation, 2014, p. 1).

The views of municipal actors (elected and appointed) remain controversial in terms of whether teacher recruitment and management should remain a centrally managed responsibility, transferred to the town council, or delegated to the provincial and local school authorities. In contrast, teachers as the concerned target group of this probably upcoming reform discussed this issue critically, fearing that the devolution of teacher recruitment and management may become politicised. Some municipalities, among others from the Northern field site, were already committed to funding teacher training and employing teachers in their community due to the lack of teachers, especially in the North and rural parts of the country. These informal practices could serve as an encouraging example of how education as a shared responsibility between central and the municipal government entities can contribute to improving access to and the quality of pre-school and primary education. Whether this responsibility should be de-concentrated or devolved has to be examined thoroughly to avoid politicisation.

Teacher development in Benin is sub-divided into pre-service training, provided by public and private teacher education institutions (*Ecole Normale d’Instituteur*) at national/ regional level, and in-service training provided by regional and local school authorities as well as school networks (*unite pédagogique*). Although the in-service training in Benin can be considered as already highly de-concentrated, de-concentration implies limited autonomy of school authorities in delivering the in-service training. If this area should be devolved rather than de-concentrated, raises questions of decentralisation motivated by professional expertise (in the case of local school authorities) or political legitimacy (in the case of municipalities). Expert decentralisation occurs if the objective is to minimise variations in school quality and to maximise overall school effectiveness, while political legitimacy reforms imply a shift from professional to political control to empower communities (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). This development raises a further discussion informed by a democratic theory argument versus a social justice argument

(Badat and Sayed, 2014), as devolving responsibilities to lower levels may result in greater inequity, particularly in countries with vast geographical disparities, as is the case in Benin. As such, I suggest weighing up the genuinely democratic argument giving voice to those who are the direct beneficiaries or recipients of education in the forms of participation and democracy against the backdrop of potentially increasing inequality in access and quality of service delivery.

8.4.2 Political implications

The current decentralisation system is a bricolage predominantly of characteristics of the French governance system, although both the policy and some of the interview data asserted that it has been adjusted to the local context. This study questions, however, ‘how local the local context is’ as decentralisation in its current form relies on the administrative structure inherited from the colonial system and is also influenced by global discourses, such as linking decentralisation, democracy and development (cf. chapter 5 and 7). In that regard, the colonial organisation on the one hand, and global influences, on the other, have persisted and mediated the way in which decentralisation is currently understood and practiced. The process of creating governance policies would benefit if national governments involved with International Organisations considered the history and the specificities of their particular context.

School maps serve as an interesting example of how the aim of giving a voice to local actors implicitly and inherently reproduces aspects of the development discourse. The school map (*carte scolaire*), a tool which helps with planning where to build which schools within a municipality, was a recurrent suggestion by the research participants as a way to address the concerns that planning was politically motivated rather than for a needs-based school infrastructure. This suggestion recalls Wainwright’s (2008) example of the Maya atlas used to portray their land and their culture. He argues that in reality, discursive elements from nationalism, international law and sustainable development pervade the atlas (Wainwright, 2008), but simultaneously remain silent about other aspects, such as gender relations and marital violence. Like the decentralisation policy itself and the broader policy ensemble, the school map is highly advocated by development agencies as a seeming technological solution to a deeply political issue. If decentralisation is defined as redistributing responsibilities and resources, which is how development agencies claim they act within an apolitical space for the common good, they nevertheless do politically intervene in the so-called/ so-wanted sovereign post-colonial nation-states. This example does not only illustrate how the apolitical becomes political, but also how actors in the Global South, elites in particular, appropriate the development discourse (Ziai, 2017).

Power and power relations are inherently central in the concept of decentralisation. The study showed how actors perceive and narrate the negotiation of power between the central and the local levels (vertically), but also between different ministries or between actors on the ground (horizontally). International Organisations form a further powerful actor group, whose interventions often complicate the power game between actors, as this study has shown. In light of the uneven power relations in both the formulation and enactment of the policy of education decentralisation, and the lack of significance accorded to the specificities of local contexts, I suggest that education governance remains a challenge to deal with far beyond the scope of development policies.

In the context of a post-development paradigm, I question the appropriateness of the decentralisation policy, as decentralisation as a reform, implies the perception of a lack, and re-inscribes the very notion of development as a historically singular experience, the creation of a domain of thought and action, as proposed by Escobar (2012). At the same time, I acknowledge that a post-development perspective, especially through the lens of discourse analysis, can only partially address the issue of material inequalities - to the extent that representational practices (development discourse) and the material practices (development policy) are interrelated. As Ziai claimed ‘development discourse did not only function as a discourse of hierarchisation and depoliticisation, but it also worked [...] as a discourse of claims and rights’ (Ziai, 2017, p. 227) for the less privileged communities. However, I conclude that any material redistribution/transformation has to be preceded by a discursive transformation within the development discourse. As long as this does not happen, the transformation of educational governance systems cannot be found within the development discourse.

8.4.3 Implications for further research

This study has pointed out the gender imbalance in the administration across sectors (education, decentralisation, planning) and levels (central, provincial, municipal). Further research could explore the female perspective of education decentralisation, by capturing the perceptions of female mayors or members of the town councils who are highly underrepresented, particularly in elected bodies, but also generally within the Beninese administration. The agenda setting of education decentralisation in 1990, materialised through its national conference, aimed at representing and involving all social groups, but women in local decision-making have been underrepresented so far.¹⁶⁰ This observation is striking insofar as women occupy most positions

¹⁶⁰ For example, the first municipal elections in 2002/03 resulted in 77 male mayors. Even though later elections had a slightly better result, women continue to be highly under-represented at all levels of the system, but particularly at the municipal level.

in devolved social services, notably education, health, the local economy and environment (Vankpinmede, 2016). Therefore, further research could explore the extent to which the involvement of women in local governance in Benin constitutes a determining factor for the enactment of the decentralisation policy and the socio-economic development at the local level more broadly. Such a study may draw a different analysis of education decentralisation and open up new perspectives and contributions on education governance in a post-colonial setting.

Revisiting Sustainable Development Goal 4, promoting inclusive and equitable quality education, it is essential to reflect on how redistributing the governance of education may affect the quality of education delivered. Curriculum, teacher development and assessment are commonly associated with the quality of education, to enable both relevant and effective learning outcomes (Sayed and Moriarty, 2017). These quality questions can only be dealt with in relation to overarching questions of education governance. Future research could explore how education governance reforms affect quality issues, such as the curriculum, teacher development and assessment, potentially contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, to provide an inclusive and equitable quality of education. Some research has already carried out in this direction; Kuhon (2020) explored, for example, the extent to which the reform of education decentralisation contributed to the achievement of Education for All, and concluded that the reform had not had a significant effect on this aim, drawing attention to the particular issues concerning human resources, the curriculum, corruption and poverty issues. Further research into education governance and questions of education quality and inclusivity education are highly important.

8.4.4 Summing-up

This study explored how the policy of decentralisation emerged and how the actors involved in the provision of pre- and primary education in Benin (West Africa) mediated this policy. It argues that even though the national Conference of the Active Forces in 1990 was significant for setting the agenda of education decentralisation, the policy process was influenced by further exogenous and endogenous factors (chapter 7). Moreover, this policy contains evidence of Benin's colonial and neo-colonial legacies in material and discursive terms. In material terms, it builds incrementally upon the territorial administration of previous political regimes, notably colonial rule. In discursive terms, it is underpinned by discourses of modernisation and development, reinforced by the influence of international aid agencies and consulting firms (chapter 5). Finally, the actors are part of broader, fluid and changing actor-networks constantly negotiating power and responsibilities. The study reveals a bewildering array of messy practices in the context of a restricted understanding of decentralisation and governance (chapter 6). The

thesis offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of education decentralisation reforms in general, not only in the particular context of Benin. It therefore contributes to an understanding of policy knowledge unaccounted for or ignored by policymakers. The nuanced and fine-grained analysis of Benin talks back to the broader agendas and landscapes of global governance reforms that advocate decentralisation as a necessary policy reform as a basis for good quality learning, democracy and social justice.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Analysis of the responsibilities of actors in the context of pre-school and primary education in Benin¹⁶¹

Function	Level and type of organisation			Observations
Function	National	Regional/ province	Municipality	
Determination of national norms and standards e.g. objectives of teaching, curriculum, school map	Ministry for Pre- and Primary Education (MIEMP)	Regional school authority (provides school map in its catchment area)		"In cooperation with other institutional partners", but these partners are not defined. The school map signifies an assignment system of students to schools in a particular geographic area.
Supply of didactic material, school books and other equipment	Ministry for Pre- and Primary Education			
Assessment and examinations with regard to the curriculum	Ministry for Pre- and Primary Education			

Function	Level and type of organisation			Observations
Function	National	Regional/ province	Municipality	
Technical assistance and supportive advice towards the municipalities		Regional school authority	Local school authority??	The role of local school authorities towards the municipalities is not clear. The decree and the professional practice differs.
School infrastructure and equipment	Ministry for Pre- and Primary Education (monitors the school construction and equipment)	Regional school authority (assists municipality, see above)	Municipality (builds and equips pre- and primary public schools)	The municipality is responsible for the construction and equipment of pre- and primary public schools, but the Ministry monitors and the provincial school authority assists/ advises the municipality.
Recruitment and management of administrative staff in the Education Ministry and its deconcentrated units	Ministry for Civil Service	Regional school authority (allocation and transfer of staff within the province)		According to the decree 2004-627 of 10 th November 2004, certain attributions has been transferred from the Ministry for Civil Service to the Ministry for Primary Education
Teacher recruitment and management	Ministry for Pre- and Primary Education			

¹⁶¹ This analysis is based on the decree 2012-538 of 17 December 2012 clarifying the organisation of the Ministry for Pre-school and Primary Education.

9.2 Chronological overview of interviews and focus groups

N°	Date	Institution	Function	Govt.	I O	Nei ther	Pla n- ned	Un- pla n- ned	Observations
1	05/01/2017	National Education Board (Conseil National de l'Education)	Senior official	X				x	
2	07/01/2017	Public primary school (Cotonou)	Management	X				x	This interview was planned as a pilot. I asked for official permission to use the information afterwards.
3	11/01/2017	German Development Agency (GIZ)	Senior management		x		x		
4	11/01/2017	Ministry for Pre-school and Primary Education	Senior official	X			x		The person has been affected to the Ministry for Secondary Education during the data collection period.
5	17/01/2017	ibid	Junior official	X			x		This service has been re-allocated to the Planning Department
6	18/01/2017	Permanent Technical Office of the Education Strategy	Senior official	X			x		
7	19/01/2017	Decentralisation Ministry	Junior official	X			x		
8	20/01/2017	-	Independent searcher			x		x	
9	24/01/2017	Government	Senior official	x				x	Retired
10	24/01	Decentralisation Ministry	Senior official	X			x		
11	26/01	ibid	Senior official	X			x		

12	26/01	ibid	Junior official	X				x	Is part of the General Department of State Administration
13	31/01/2017	GIZ	Senior management		x		x		
14	31/01/2017	See line 9							
15	07/02/2017	See line 14							
16	07/02/2017	MDGL	Senior official	X			x		
16b	16/02/2017	MEMP	Senior official	x				x	
17	20/02/2017	Provincial school authority	Senior official	x			x		As the decentralisation service has been abandoned, the interviewee was recently affected to a Local school authority.
18	21/02/2017	Swiss Cooperation (DEZA)	Programme Manager		x		x		
19	01/03/2017	Aide et Action (NGO)	Programme Manager		x		x		
20	02/03/2017	MEMP	Senior official	x			x		
21	06/03/2017	MEMP	Senior official	x			x		
22	07/03/2017	PSDCC (World Bank/ Decentralisation Ministry)	Programme Manager		x			x	
23	09/03/2017	Local school authority (MEMP)	Senior official	x			x		
24	21/03/2017	Provincial school authority	Senior official	x			x		
25	21/03/2017	Pre-school N'Dali Centre (urban)	Management	x			x		Not transcribed
26	21/03/2017	Coordination/ Association of students' parents	Senior officials			x	x		
27	21/03/2017	Pre-school and Primary School N'Dali Centre (urban)	4 teachers (two from each school, one male and one female)	x			x		FGD
28	21/03/2017	Primary School N'Dali Centre (urban)	Management	x			x		
29	22/03/2017	Municipality N'Dali	Senior official	x			x		Spontaneous FGD
30	22/03/2017	Municipality N'Dali	Senior official	x			x		

31	23/03/2017	Primary School Alafiarou A + B group (Arondissement Gbégourou) (rural)	Management	x			x		Not audiotaped
32	23/03/2017	Pre-school and Primary School Alafiarou (Arondissement Gbégourou) (rural)	3 teachers (two male from primary and one female from pre-school)	x			x		Not audiotaped
33	24/03/2017	Prefecture Borgou	Senior official	x			x		Not audiotaped
34	24/03/2017	Provincial planning authority	Senior official	x			x		
35	24/03/2017	Prefecture Borgou	Senior official	x			x		
36	04/04/2017	Prefecture Ouémé	Senior official	x			x		Not audiotaped Visit of courtesy to the prefect
37	05/04/2017	Delegation of the European Union	Programme Manager		x		x		
38	05/04/2017	MDGL/ CONAFIL	Senior official	x			x		Possibly planned
39	07/04/2017	Local school authority	Senior official	x			x		
40	12/04/2017	ibid	Representative of the municipal students' parents association (C/APE)			x	x		
41	18/04/2017	Pre-school + Primary School Tokpota/ Porto Novo	Management	x			x		Not audiotaped
42	ibid	ibid	4 teachers (two from each school, 1 male, 3 female)	x			x		ibid
43	20/04/2017	Pre-school + Primary School Dowa-Gbago/ Porto Novo	4 teachers (one from pre-school, female; 3 from primary school, 1 male, 2 female)	x			x		
44	24/04/2017	ibid	Management	x			x		Not audiotaped
45	26/04/2017	Provincial planning authority Ouémé	Senior official	X			X		Not entirely audiotaped because the battery was weak
46	28/04/2017	Provincial school authority Ouémé	Senior official	X			X		The interviewee asked to get the audio tape

47	05/05/2017	Town council Porto Novo	Senior and junior official	X			X		
48	ibid	ibid	Senior official	X			X		Not audiotaped
49	09/05/2017	Association of Students' Parents	Representative of students' parents of Tokpota, Dowa-Gbago and Todowe			x		x	The research participant is also a member of the Coordination of the APE
50	12/05/2017	Decentralisation Ministry	Senior official			x		x	1998 – 2005, not audiotaped
51	16/05/2017	Teacher union SYNIA-EP Benin	Representative of teacher union	x			x		Retired principal -> Pedagogical Advisor; provincial level
52	18/05/2017	Prefecture Ouémè	Senior official	x			x		Recently affected to the Decentralisation Ministry (DGAE)
53	20/05/2017	Planning authority Ouémé	Junior official	x				x	
54	23/05/2017	Decentralisation Ministry	Senior official	x				x	Retired, recommended by GIZ and European Union Not audiotaped
55	23/05/2017	Independent	Searcher			x		x	Long experience in civil society and education administration Not audiotaped
56	24/05/2017	Planning Ministry	Senior official	x			x		
57	24/05/2017	Communication agency 'Le Municipal'	Senior Management			x		x	Not audiotaped
58	31/05/2017	Municipality Porto Novo	Senior official	x				x	
59	02/06/2017	ibid	Municipal advisor	x				X	Elected
60	ibid	ibid	Municipal advisor	x				X	elected, opposition (only one on 33 municipal advisors)

60b	04/06/2017	GIZ	Programme manager			x		x	Retired
61	06/06/2017	ANCB	Representative of ANCB	x			x		Part of MDGL?
62	ibid	MEMP	Senior official	x				x	Retired since 2014
63	08/06/2017	Municipality Porto Novo	Senior official	x				x	
64	09/06/2017	Teacher union SYNIA-EM Benin	Representative of teacher union	x				x	
65	16/06/2017	GIZ	Programme manager		x			x	Debriefing, not audiotaped
66	16/06/2017	UNICEF	Programme manager		x			x	She talked as a private person and not as a UNICEF representative as I did not address my request to the head to UNICEF.
67	22/06/2017	MEMP, MDGL	1 senior und one junior official of each ministry	x				x	Debriefing
68	29/06/2017	MEMP	Senior official	x				x	Not audiotaped No consent form signed as the exchange was not expected

9.3 Participant Information Sheet

Study title

“The policy of decentralisation as discursive and social practices with regard to pre-school and primary education in Benin”

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore how the decentralisation policy is conceptualised as discursive and social practices and how it is mediated through different actors within the pre-school and primary education system in Benin (West Africa). This research will explore education decentralisation as a social phenomenon to identify ways in which the conceptualisation of the policy of decentralisation can be improved to make it more equitable taking into account the historical, socio-political, economic and cultural context of Benin.

The empirical research draws on qualitative data and is divided into two parts of data collection: firstly, a documentary review of the policy of decentralisation and related documents; secondly, semi-structured interviews with high and middle rank officials from the Decentralisation Ministry, and from the Ministry for Pre-school and primary education and their sub-units. The doctoral research project goes over three years which involves 6 months of data collection in the field.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen to take part in the research project because of your area of expertise and the institution you work for. You can make a valuable contribution to this research project and express your views about decentralising pre-school and primary education, according to your experience. The proposed study covers all levels of the pre-school and primary education system and the actors involved in the delivery of pre-school and primary education. A maximum of 25 interviews and four FGDs will be carried out in total.

Do I have to take part?

If you decide you would like to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. It will explain that you are still free to withdraw at any time UNTIL THE THESIS IS SUBMITTED without giving a reason. IF YOU WITHDRAW CONSENT AFTER BEING INTERVIEWED, THEN ALL DATA WILL BE DESTROYED AND NOT USED FOR ANY PURPOSE.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you are interviewed, interviews will last approximately one hour in your place of work. The interviews will be recorded and carried out in French. If you are a member of a focus group in your school, these will last for up to one and a half hours each. If clarification is needed, I will request a follow-up interview within the school for approximately an hour. THE INTERVIEWS AND THE FGDS WILL BE TRANSCRIBED AFTERWARDS. YOU WILL BE GIVEN THE TRANSCRIPT OF YOUR INTERVIEW/ FGD AND THEN HAVE TWO WEEKS TO CHECK THE ACCURACY OF THE CONTENT. IF YOU DO NOT RESPOND WITHIN TWO WEEKS, YOUR CONSENT WILL BE ASSUMED.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? (where appropriate)

There are no disadvantages or 'costs' involved in taking part in the study, except offering your time for the interview/ focus groups discussion.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The interview and the focus groups discussions are safe places to critically reflect on the decentralisation reform in Benin. The study aims at improving the conceptualisation of the decentralisation policy in order to make it more equitable and appropriate to the Beninese context and needs.

Will my information in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Names of participants will not be revealed to third parties or in any form of communication. At institutional level, your participation will be confidential and your anonymity ensured. However, a reasonable risk of being identified at higher level remains.

Each person will be assigned a random identity number or a pseudonym so the data cannot be linked to their name, their institution and/or any other identifiable information e.g. contact details. Once the participants have been assigned their codes, their names and contact information will be destroyed.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You can participate in the study if you wish but can drop out any time before submission. You will contribute to a better understanding of the discursive and social practices of the decentralisation policy in Benin through your participation.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data obtained for the above described doctoral research to show the discursive and social practices of decentralisation, which I hope will broaden the discussion in Benin through publication and conference papers. If you would like a copy of the thesis, please contact me (see below).

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the research as a doctoral student of the School of Education and Social Work at University of Sussex. I am funding the research on my own and, consequently, I am independent of any donor requirements.

Who has approved this study?

This research has been approved by the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (C-REC).

Contact for Further Information

If you like to come back to me for further information, feel free to contact me:

Eva Bulgrin, doctoral research student, 00229 97734343, eb223@sussex.ac.uk

You can also contact the supervisors of the doctoral research if you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted:

Dr. Yusuf Sayed, Professor of International Education and Development Policy (Education):
y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk

Dr. Kwame Akyeampong, Professor of International Education and Development (Education):
a.akyeampong@sussex.ac.uk

University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

9.4 Consent Form For Project Participants

PROJECT TITLE: *“The policy of decentralisation as discursive and social practices with regard to pre-school and primary education in Benin”*

Project Approval
Reference:

ER/EB223/1

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher;
- Allow the interview to be audio taped and transcribed;
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the reports on the project, either by the researcher or by any other party. However, a reasonable risk of being identified at higher level remains. I WILL BE ASKED EVERY SIX MONTHS IF I WISH TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw my participation and/ OR the data at any stage of the project without giving reason. I WILL NOT be penalised or disadvantaged in any way IN THIS CASE.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name:

Signature

Date:

9.5 Interview schedules

9.5.1 Questions for the national level

Opening question

- ❖ Can you tell me a little bit about your professional role within the department/ service/...
- ❖ Can you elaborate how the decentralisation policy affects your work?
- ❖ Can you give an example of an area of tension between policy and practice?

Main body of questions

- ❖ Based on your professional practice, how would you personally define decentralisation?
- ❖ Do you think decentralization is necessary to the education strategy?
- ❖ Talon, the new president, intends to strengthen the decentralisation reform.
- ❖ What are his intentions to do this?
- ❖ What do you think about these intentions?
- ❖ The decentralisation reform has been introduced at the beginning of 2000. Can you tell me how the reform has been introduced?
- ❖ Why was the decentralisation reform introduced at this time?
- ❖ How has the decentralisation policy been introduced?
- ❖ What happened since then?
- ❖ How was the management before decentralization?
- ❖ Who were the groups involved in establishing the policy? How in your experience
 - ...did national/ provincial/ municipal state structure influence the policy process?
 - ...is the policy influenced by local ideas and actors?
- ❖ In what way do local, national and global motivations vary?
- ❖ How have competing interests been negotiated in relation to the policy?
- ❖ Can you tell me how IO work in (sector) decentralisation in Benin?
- ❖ Do you know of instances when (and how) IO have influenced the decentralization policy?
- ❖ What is the role of international agendas in the work of IO (e.g. SDG, Education for all)?
- ❖ Which are the most important aspects of the policy of decentralisation according to you?
- ❖ Where are the challenges?
- ❖ What is not said?

- ❖ Can you give an example of
 - ...which part of the policy of decentralisation is not clear enough
 - ...how this aspect could be differently understood?
- ❖ Let me know more about the future of the decentralisation policy.
- ❖ What is your personal vision for the decentralisation reform for the next 10 years?
- ❖ What do you specifically hope for the pre-school and primary education sector?

Closing questions

- ❖ To whom else should I speak during my research?
- ❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

9.5.2 Questions for the provincial level

Opening question

- ❖ Can you tell me a little bit about your professional role within the department/ service/...
- ❖ Can you elaborate how the decentralisation policy affects your work?

Specific questions to the Provincial school authority:

- ❖ In what way do you assist and advice the municipality?
- ❖ According to your opinion, in what areas of educational management and administration would you say that the Provincial school authority performs better than the central Ministry?
- ❖ Do you see any area of tension for your task? If yes, which?

To the prefecture:

- ❖ How do you ensure your supervision function towards the Local school authorities?
- ❖ Do you see any area of tension for your task? If yes, which?

Main body of questions

- ❖ Based on your professional practice, how would you personally define decentralisation?
- ❖ Do you think decentralization is necessary to the education strategy?
- ❖ Talon, the new president, intends to strengthen the decentralisation reform.
- ❖ What are his intentions to do this?
- ❖ What do you think about these intentions?
- ❖ The decentralisation reform has been introduced at the beginning of 2000. Can you tell me how the reform has been introduced?
- ❖ Why was the decentralisation reform introduced at this time?
- ❖ How has the decentralisation policy been introduced?
- ❖ What happened since then?
- ❖ How was the management before decentralization?
- ❖ Who were the groups involved in establishing the policy? How in your experience
 - ...did national/ provincial/ municipal state structure influence the policy process?
 - ...is the policy influenced by local ideas and actors?
- ❖ In what way do local, national and global motivations vary?
- ❖ How have competing interests been negotiated in relation to the policy?

- ❖ Can you tell me how IO work in (sector) decentralisation in Benin?
- ❖ Do you know of instances when (and how) IO have influenced the decentralization policy?
- ❖ What is the role of international agendas in the work of IO (e.g. SDG, Education for all)?
- ❖ Which are the most important aspects of the policy of decentralisation according to you?
- ❖ Where are the challenges?
- ❖ What is not said?
- ❖ Can you give an example of
 - ...which part of the policy of decentralisation is not clear enough
 - ...how this aspect could be differently understood?
- ❖ Let me know more about the future of the decentralisation policy.
- ❖ What is your personal vision for the decentralisation reform with regard to pre-school and primary education for the next 10 years?
- ❖ What do you specifically hope for the pre-school and primary education sector?

Closing questions

- ❖ To whom else should I speak during my research?
- ❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

9.5.3 Questions for the municipal level

Opening question

- ❖ Can you tell me a little bit about your professional role within the department/ service/...
- ❖ Can you elaborate how the decentralisation policy affects your work?

Specific Questions to the Local school authority:

- ❖ How do you coordinate your work with the municipality generally?
 - ...with regard to school construction and equipment?
 - ...with regard to local development plans/ local education plans?
- ❖ Can you describe which aspects of local development plans/ local education plans you are familiar with?
- ❖ Can you describe the process how you develop, implement and monitor local education plans?
- ❖ Is there a law/ decree which prescribes local education plans?
- ❖ How do local education plans relate to local education plans?
- ❖ In what areas of educational management and administration does the CS perform better than the central Ministry and/ or the Provincial school authority?

To the municipality:

- ❖ In what way are you assisted by the regional and the Local school authority...
 - ... when you construct and equip schools?
 - ...when you develop local development plans?
- ❖ Where does the money come from for school construction and equipment?
- ❖ Can you describe with which aspects of local development plans/ local education plans you are familiar with?
- ❖ Can you describe the process how you develop, implement and monitor local development plans?
- ❖ Is there a law/ decree which prescribes local development plans?
- ❖ How do local development plans relate to local education plans?
- ❖ To what extent are you accountable to the Prefecture and/ or the Ministry for Pre-school and Primary Education?

Main body of questions

- ❖ Based on your professional practice, how would you personally define decentralisation?

- ❖ Do you think decentralization is necessary to the education strategy?
- ❖ Talon, the new president, intends to strengthen the decentralisation reform.
- ❖ What are his intentions to do this?
- ❖ What do you think about these intentions?
- ❖ The decentralisation reform has been introduced at the beginning of 2000. Can you tell me how the reform has been introduced?
- ❖ Why was the decentralisation reform introduced at this time?
- ❖ How has the decentralisation policy been introduced?
- ❖ What happened since then?
- ❖ How was the management before decentralization?
- ❖ Who were the groups involved in establishing the policy? How in your experience
 - ...did national/ provincial/ municipal state structure influence the policy process?
 - ...is the policy influenced by local ideas and actors?
- ❖ In what way do local, national and global motivations vary?
- ❖ How have competing interests been negotiated in relation to the policy?
- ❖ Can you tell me how IO work in (sector) decentralisation in Benin?
- ❖ Do you know of instances when (and how) IO have influenced the decentralization policy?
- ❖ What is the role of international agendas in the work of IO (e.g. SDG, Education for all)?
- ❖ Which are the most important aspects of the policy of decentralisation according to you?
- ❖ Where are the challenges?
- ❖ What is not said?
- ❖ Can you give an example of
 - ...which part of the policy of decentralisation is not clear enough
 - ...how this aspect could be differently understood?
- ❖ Let me know more about the future of the decentralisation policy.
- ❖ What is your personal vision for the decentralisation reform with regard to pre-school and primary education for the next 10 years?
- ❖ What do you specifically hope for the pre-school and primary education sector?

Closing questions

- ❖ To whom else should I speak during my research?
- ❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

9.5.4 Questions for the school level

Opening question

- ❖ Can you tell me a little bit about your professional role within the department/ service/...
- ❖ Can you elaborate how the decentralisation policy affects your work?

Main body of questions

- ❖ How do you describe the school construction and equipment process?
- ❖ Which actors are involved and how dominant are they?
- ❖ To whom is your school accountable to?
- ❖ Where does your school get the money from?
- ❖ Can you think of any other examples how the decentralisation policy has affected primary schools?
- ❖ What else should be devolved according to your opinion? Why?
- ❖ Is there an attempt to adapt the decentralisation policy in order to achieve what you are looking for?

Closing questions

- ❖ To whom else should I speak during my research?
- ❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

9.5.5 Interview questions for International Organisations

Opening question

- ❖ Could you describe how you support the decentralisation reform of the Beninese government [with regard to primary education]?
- ❖ Since when?
- ❖ How much budget have you allocated up to now?

Main body of questions

- ❖ Why did your organisation decide to support the Beninese reform?
- ❖ How has the global agenda influenced the decision to support the decentralisation reform?
- ❖ Talon, the new president, announced at the beginning of his presidency to strengthen the decentralisation reform.
- ❖ What are his intentions to do this?
- ❖ What do you think about these intentions?
- ❖ Why has the Beninese government made the decision to decentralise some competences in the primary education sector at the beginning of 2000?
- ❖ Can you describe the reform process from your perspective?
- ❖ Who were the groups involved in establishing the policy? How in your experience
 - ...did national/ provincial/ municipal state structure influence the policy process?
 - ...is the policy influenced by local ideas and actors?
- ❖ In what way do local, national and global motivations vary?
- ❖ How have competing interests been negotiated in relation to the policy?
- ❖ How do you coordinate your support
 - ...with the Decentralisation Ministry/ Primary Education Ministry/ Municipalities
 - ...with other International Organisations?
- ❖ Can you give an example how the decentralisation reform has affected primary education?
- ❖ Do you think that the decentralisation reform should be further supported in order to improve the primary education sector in Benin? If yes,
 - ...in which dimensions is decentralisation appropriate, in which dimension not?
 - ...what is your vision for the decentralisation reform with regard to the pre-school and primary education sector for the next 10 years?

Closing questions

- ❖ To whom else should I speak during my research?
- ❖ Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you

9.6 Interview and focus group transcripts

9.6.1 School level: focus group discussion N° 43

Interviewer

Participant 1 (teacher): P1

Participant 2 (teacher): P2

Participant 3 (teacher): P3

Participant 4 (intern): P4

Interviewer : Donc je serais heureuse si vous pouviez me parler un tout petit peu de votre rôle comme institutrice ou instituteur et un peu le quotidien. Si vous souhaitez déjà aborder les défis vous êtes bienvenus de faire ça aussi. Donc il y a un qui peut commencer et puis les autres complètent. Après ça devient plus concrète.

P 1 : Donc si je comprends bien on va parler de l'école (oui) et de notre (de votre, de vos tâches) carrière d'institutrice (bon non) ou bien les tâches quotidiennes

Interviewer : Oui voilà les tâches quotidiennes

P 1 : dans le domaine pédagogique.

Oui ! Oui ! Dans le domaine pédagogique, l'école (et administra... Bon si vous avez aussi administratif. Les deux volets).

P 1 : Qui commence ? Ok ! Je crois j'ai déjà fait une dizaine d'année dans la carrière. Je suis titulaire avec un certificat d'aptitude pédagogique.

Interviewer : Vous êtes APE ou ACE ?

P 1 : Je suis APE. Je viens d'être d'avoir (comment dirais-je) le projet pas plus tard hier à la DRH. Donc le projet est sorti, j'ai mon nom. Donc je suis reversée en APE.

Interviewer : Oh ! Félicitation ! Donc vous êtes heureuse. Vous avez dit ? Il faut que je m'en rappelle CM1. Parlez-moi un peu de vos tâches régaliennes.

P 1 : Donc dans la boîte, je représente le personnel enseignant de l'école du point de vue administratif. Et par responsabilité collégiale, je suis chargée du matériel didactique de l'école. Ensuite qu'est-ce que je pourrai dire ? Et aussi la formation des apprenants. Je préfère m'en arrêter là pour que les autres aussi complète.

Interviewer : Merci beaucoup.

P 2 : Ok ! Je peux la suivre. Moi je ne suis pas encore APE. Je suis ACE (Agent Contractuel de l'Etat). Je suis dans ma septième année. J'ai fait ENI Porto-Novo. Je suis sortie. Je suis dans ma cinquième année à l'EPP Dowa-Gbago. Depuis que je suis arrivée là, je suis chargée aux affaires administratives. Donc je suis la rare comme les gens le disent. Donc tout ce qui concerne l'école ; c'est-à-dire sa création, s'il y a extension, les courriers arrivé-départ, je suis chargée de tout cela. S'il y a une demande à faire dans l'école, demande de tables et bancs, demande de... Quelque soit la demande à faire, je suis chargée de le faire. S'il y a les évaluations, les résultats des évaluations, avec les collègues ensembles on le fait. Je le mets au propre et je le transmets à la circonscription. Donc c'est surtout mon travail dans l'école. Et je suis également l'adjointe directe de la directrice.

Interviewer : Ok ! Oui ! Je voulais le dis, on dirait ça ressemble déjà beaucoup aux tâches de la direction. Apparemment la directrice a bien délégué...

P 2 : Voilà ! Donc je crois que c'est en quelques sortes la tâche que j'ai dans l'école. Quotidiennement on est à l'école, on a la responsabilité de suivre nos enfants, travailler avec eux. On passe plus de temps avec les enfants à l'école qu'à la maison. Donc c'est à peu près en bref ce que je peux dire d'abord.

Interviewer : Vos enfants ils vont dans la même école ou ils vont dans d'autres écoles ?

P : Non ils ne sont pas... Surtout qu'actuellement moi, la dernière est au CM1, elle est dans une école privée. Les autres sont déjà au collège. Donc elle est dans une école privée. Je ne mets pas mes enfants dans les écoles publiques.

Interviewer : Pourquoi pas le public ?

P 2 : Bon sinon de mon... Si ça ne tenait qu'à moi seule, ils iront au public. Mais à cause des grèves. Par moment il y a des grèves dans le public. C'est pour quoi leur papa a préféré qu'ils restent dans une école privée pour pouvoir les suivre. Sinon si ça ne tenait qu'à moi

seule, ils vont me suivre dans les publics. Parce que moi aussi je suis allée dans une école publique. Jusqu'à mon BAC je suis toujours allée dans une école publique. Même s'il y a grève, on arrive toujours à s'en sortir. Mais il a voulu qu'ils aillent dans une école privée. Je ne peux pas refuser.

Interviewer : Oui ! Bon en fait peut-être notre enfant que vous venez de voir il va aussi bon dans... à la crèche dans une école privée. J'avoue moi-même de façon générale je suis un peu critique par rapport au nombre des écoles privées. Surtout ici à Porto-Novo. Je dis il ne peut pas avoir la même qualité d'accompagnement etc., la qualification des enseignants. Donc je ne vous cache pas. Je suis... Mais moi-même j'envoie notre enfant à l'école privée.

P 2 : On se connaît, nous enseignants, on se connaît. Chacun sait ce qu'il fait. Chacun le fait selon sa conscience. C'est vrai qu'il y a des gens qui travaillent bien. Ils travaillent bien comme s'ils étaient dans une école privée. Mais il y a encore d'autres non. Donc si les gens préfèrent amener leurs enfants dans une école privée, moi je ne refuse pas hein. Je dis si vous avez les possibilités, il faut envoyer vos enfants. Terminé.

Interviewer : En même temps, j'ai appris juste pour la circonscription scolaire Oganla, il y a (je ne m'en rappelle plus exactement, mais) disons une 70 écoles publiques et plus que 200 écoles privées. Vous pouvez imaginer. Et c'est pour une circonscription scolaire.

P 2 : Hou ! 200 écoles privées ? Ça fait le triple hein.

P 3 : Il y a des écoles à côté à côté en désordre.

P 4 : Et les écoles sont très rapprochées. Très même. Très même. Et la distance n'est pas... oui !

Interviewer : Oui !

P 2 : L'Etat ne peut pas tout faire. S'il n'y a pas d'école privée, je ne crois pas que ça peut... Le système éducatif peut aller plus loin hein. L'école privée est là pour aider l'école publique. Mais si c'est encore trop, c'est ça qui n'est pas bon.

P 1 : Effectivement pour la plupart des écoles les effectifs sont plutôt élevés.

P 2 : Elevé. Pléthorique.

P 4 : Oui ! Très élevé hein.

P 1 : Le nombre d'enseignants n'est pas suffisant. Donc il faut que ces écoles accompagnent le système éducatif. C'est normal. Lorsqu'ils en abusent, c'est là où la question est..., Il y a point d'interrogation.

Interviewer : On finit avec vous.

P 4 : Moi je n'ai une tâche précise.

P 1 : Vous travaillez avec les enfants.

P 4 : Je travaille avec les enfants. Je n'ai pas une tâche...

Interviewer : Moi je me dis c'est une grande tâche. J'ai raconté à notre... où le mercredi après midi, je fais une sortie d'éveil musicale ici à la maison. Notre enfant et quelques d'autres enfants. Et parfois, je suis débordée avec six.

P 2 : Surtout avec les petits enfants là. C'est une grande tâche.

Interviewer : Ils ont quel âge ? Entre quel et quel âge ?

P 4 : Trois ans et quatre ans au plus.

Interviewer : Donc vous n'avez pas de deux ans ? Pas comme dans les privées.

P 4 : Deux ans et demi, trois ans.

P 2 : Session des petits. Session des petits.

P 4 : Deux ans et demi, trois ans. Session des grands, trois ans et quatre à cinq ans.

Interviewer : Ok ! Vous êtes dans quelle ENI ?

P 1 : ENI privée de TANZOUN. Où ça ? TANZOUN.

P 2 : TANZOUN dans la circonscription d'Avrankou.

P 3 : Avrankou.

P 1 : La circonscription d'Avrankou. Oui ! C'est une ENI privée.

Interviewer : Avrankou. Ok ! Merci beaucoup. Est-ce qu'on vous a oublié ?

P 3 : Pas du tout.

Interviewer : On a commencé par vous.

P 2 : Non hein. Il n'a pas encore parlé.

P 1 : Il n'a pas encore parlé.

P 3 : Moi je viens d'arriver dans la maison publique. Sinon j'étais au privé. J'ai fait dix ans au privé avant d'aller au concours. Donc je viens de venir dans la maison. Donc je n'ai pas encore une tâche officielle comme ça. Puisque on a pris service le 13 passé du moi de février. Donc les choses ne sont pas encore réorganisées. Donc j'attends l'année prochaine pour avoir ma charge. La seule tâche qu'on m'a confiée, c'est la classe de CE2.

P 1 : La classe de CE2.

P 3 : Pour le moment.

Interviewer : Ce qui est déjà beaucoup.

P 3 : Voilà ce que je peux dire pour le moment.

Interviewer : Ok ! Et vos impressions si vous comparez vos premières expériences avec le privé et avec le public.

P 2 : Quelles sont tes impressions ? Tes impressions ? C'est-à-dire par rapport aux élèves, par rapport au cadre, qu'est-ce que tu as à dire ?

P 1 : Entre privé et public, qu'est-ce que tu as constaté ? Bon, c'est vrai au privé, il y a certaines rigueurs qui font qu'on est obligé de travailler, de s'y mettre. On se donne. On est obligé de se donner. Mais ici, il y a le problème d'effectif qui fait que parfois même, on est obligé de... C'est-à-dire même si tu fais, on se dit toujours qu'on n'a rien encore fait. Puisque les enfants tellement nombreux puis on est dépassé parfois. Oui ! Mais là-bas, c'est, c'est... Il y a au moins une marge. Pour les privés, certaines écoles privées respectent. Ça fait que même le message là ça passe normalement plus que le public.

P 2 : A cause des effectifs.

P 1 : A cause des effectifs. Comme moi-même je viens d'arriver, je ne sais pas si avec le temps je vais m'y habituer. Puisque vraiment je me suis rentré dedans comme ça. Donc je suis obligé d'avoir... C'est un peu difficile pour le moment comme c'est le début. Puisque je n'ai jamais habitué à garder ce genre d'effectif au privé.

Interviewer : Vous en avez combien ?

P 1 : C'était à trente, trente-deux et trente-cinq au plus.

Interviewer : Oui ! Et maintenant ?

P 1 : Maintenant je suis à 42 ici à 42 pour le moment. Ça fait que bon... Ce n'est pas aussi trop parfois. Mais quand-même...

P 2 : Estime-toi heureux. Moi qui gardais soixante, soixante quinze.

P 3 : Oui ! C'est de là que... Vous voyez ? C'est en se forgeant qu'on devient forgeron.

P 2 : Ah ! Au CE1 encore hein. Classe de transition. Attention !

P 3 : Maitresse ! Maitresse ! Mais si j'avais deux enfants avant et doucement ça revient à trois. Ça devient une charge et c'est un peu difficile.

Interviewer : Et qu'est-ce qui vous a amené à postuler pour le public ?

P 3 : Pour le public ?

Interviewer : Oui !

P 3 : Bon ! Vous voyez c'est par rapport aux avantages. Puisque le privé n'est pas rassurant et à tout moment, on peut te remercier. Comparativement au public, c'est-à-dire c'est pour une grande éternité. Et c'est fini.

Vous êtes ACE ou APE ?

P 3 : Non je viens d'être ACE. ACE 2017.

Interviewer : Et les stagiaires ont quel statut ?

P 2 : Non ! C'est stagiaire. C'est après ça il faut lancer un concours et postuler. Ils vont postuler au concours et devenir ACE.

Interviewer : En fait en Allemagne dans le passé, les enseignants étaient APE, mais de plus en plus surtout dans les grandes villes, on les contractualise dans ACE et les avantages sont beaucoup moins. Mais ils ont l'avantage de pouvoir travailler en ville.

Interviewer : Ok ! Maintenant si ça ne vous gêne pas on va déplacer pour un petit moment.

(Instructions for visual and participatory activity).

Interviewer : Donc j'ai entendu à part la mairie, les bonnes volontaires.

P 2 : Oui ! Les ONG.

Interviewer : Ok ! Allez-y. Qui veut... ? Il y a des cartes. Mon écriture est illisible.

P 2 : C'est chacun qui écrit ou bien...

Interviewer : On met tout ensemble ?

P 1 : On a besoin juste une fois la mairie. La mairie plus les ONG.

Interviewer : C'est aussi très important au nord. Il me semble plus important dans les coins qui sont plus reculés.

P 3 : Les bonnes volontés.

Interviewer : Les bonnes volontés, les individus.

P 1 : Les individus qui ont la force de frappe dans le pays.

P 2 : Oui ! Les bonnes volontés.

Interviewer : Pour avoir l'électorat après ou quoi...

P 3 : Il y a aussi ça là.

Interviewer : Comme ADJAVON par exemple.

P 2 : In hein. Quand vous allez dans le plateau, c'est encore d'autres.

P 3 : C'est encore d'autres hein.

P 2 : Les bonnes volontés. Qui encore ? Il y a même dans l'école même, l'association des parents d'élèves là.

P 1 : Parfois eux-aussi contribuent. Il y a les parents d'élèves. Le bureau.

P 2 : Par exemple CI₂, CE1₂ qui est là. C'est les parents d'élèves. Oui !

P 1 : Donc on va écrire le bureau APE. Les membres du bureau APE. Puisqu'ils sont en relation avec la population de la localité.

Interviewer : Et c'est eux qui ont construit deux salles de classe ?

P 1 : C'est ça ?

P 3 : Oui dans l'école.

P 1 : On va définir APE. Association des parents d'élèves. Association des parents d'élèves. Là c'est les membres de ce bureau là concertés qui donnent le résultat. Pour avoir une école. Pour avoir une école c'est la mairie. C'est la mairie fonds FADeC.

P 2 : Souvent la mairie ne réagit pas. On a écrit plusieurs fois. Dans cette école on a écrit plusieurs fois à la mairie qu'on veut de salles de classe.

P 1 : Ce sont les ONG...

Interviewer : ça n'a pas changé depuis que les mairies ont changé ?

P 1 : Nous sommes toujours là.

Interviewer : Vous êtes toujours là ?

P 1 : On est toujours au point mort. On est toujours là. On a écrit fatigué. Oun kan wé ka ka bo alo bivè¹. Et comment on peut expliquer que les mairies ne réagissent même pas. Ils ne réagissent même pas.

P 2 : Ils ne réagissent pas. Il faut aussi dire qu'il y a aussi problème de connaissance hein.

Interviewer : Problème de connaissance ?

P 2 : Si tu connais quelqu'un là qui pourra appuyer, être derrière eux, les pistonner. In hein ! Mais si tu ne connais personne là... Même leur chose d'ADJAVON là, ils construisent des écoles toujours.

P 3 : C'est ça je dis non.

Interviewer : Je le... effectivement le mardi j'ai vu des écoles...

P 1 : Si tu vas dans le plateau tu vas voir ADJAVON, ADJAVON.

Interviewer : Même à Porto-Novo.

P 1 : Même à Porto-Novo aussi. Oui, dans Ekpè, Sèmè.

P 2 : Anan mon ADJAVON, ADJAVON².

P 1 : Même les centres de loisir.

P 2 : Tout est affaire de connaissance. Si tu connais quelqu'un dans... là ton dossier passe très vite.

Interviewer : Qui doit connaître quelqu'un ? Le Directeur, ou l'APE ou... ?

P 2 : Bon ils parlent de direction. Même un enseignant. Même si tu es enseignant et tu connais quelqu'un dedans tu peux passer par là. Tu sais que dans ton milieu, dans ton école tu as besoin de classes, tu connais quelqu'un qui est influent, le dossier va passer.

P 1 : Si tu as quelqu'un influent, il suit le dossier ça suit le cours normal pour atteindre l'objectif.

Interviewer : Et la mairie, est-ce que vous adressez le courrier directement à la mairie ou ça passe par...?

P 1 : Tout prend par voie hiérarchique.

Interviewer : C'est- à dire circonscription...

P 2 : Si vous vous... ça va à la circonscription. De la circonscription ça va à la mairie.

Interviewer : Peut-être on va noter la circonscription scolaire aussi. Souvent, par mon expérience professionnelle, j'ai souvent rencontré la phrase : « le CCS doit être le conseiller technique du maire en matière de l'éducation ».

P 2 : Oui !

P 1 : C'est toujours ça.

Interviewer : Est-ce que vous le sentez sur le terrain ?

P 2 : Oun ! Moi je ne le sens pas hein. Ils le disent seulement à la bouche. Moi je ne le sens pas hein. C'est vrai. C'est vrai. S'il était vraiment le conseiller technique de la mairie là, sa circonscription serait bien développée.

P 1 : Bien développée.

P 2 : Oui ! Ils le disent seulement mais ça ne sent pas en pratique.

Interviewer : Vous avez la même perception ?

P 1 : Oui ! Oui !

Interviewer : Est-ce que le chef quartier, le chef d'arrondissement (20 minutes) joue un rôle dans...

P 2 : Bien sûr. Ils jouent un rôle.

Interviewer : Ça passe d'abord par eux ?

P 2 : Il doit avoir sa signature. Quand on fait la demande par exemple à l'école, demande d'un module de trois classes. La directrice ou le directeur signe. Le président APE, sa signature est importante. Après ça le délégué. Avant même qu'on ne fasse l'école, le délégué doit être informé qu'il doit avoir telle chose dans le quartier, dans telle école. Il est informé. Donc quand on fait la demande, on lui envoie et il doit avoir nécessairement sa signature dessus avant d'envoyer.

Interviewer : Après ça va directement à la mairie. Mais il y aura une copie qui va à la circonscription scolaire.

P 2 : A la circonscription scolaire et après ça va... ça vient même à la DDEMP d'abord.

P 1 : De la circonscription ça doit transiter par la direction.

P 2 : Direction d'abord DDEMP.

P 1 : De la direction ça chemine au ministère.

Interviewer : Ça va jusqu'au ministère ?

P 1 : Maintenant la décentralisation au niveau du ministère envoie ça à la mairie.

P 2 : C'est ça.

P 1 : Ça doit aller à la direction, au ministère.

Interviewer : Je n'ai pas très bien compris la dernière partie. Donc la copie va à la CS,

P 1: (oui)

Interviewer : DDEMP et puis MEMP ?

P 1 : Et là c'est la direction de la décentralisation qui l'envoie à la mairie. C'est-à-dire au niveau du ministère, il y a le cabinet chargé et qui s'occupe. Il est en relation avec la mairie. Puisqu'il y a des fonds qui sont alloués et affectés à la mairie dans ce canevas. Donc la structure est en place là et s'occupe de ça pour que la mairie en relation avec le ministère...

Interviewer : Pour définir peut-être le montant des fonds transférés.

P 1 : Le reste là, je ne maîtrise pas trop. Mais c'est la procédure. Notre hiérarchie à nous, le secrétaire administratif. Nous respectons cette hiérarchie. Le reste là ça se finalise à leur niveau.

Interviewer : Ok ! Mais néanmoins il y a une correspondance qui va aussi directement à la mairie et ils sont déjà informés. Maintenant le MEMP s'il veut bien s'adresse à la mairie à travers la DPP. C'est le FADEC affecté. Et pourtant le ministère continue aussi à construire des écoles d'après ce que je sais.

P 1 : Le MEMP ?

Interviewer : Oui !

P 2 : Si, le MEMP construit certains modules de classes. Ministère des Enseignements Maternels et Primaire. MEMP aussi construit.

Interviewer : Mais là vous n'avez pas une expérience donnée que vous allez partager.

P 1 : Toujours depuis fort longtemps, ce que moi j'ai pu assister c'est les fonds de la mairie, les fonds FADEC là. C'est-à-dire au niveau, au moment où on était dans le changement.

P 3 : YAYI Boni

P 1 : Le régime changement là. Donc c'est la mairie qui a pris cette option de pouvoir permettre aux écoles d'avoir des salles de classes.

Interviewer : Quelle est la situation des salles de classes ? Est-ce que vous avez suffisamment de salles de classe ? Donc pour chaque groupe. Bon pas chaque groupe. Pour chaque classe vous avez une salle de classe ?

P 2 : Non ! Pour chaque école. Pour chaque école.

Interviewer : Dans votre école.

P 2 : Dans notre école, chaque enseignant à sa salle classe.

P 1 : Han c'est ce qu'elle demandait ?

P 2 : On va dire à peu près oui.

P 1 : Puisque nous avons huit...

P 2 : A peu près oui.

Interviewer : Le "à peu près" ça m'intéresse.

P 2 : Oui c'est à peu près. Pourquoi j'ai dit à peu près. Parce que les deux salles qu'on dit en tant que salle ce n'est pas salle de classe.

Interviewer : C'est quoi alors ?

P 2 : Ce n'est pas salle de classe. C'est à peu près salle de classe.

Interviewer : C'est une paillote ou c'est... ?

P 2 : Non ce n'est pas une paillote. Je disais tantôt que ce sont les parents d'élèves qui ont fait ça. A la rentrée, souvent à la rentrée quand on fait souscription là, les parents donnent quelque chose. Après, avec l'association des parents d'élèves, la directrice les appelle, le bureau APE. Bon on a trouvé tant, l'école a besoin de tant. Donc ils prennent sable, ciment. On appelle maçon. C'est ça qui a fait qu'on a encore deux classes là. Sinon, on va dire que tous les enseignants n'ont pas classe. Vous voyez, la classe on l'a fait mais ce n'est pas dans les normes.

P 1 : Dans les normes. Ce n'est pas matériaux définitifs.

P 2 : Il n'y a pas de fenêtres, il n'y a pas de portes, ce n'est pas remblayé. Vous voyez ce que je dis non ? Quand on va dire salle de classe ? Ce n'est pas une salle de classe normalement.

Interviewer : Je crois il y a les normes pour la construction des écoles. Parce que vous venez de dire que ce n'est pas du tout dans les normes

P 1 : non ce n'est pas dans les normes.

Interviewer : Je me demande, pour les autres, est-ce qu'il y a des normes qui sont prises en compte ? Quelles sont les normes ?

P 1 : Nous avons un module qui est en matériaux définitifs. Là nous pouvons dire que les normes sont respectées. Parce que fenêtres, portes, placards, armoires, chaises. Maintenant la salle là, la souffrance... Je n'ai pas ça en tête.

P 3 : C'est dans les documents.

Interviewer : Ok ! Donc !

Interviewer : On peut encore parler brièvement ... Je crois qu'on a parlé du processus des tâches. Mais quels sont les acteurs qui ont plus de poids dans le processus que d'autres ?

P 1 : Plus de poids c'est la mairie. C'est la mairie hein ! Tout est dirigé vers la mairie. C'est la mairie.

Interviewer : La mairie on la met au centre.

P 1 : On la met au centre.

P 2 : Après la mairie, ...

Interviewer : Et la mairie décide sur quelle base ? Est-ce que la mairie travaille avec une carte scolaire ?

P 2 : Ce n'est pas l'Etat ? C'est l'Etat qui leur octroie de fonds non ?

P 3 : Les fonds FADEC là.

P 2 : C'est l'Etat qui leur octroie le fond. Avant que la mairie ne réalise, il faut que l'école exprime ses besoins. Nous nous sommes à Gbago. On exprime nos besoins. On a besoin de salles de classes. Et ils envoient les gens. Leur DST (Direction des Services Techniques). Très bien. Ils les envoient sur le terrain, ils vérifient et constatent.

Interviewer : C'est le service de la mairie ou quel service ?

P 2 : Oui de la mairie. DST service de la mairie.

Interviewer : Parce que vous avez parlé aussi de l'école. Donc l'école exprime le besoin.

P 1 : L'école exprime le besoin. Bon souvent ça passe par le directeur ou la directrice adjointe. Bon on a négligé le MEMP. N'est-ce pas ? Parce que j'ai entendu une remarque importante. Si le ministère n'envoie pas les fonds, la mairie ne peut rien faire.

P 1 : Oui la mairie ne peut rien faire. Donc, donc, avoir quel est... Vous voyez ?

Interviewer : Je comprends...

P 1 : C'est le MEMP qui est le centre hein. C'est le MEMP ? Oui ! Puisque c'est après tout le circuit, le cheminement hiérarchique là, c'est ici ça s'achemine. Et qui dit « down-top » ... La décision d'application c'est ici et puis ça renvoie comme ça. Donc l'autonomie de la mairie, est-ce qu'on peut dire que c'est relatif ? Parce qu'elle dépend. Oui elle dépend du MEMP.

Interviewer : Maintenant si la mairie ne joue pas son rôle, il y a les bonnes volontés, il y a les ONG.

P 1 : C'est ça.

P 2 : La circonscription ne peut venir sans ceux-là. Parce qu'il faudrait que ceux-là se manifestent avant qu'on envoie à la circonscription.

P 1 : Ils font leur entrée dans l'établissement...

Interviewer : Ici c'est relationnel si je comprends bien. Ici aussi...

P 1 : ... c'est relationnel. Et d'ici maintenant ça vient là...

Interviewer : ...à la circonscription. Quel est le poids, quelle est l'importance de la circonscription scolaire à part que ça a une procédure formalisée, standardisée ? Est-ce qu'eux... peuvent appuyer ?

P 1 : Toujours dans le respect de hiérarchie, nous sommes tenus... Toute information qui doit, tout ce qui doit avoir lieu dans l'école doit transiter par la circonscription pour un bon suivi. Il a un poids. C'est-à-dire si la demande passe par la circonscription, est-ce qu'ils ont un poids de vite accélérer ou de ralentir le processus ?

P 3 : Ils n'ont pas un poids. Ils envoient ça seulement.

P 1 : Non ils transitent. Ils vont transiter. Normalement une circonscription qui joue bien son rôle (doit), c'est dans ta circonscription qu'on veut... tu dois œuvrer normalement. Ou bien ? Oui ! S'il y a des démarches à faire... Etant le coordonnateur direct de l'éducation au niveau de la mairie, normalement quand ça vient ici à la circonscription, ...

P 3 : ... il devrait directement aller voir le maire et en parler.

P 1 : D'accord !

P 3 : Vous voyez non ?

Interviewer : Donc est-ce qu'on peut dire si je vous comprends bien. Si ici le courant passait bien, la circonscription scolaire aurait plus d'importance parce qu'elle sera écoutée.

P 2 + 3 : Oui !

Interviewer : Mais vu que le lien ici est un peu interrompu, le poids de la circonscription scolaire diminue.

P 1 : Ça diminue.

Interviewer : C'est très intéressant. On va juste les coller comme ça pour réaliser les liens et retourner à la table. Donc je mets la mairie...

P 3 : ... à côté du MEMP

Interviewer : ... à côté du MEMP. C'est au même niveau ? C'est au même niveau ?

P 3 : Non pas au même niveau. Ça doit sortir un peu.

Interviewer : Le MEMP, ...

P 2 : ... c'est vers le haut.

P 3 : Le MEMP reste en haut complètement.

Interviewer : D'accord ! Ok ! Donc la circonscription scolaire est un peu reculée.

P 2 : Oui elle est un peu reculée.

P 1 : Je peux déjà faire un...

P 2 : Oui une flèche...

P 1 : ... pour dire c'est un peu interrompu. Bon maintenant il y a l'école. L'école identifie le besoin.

P 2 : Oui l'école identifie le besoin parce que tout part de l'école.

P 1 : Tout part de là.

P 2 : Si l'école ne demande pas.

P 1 : Si le besoin n'est pas exprimé, tout ceux-ci là n'ont pas de rôle à jouer. Donc l'école a une certaine importance parce que c'est le point de démarrage.

Interviewer : Mais l'école si je comprends bien sans elle, les acteurs ne peuvent rien faire.

P 1 : Oui !

P 2 : Ils ne peuvent rien faire.

Interviewer : Donc où est-ce qu'on va la placer ? Est-ce qu'elle au même niveau que la circonscription scolaire ou encore plus loin ou proche ?

P 1 : du MEMP non ?

Interviewer : A côté du MEMP pourquoi ?

P 1 : Non c'est rattaché à la circonscription.

P 2 : Elle est en bas de la circonscription.

Interviewer : Si on respecte la hiérarchie. Maintenant par rapport au centre d'influence, au centre de pouvoir. Moi je raisonne toujours en termes de...

P 2 : Je comprends.

Interviewer : Oui je crois.

P 2 : Je comprends.

P 1 : Ça suit le cours normal. Nous sommes en train de suivre la hiérarchie déjà. Ça vient.

Interviewer : Ça c'est la voie hiérarchie.

P 2 : La voie hiérarchie.

Interviewer : Sinon il se peut que dans la voie hiérarchique quelqu'un qui a un niveau élevé n'a pas forcément un pouvoir donné.

P 2 : Oui effectivement.

Interviewer : Mais, mais je vous... J'essaie de vous suivre. Je vous donne la carte.

P 1 : C'est-à-dire pour que je sois écouté ici, je dois transiter par tout ceci. C'est-à-dire l'école ne peut pas sauter la circonscription quelque soit son action. Ça c'est, c'est ce que nous nous respectons : la hiérarchie.

Interviewer : Maintenant, l'école identifie le besoin. Donc si l'école n'identifie pas, il n'y a rien qui se déclenche. Mais en même temps si tous les acteurs ne jouent pas leur rôle, l'école ne sera pas construite dans ma compréhension mais je souhaite avoir votre compréhension. Je me dis l'école n'a pas au tant d'influence dans la réalisation. Donc est-ce qu'on la met à côté de la circonscription scolaire ou... ? Je vois bien le lien hiérarchique : c'est sous la circonscription. Mais par rapport à l'influence...

P 2 : Mais il y a une chose. Quand on dit... Si l'école veut sans ces acteurs là, elle peut avec les bonnes volontés.

P 1 : Avec les bonnes volontés. Elle peut.

P 2 : Avec l'aide des bonnes volontés l'école peut. Même sans la mairie, sans le MEMP, l'école peut.

P 1 : Il y a le cas qui est en cours là.

Interviewer : C'est intéressant.

P 3 : Moi je pensais qu'on va mettre l'école ici.

P 1 : Ce que moi je dis, l'école peut.

P 2 : Même sans ceux-là. Si ceux-là ne décident pas et l'école a des ONG, les bonnes volontés, elle peut construire.

P 2 : Si on mettait l'école à côté ou bien quelque part ici, et on met les parents d'élèves à côté, eux ils viennent directement dans l'école et c'est fini. Ça s'achève là. Maintenant s'il y a un acteur de circonscription qui va voir mairie, lui continue.

P 2 : Si on veut suivre la hiérarchie, on va à la circonscription. Sinon l'école part des ONG et des bonnes volontés, on peut ne pas informer la circonscription. C'est parce qu'on veut suivre

la hiérarchie qu'il y a telle situation dans l'école qu'on veut leur adresser ça. Si l'école a des bonnes volontés et ONG, tous ceux-là, on peut les oublier.

P 1 : Si l'école là...

Interviewer : Oui c'est une réflexion importante. Donc comment est-ce qu'on va les classer ?

P 3 : L'école reste ici.

P 1 : Mi man si gan ze do do niin.¹⁶² Ça ne peut pas rester en bas de la circonscription.

P 2 : Ah... ! C'est vrai ! Excusez ! Je disais que ça ne peut pas rester en bas de la circonscription.

P 1 : Ça peut rester à côté. A côté. Et les ONG, les bonnes volontés à côté. Il faut mettre ça à côté.

Les bonnes volontés restent ici. Oui ! Elles sont à côté de l'école.

P 3 : Donc ils viennent directement dans l'école.

Interviewer : Est-ce qu'ils sont un peu plus proche du pouvoir parce qu'ils ont les ressources financières ?

P 3 : Par rapport aux ressources financières, voilà qu'eux, ils ne peuvent rien faire maintenant sans l'école.

Interviewer : Ça c'est vrai.

P 3 : Même s'ils les voies, ils doivent venir d'abord dans l'école (constater) dire quel besoin. Et nous, on leur parle de nos besoins. C'est là avec la directrice ils se comprennent.

Interviewer : Ok !

P 3 : Si je ne me trompe pas bien. Mais les bonnes volontés peuvent aller à la circonscription pour dire qu'ils veulent construire dans l'école directement comme ça ?

P 1 : Non ! Eux ils sont dans les quartiers.

P 3 : Donc eux, ils vont rester à côté de l'école.

¹⁶² Local language, not possible to translate.

P 1 : Les bonnes volontés dont on parle là, c'est ceux qui sont dans le quartier. Ils ont vu, ils ont remarqué que ah dans mon quartier il y a une école là mais les enfants, ils ont manque... Peut-être ils ont une ONG, ils vont leur en parler. Ils vont venir vers l'école. C'est ça.

P 3 : Donc c'est là... Si c'est l'affaire de poids, si c'est l'affaire de poids tel que la madame vient de dire, ils pouvaient rester en haut mais c'est impossible. Ils ne peuvent pas rester en haut.

Interviewer : Et si on les mettait entre...

P 1 : Entre le MEMP et l'école ? Oui ! Oui on peut les mettre là. C'est bon ? Oui c'est bon. Et les APE. Ah les APE... C'est lié directement à l'école. Quand on dit école, on dit APE direct.

Interviewer : D'accord !

Interviewer : Donc on a de liens hiérarchiques qui sont entre école, CS (circonscription), MEMP. On n'a pas mis la DEMP, ce n'est pas important. Donc on peut mettre école, circonscription scolaire, MEMP, ...

P 1 : C'est ça. C'est la hiérarchie là ça.

Interviewer : ... les bonnes volontés, les ONG, ça c'est relationnel...

P 1 : oui c'est relationnel.

Interviewer : Mettons un point d'interrogation, ça dépend des relations. L'APE et l'école, c'est comment ? Quelle est leur relation ? Est-ce qu'elle est proche ?

P 1 : C'est un lien qui est très proche. Très proche. Quelque soit la situation dans l'école là, l'APE est informé en même temps. Très proche. Immédiat.

Interviewer : Donc ça fait...

P 1 : Très proche.

Interviewer : Le MEMP doit informer la mairie.

P 1 : Oui !

Interviewer : Donc quel est le lien entre le MEMP et la mairie ?

P 1 : Le MEMP doit informer la mairie d'autant plus que c'est la mairie qui reconstruit l'école, les salles de classe. C'est la mairie qui doit donner le top. Le MEMP est déjà informé. Donc c'est au MEMP maintenant d'informer la mairie qu'il y a une telle situation dans la commune.

Interviewer : Et en même temps elle doit débloquer les fonds.

P 1 : Elle doit débloquer les fonds.

P 2 : C'est ça.

P 1 : Et qui aime faire sortir l'argent de sa poche ?

Interviewer : Donc est-ce qu'on peut dire « point d'interrogation » ?

P 1 : Ce n'est pas de sa propre poche. Normalement ce n'est pas de sa poche.

P 3 : C'est dans le budget national.

P 1 : C'est l'Etat. Ce n'est pas de sa propre poche. Ce n'est pas de sa poche qu'il va faire sortir l'argent. C'est l'Etat.

Interviewer : Ok ! Je crois on a ... Est-ce qu'il a des rajouts ? Sinon on peut s'asseoir de l'autre côté. Je pense que c'est tout hein.

(Focus group discussion after visual participatory activity).

Interviewer : Ok on va s'asseoir de l'autre côté. Vous avez commencé déjà à aborder les défis ; on a parlé de la location des enseignants dans des écoles ; que la situation dans votre école s'est beaucoup plus améliorée depuis l'année passée. On a parlé de façon plus approfondie des bâtiments. Maintenant est-ce qu'il y a d'autres préoccupations, d'autres défis que vous rencontrez dans votre quotidien ?

P 1 : D'autres défis selon moi, ce serait par rapport à nos apprenants ou parents d'élèves. Surtout au début de l'année là, il n'y a pas de fournitures. Ils n'achètent pas de fournitures aux enfants. Vous allez les renvoyer fatigués. Mon père n'est pas à la maison, ma mère n'est pas à la maison. Surtout dans notre zone là, ça là. Les fournitures ne viennent pas à temps. Oui et ça bloque parfois le travail. Surtout au début, ça bloque le travail. C'est quelques uns qui ont leurs fournitures. Et il faut, il faut, c'est par force tu dois les renvoyer, les

renvoyer... avant qu'ils n'amènent deux, un, deux, un... il y a ça. Ça là c'est vraiment difficile.

Interviewer : Donc fournitures comme quoi ?

P 1 : Bic, ardoise, cahiers, crayons, gomme...

Interviewer : Donc c'est aux parents d'en acheter ?

P 1 : Oui !

Interviewer : Ce n'est pas à envoyer par la DDEMP ?

P 1 : Ce n'est pas envoyé. C'est aux parents d'en acheter. Les manuels sont envoyés. C'est envoyé par la DDEMP. Quand on parle de gratuité là, les parents croient que tout est gratuit quoi. Même jusqu'au Kaki (school uniform) de l'enfant, c'est l'école qui doit... Or ce n'est pas ça. C'est, ce qui est donné, ce sont les manuels et parfois, parfois le cahier d'activité. Cette année par exemple, ce n'était pas en nombre suffisant. Donc on a été obligé de dire à certains élèves d'acheter. Normalement ce qui est gratuit, c'est cahier d'activité CI, CP et manuel de toutes les classes.

Interviewer : Donc cahiers d'activité pour CI, CP.

P 1 : Mais ce n'était pas en nombre suffisant. Ce n'était pas en nombre suffisant. On était encore obligé de dire aux enfants d'acheter et quelques parents ont acheté. C'est qui est gratuit ça.

Interviewer : C'est quasi gratuité. N'est-ce pas ?

P 1 : Oui c'est quasi gratuité.

Interviewer : Maintenant vous avez dit, bon quelqu'un a fait une remarque « surtout dans notre quartier ». Bon je vais me rendre dans votre quartier. Mais comment est-ce que vous décriviez votre quartier. Quelles sont les caractéristiques.

P 2 : Moi je suis dans ma deuxième année. Elle a fait plus d'ancienneté dans la zone. Je suis dans ma deuxième année.

Interviewer : Est-ce que c'est quartier résidentiel, est-ce que s'est favorisé, ou est-ce que s'est bien mélangé ?

P 1 : Non c'est un quartier mélangé. Surtout qu'actuellement il y a des, ... il y a des autochtones, mais actuellement, les étrangers viennent construire.

Interviewer : Parce que c'est moins cher ?

P 1 : Bon ce n'est pas si moins cher hein. Attention ! Pour prendre quelques choses dans la zone maintenant c'est au moins trois millions hein. Oui ! Au moins trois à quatre millions. Alors qu'il y a cinq ans, ou dix ans, un million cinq cent, deux millions, tu as déjà payé une parcelle.

P 3 : Cinq ans- dix ans ?

P 1 : Oui ! Il y a dix ans dans notre zone là.

P 3 : Deux millions ou bien ?

P 1 : Oui ! Il y a dix ans. Mais actuellement là tu es à trois voire quatre même.

Interviewer : Ça me rappelle un phénomène en Allemagne qu'on appelle « ... » et je ne sais pas comment le dire en Français comme "gentrification" ça veut dire qu'un quartier défavorisé dans une ville a gagné beaucoup de valeurs en très peu de temps. Parce que justement les gens (les étrangers) sont venus investir ce qui fait que pour les autochtones, c'est difficile à supporter. Parce que tout commence par augmenter. Et pourquoi vous dites surtout dans votre quartier c'est... Si je finis la phrase, surtout dans votre quartier et ce n'est pas évident que les parents ils achètent.

P 1 : J'ai dit que surtout dans notre quartier là, d'usage, c'est par rapport à d'autres expériences. J'étais restée dans une autre école avant de venir ici. Et j'ai comparé. Oui ! Donc... Pourquoi il y a ce... Non ! C'est manque de volonté ?

P 2 : Comment on peut expliquer cela ?

P 3 : Et c'est ce que la madame dit avant que les gens pensent que quand on dit la gratuité, c'est tout. Alors que c'est défini sur un certains matériels. Les cahiers nécessaires, ce sont eux-mêmes qui devraient...

P 1 : Disons qui a appris la mauvaise volonté des parents ?

P 3 : De certains parents.

P 1 : De certains parents. Et après tout « a man s éwé, a nan kplon masson¹⁶³ ». De certains parents.

Interviewer : Et ceux qui ont les moyens. Est-ce qu'ils envoient leurs enfants dans les écoles privées ? Ou est-ce que... ?

P 1 : Oui ! D'autres viennent dans notre école. Il y a d'autres qui ont un peu de moyens, ils envoient leurs enfants dans les écoles privées. Mais ce n'est pas en nombre intéressant.

Interviewer : Donc il y a une tendance qui sont dans les écoles privées.

P 1 : Oui ! Parce qu'il y a beaucoup de privées hein. Ah il y en a. A Dowa là, il y a de privée. Il y a des écoles privées.

P 3 : Et ils achètent tout hein. Le jour de la rentrée là, le premier jour de la rentrée. Ils achètent tout et le travail commence en même temps. Tous les parents.

P 1 : Parce que je suis aussi parent d'élève dans une école privée.

P 3 : Voilà !

P 1 : Quand on dit rentrée trois octobre là, si l'enfant va à l'école, s'il revient, c'est avec leçon dans le cahier. Donc tu dois lui donner toutes les fournitures scolaires. Puisque le jour là, il va avec son sac au dos et toutes les fournitures sont dedans. Mais chez nous, ce n'est pas ça. Quand on dit rentrée le lundi là, c'est à peine tu va trouver quelques uns. Parce que les parents se disent : quand il y a rentrée, ils ne vont pas commencer par écrire maintenant.

P 2 : Or en réalité, le système pour cette année, pratiquement cette année, on nous a recommandé dès la rentrée là de commencer par travailler. On n'était bien présent, les cahiers bien préparés, mais les apprenants nous sont pas prêts pour pouvoir au moins les premières leçons. La leçon était au tableau mais l'enfant était dans la classe et il ne pouvait pas prendre.

¹⁶³ 'Si tu n'es pas intelligent à l'école, tu iras apprendre la maçonnerie.' (translation from local language into French)

Interviewer : Parce que ?

P 1 : ...il est venu les mains vides.

P 2 : Et c'est après deux semaines déjà, parce qu'il y avait eu la prérentrée. On avait effectué la prérentrée et ils ont reçu leur liste de fourniture. Cahier, combien de cahiers il faut, le nombre de livres qu'il faut. Pourtant après ces deux semaines là, ils ne sont pas prêts pour pouvoir démarrer effectivement la rentrée.

Interviewer : Donc si je comprends bien, cette année, les enseignants, l'école était prête.

P 2 : Mais (la classe bien préparée) mais les apprenants, les parents d'élèves n'ont pas accompagné pour que l'effectivité soit constatée par l'écrit dans les cahiers.

Interviewer : Pourquoi il n'y avait pas de communication entre les APE et l'école ?

P 2 : Il y avait la communication puisque la prérentrée a été effectuée. Ils étaient venus prendre la liste chez nous. On leur a donné la liste là. Mais pourtant, notre constat ça n'avait pas pris.

P 1 : Donc on voit que la mentalité n'a pas encore... Ils n'ont pas encore compris. On va encore attendre cette année ci pour voir ce que ça va donner. Peut-être que c'est la première fois, nous disons que c'est une expérience. On attend encore l'année prochaine pour voir ce que ça va donner. Sinon très souvent là, ils ne payent pas les fournitures. Ça va faire deux semaines. Je te dis même jusqu'... avant d'aller en congé là, il y a encore un enfant, ces fournitures ne sont pas encore prêtes. A quelques mois des vacances. Et ses camarades travaillent. Et lui, chaque fois, arrivé à ce stage là, il est là. Je dis « Toi là, tu es dans la classe depuis septembre, octobre, novembre, décembre, janvier, février, mars, bientôt quelques mois et tu n'as pas amené... Allez, va chercher un cahier ! » Et quand tu les renvoies parfois, ils peuvent rester à la maison hein ; une semaine avant de revenir. Même si je dis va à la maison là, il dit oui, oui. Tes parents sont à la maison, il dit oui. Assois-toi, assois-toi là. Parce que si tu les renvoies là, ce n'est pas sûr qu'ils viennent avec ça. Là c'est un cas.

P 2 : Ce genre de constats, ceux qui sont comme ça là, on peut les placer dans les cas sociaux. Parce que le parent est là avec l'enfant et après six mois de travail, il n'a pas encore tout acheté. Est-ce que c'est manque de volonté ? Ou bien les moyens ne sont pas. Les moyens. Sur un effectif de quarante et quelque et c'est deux ou trois qui n'arrivent pas à finir

d'acheter leur... On se pose des questions. Mille et une questions. C'est ces comportements que nous constatons à des moments donnés.

P 1 : Si c'est moyen là, ils n'ont qu'à cesser de faire. Parce qu'il faut faire la politique de ses moyens.

Interviewer : Et si vous parlez des moyens, est-ce qu'on parle des subventions de l'Etat.

P 1 : Non ! Pas ... L'Etat a déjà fait ce qu'il peut...

Interviewer : Non en fait, ce n'est pas la même chose, mais peut-être on aborder question.

P 1 : La subvention. Oui ! La subvention pour cette année là, l'Etat n'a rien fait hein. Non !

P 2 : Je suis en train de parler pour les cas sociaux peut-être.

P 1 : Les cas sociaux là...

P 2 : Je veux comprendre si l'Etat a subventionné dans le domaine des cas sociaux ou bien.

P 1 : Non elle parle de l'école.

P 2 : Pour le fonctionnement de l'école ?

P 1 : Pour le fonctionnement de l'école. Cette année... Quand on parle de subvention là, cette année, l'Etat n'a pas du tout honoré à son engagement. Pas du tout. Même jusqu'avant-hier, j'ai eu un message. Ils ont dit que si l'Etat ne donne pas les $\frac{3}{4}$ restants là, on boycotte la rentrée du 24 là. On va boycotter d'abord parce que nous sommes à quelques mois de la fin et les $\frac{3}{4}$ ne sont pas encore venus. Quand est-ce que ça va venir ? Depuis la rentrée, ils ont envoyé seulement $\frac{1}{4}$. Comment l'école veut fonctionner ? Il y a des trucs qui sont terminés et les enseignants doivent prendre. Il y a les factures à payer. Il y a ci, il y a ci à faire. L'Etat n'a pas débloqué les fonds. Ils ont dit qu'ils vont boycotter la rentrée hein. Si ça ne tombe pas dans cette semaine avant le lundi là, la rentrée sera d'abord boycottée. Il faudrait que l'Etat sorte les $\frac{3}{4}$ restants là avant que l'école ne continue. Cette année, il n'a pas du tout honoré à son engagement. Pas du tout ! Pas du tout !

Interviewer : Et quel est... L'Etat doit se justifier ?

P 1 : Normalement l'Etat doit se justifier. Qu'est-ce qu'ils vont dire. Est-ce que... Bon je 'en sais pas grande chose hein. Ils disent que le problème se trouve au finance. Que c'est au niveau de la finance que les fonds sont bloqués (au ministère des finances). Oui ! Que les fonds sont bloqués. Je ne sais pas si l'Etat se défend comme ça hein. Que les fonds sont bloqués au niveau de la finance. Et il a fait appel au directeur là de débloquent les fonds pour les enseignants. Comme ils ont mis certaines influences sur l'Etat, que s'il ne donne pas les trois restants là, ils vont boycotter la rentrée. Donc il fait appel au ministre des finances là. Donc ils vont débloquent les fonds. On attend encore. On a encore deux jours. Normalement ce sont ces fonds là qui vont permettre à l'école de bien fonctionner.

Et comment vous faites ? Comment vous...

P 1 : On se débrouille.

Interviewer : Comment vous vous débrouillez ?

P 1 : Alors qu'on dit : une mission, des moyens. Tu envoies les gens, il faut donner les moyens. Les gens sont là ; on est là, il y a des fiches, il y a certains nombres de fiches qu'on doit prendre chaque année. Les fiches sont terminées depuis. L'enseignant est obligé d'enlever l'argent de sa poche pour acheter quand il veut travailler. Voilà que le directeur n'en a pas, la directrice n'en a pas. Elle aussi attend la subvention qui n'est pas venue. Est-ce qu'elle va sortir l'argent de sa poche pour satisfaire tous les enseignants ? Je ne crois pas. Les enseignants mêmes se débrouillent parfois. Ils sortent l'argent de leur propre poche.

Interviewer : C'est pareil à la maternelle ?

P 1 : C'est pareil. C'est pareil parce que c'est le même ministère qui gère l'enseignement maternel et primaire.

Interviewer : J'ai tenu à me n'échanger pas seulement avec le primaire, d'abord j'ai focalisé sur le primaire. Mais j'ai pu assister à un atelier sur les réformes éducatives et la question de la décentralisation a été abordée par rapport à la maternelle. Si éventuellement... Bon c'est vraiment rien de concret. Mais ça a été discuté. Et peut-être la commune va prendre plus la responsabilité par rapport à la maternelle. Donc c'est pour cela que j'ai souhaité mieux à vous avoir dans le groupe. Quelle est votre appréciation ? Est-ce que d'autres compétences à part la construction des écoles devraient être transférées à la commune. Est-ce que plus de compétences devons être décentralisées ?

P 1 : On parle de décentralisation. Quand on parle de la décentralisation dans l'école, il doit y avoir des centres de loisir, des centres de jeux. Que les enfants puissent s'épargner après l'école. Qu'il ait un centre où ils vont se distraire. Normalement il n'y a pas ça. Quand on dit décentralisation, c'est pouvoir à la base.

P 3 : Oui !

P 1 : Ou bien ?

P 2 : Tout à fait.

Interviewer : J'ai bien mis la phrase, « c'est le pouvoir à la base ».

Interviewer : C'est vrai ; vous ne rencontrez pas un problème particulier par rapport au nombre d'enseignant dans votre école, mais par exemple le recrutement et la gestion des enseignant ; est-ce que vous pensez que... C'est bien géré au niveau central par le ministère ? Ou est-ce que ça pourrait être mieux géré au niveau de la commune ? C'est juste un exemple.

P 1 : Oui ! Oui ! Je comprends. Le personnel là, quand il y a les mutations, il y a souvent aussi l'autre qu'on fait au niveau de la circonscription. Ou bien ? Il y a des mutations qu'ils font à l'interne. C'est-à-dire ce n'est pas seulement au niveau du ministère. Il s'agit de recrutement qui se fait sur la base... que le gouvernement organise. N'est-ce pas ? Et il y a aussi la commune qui recrute. N'est-ce pas ? Elle demande est-ce que cela ne soit pas bon au lieu que ça soit seulement au ministère là-bas. Je vois. Puisqu'entre temps, les années passées, il y avait ces gens de choses. Des communautaires d'entre temps là. C'était un peu dans les communes. C'était les communes qui avaient recruté. C'étaient les communes qui avaient recruté et qui avaient géré. Ce n'était pas l'Etat. Pour pouvoir fermer le vide. Des années passées. Il y a une décennie. Je crois les communautaires. Et ils étaient nombreux. Très nombreux.

P 3 : Il y a encore des communautaires sur le terrain.

P 1 : Ça a permis de renforcer le système éducatif. Mais aujourd'hui l'Etat les a reversés déjà (en ACE). Maintenant l'Etat les a rendus fonctionnaires.

Interviewer : Peut-être la question, elle est plus pertinente. Les communes qui sont loin du ministère comme N'dali, Karimama etc. puisque je me dis vous êtes proches du ministère.

Donc ça permet de... tout ce qui est encore centralisé, ça permet de facilement... bon plus ou moins de résoudre. Je me demande quelle est votre vision sur la gestion de l'école d'ici dans dix ans ? Donc qu'est-ce qui doit changer pour que vous puissiez encore mieux faire votre travail ? Qu'est-ce qui doit changer pour qu'on puisse mieux faire ?

P 1 : Tout part toujours du haut là-bas. Tout part toujours du ministère. Moi je vois que pour que l'école puisse bien fonctionner, c'est surtout les subventions. C'est surtout les subventions. Venir à tant. Si on peut mettre les subventions au niveau, peut-être il faut venir au niveau des circonscriptions. Au lieu que ça reste en haut là-bas là, c'est de là-bas qu'ils vont envoyer là, à quelques semaines de la rentrée, les gens sont déjà au niveau de la circonscription, la moitié au niveau de la circonscription. Et les directeurs, directrices concernés viennent, ils sont en possession et ils prennent déjà les dispositions nécessaires pour la bonne rentrée, je pense que ce serait mieux hein. Ça va donner un plus au bon fonctionnement de l'école. Donc si les subventions arrivent à tant, ça va donner plus d'autonomie à l'école (à l'école). Arriver à tant, ça donnerait plus d'autonomie à l'école.

Interviewer : Et qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire pour que les subventions viennent à tant ?

P 1 : Cette question-là. Qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire vraiment.

P 3 : C'est l'Etat qui décide de tout ça là.

P 1 : Avant que la rentrée ne commence, c'est l'Etat qui fixe. Ou bien ? Oui ! L'Etat même a fixé telle date pour la rentrée. Il doit savoir qu'au moins deux semaines d'avance, il doit apprêter certaines choses s'il veut vraiment que l'école commence et bien. Vous voyez non. Parce que c'est lui qui fixe la rentrée. Deux semaines avant ces dates là, il doit mettre les choses au point pour qu'à la rentrée tout commence normalement. C'est-à-dire il y a déjà les fonds. Si c'est les réfections qu'il y a à faire, c'est déjà fait. Le matériel est remis à chaque enseignant ; les primes qu'il va percevoir, ils ont déjà perçu leur prime. Ça motive aussi l'enseignant qui veut aussi travailler. Il voit. Ah ! Il y a le matériel. Je suis motivé. Il va travailler.

Interviewer : Donc plus d'anticipation de la part du MEMP.

P 1 : Oui ! Du gouvernement.

Interviewer : Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres aspects ?

P 1 : Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres aspects. C'est le grand carrefour ça. Si à la longue on peut revoir ce point là, l'école va s'améliorer plus. Et cela nous rendra aussi la tâche facile. Tout ce qu'il met dans gratuité là, il faut que tout ça là soit au nombre. C'est-à-dire les cahiers d'activité, les manuels. Il faut que tout ça là soit au nombre. En quantité suffisante. Vous voyez non. Pour permettre à l'enseignant et aux apprenants aussi de travailler. Parce que le parent qui sait que son enfant va à l'école va trouver un cahier d'activité. Il n'a pas fait ce programme là. Mais à un mois comme ça on l'appelle pour dire que le cahier ne suffit pas. Va acheter. Vous voyez un peu la difficulté que ça peut créer. Donc il faudrait qu'ils mettent les choses à la disposition de l'école et je pense que tout irait mieux.

Interviewer : Une dernière question de ma part. Tout à l'heure vous avez abordé les grèves. Il se peut qu'il y aura (ait) d'autres grèves parce que les subventions n'arrivent pas. C'est un espace protégé ? Est-ce je peux vous demander si vous participer aux grèves.

P 1 : Ah, oui ! Lorsque nous avons... Lorsque ces points là sont intéressants. Nous avons nos intérêts, nous sommes tenus de respecter le mouvement d'ensemble pour avoir gain de cause. C'est ça notre objectif. On ne va pas en grève pour aller à la grève. En tout cas quand on a lancé la grève là, on dira non. On se met en possession de la motion, on lit, on voit les points qui sont cités ; si ça nous concerne et ça nous avantage, pourquoi ne pas aller en grève. On y va. On signe la motion on dépose. On va à la grève. Parce que l'union fait la force.

Interviewer : L'union fait la force. C'est une belle phrase et vous aviez dit quelque chose semblable, je n'ai pas pu noter. Mais je vais voir après. Quelque chose comme « nous devons nous mettre ensemble pour avoir gain de cause ».

P 1 : Parce que seule la lutte paie. Surtout chez nous. Seule la lutte paie (au Bénin). Seule la lutte paie hein. Nos devanciers ils ont lutté pour que nous, nous soyons ici. Ils ont lutté pour qu'on ait ces salaires et toutes ces choses là. C'est parce qu'ils ont lutté. Ils ont lutté fort. Il faudrait aussi que nous luttions pour l'avenir de ceux qui viennent derrière. Il faut lutter.

Interviewer : Et bon. Entre temps, il y avait de grève par rapport aux inspecteurs retraités. Et moi-même, j'étais très surpris. Il suffit que je travaille sur la décentralisation de voir une certaine régionalisation des circonscriptions scolaires plus les retraités. Quel est votre point de vue là-dessus ?

P 1 : Les retraités.

P 2 : Chacun tire le drap de son côté.

Interviewer : Pardon !

P 2 : Les gens essaient de tirer le drap de leur côté. Comment faire pour leur domaine trouve satisfaction. Ils trouvent satisfaction.

Interviewer : Tire le drap de son côté.

P 2 : Oui ! Parce que nous avons les aînés, les adjoints et les collaborateurs. Nous, notre gain de cause, il y a nos avancements qui sont... On bat pour ça là. Mais eux de leur côté, il faudrait qu'ils aient, qu'ils trouvent leur place. Qu'ils ne soient pas oubliés. Parce qu'il y a des connaissances qu'on ne doit pas laisser de côté. Donc je c'est une manière pour (comment dirai-je ?) C'est-à-dire frapper pour que attention hein. On doit aussi penser à eux. On doit aussi penser à eux. Ce n'est pas parce qu'ils sont à la retraite que tout est fini. Il y a encore des connaissances qu'il faut transmettre à la génération montante.

P 1 : Au bout de l'ancienne corde on tisse la nouvelle dit-on.

Interviewer : Pardon ?

P 1 : J'ai dit au bout de l'ancienne corde qu'on tisse la nouvelle. Dit-on. Mais ce n'est pas pour ça qu'il faut en abuser. Non ! Les pépés, les retraités là. A un certains moments, l'Etat a dit tu peux valoir tes droits à la retraite. Mais va t'asseoir et céder la place à d'autres qui sont là. Il faut permettre aussi aux directeurs, aux directrices de « compétir », d'aller au concours de CP et pour devenir inspecteur aussi. Ou bien eux aussi, ils ont pris par ici non ? Ils ont été aussi enseignants. Ils ont été directeurs. Ils n'ont qu'à permettre aussi aux autres d'aller aussi. Leurs connaissances qu'ils ont là, ils peuvent toute fois rester chez eux et on peut venir vers eux. S'ils veulent ils n'ont qu'à donner ou ils n'ont qu'à garder pour aller dans leur tombe.

P 3 : Personnes ressources.

P 1 : Oui ! Peut-être que c'est la manière dont eux- aussi ils ont accepté faire le travail qui a fait qu'ils ont supposé. Non seulement la manière, les (comment je vais appeler ça). Ce qu'ils veulent percevoir là c'est trop. C'est trop. Le salaire là. Leur salaire là, c'est trop. On dit qu'on veut inspecter pour quelque... C'est trop. Soyons... C'est trop. Et au même moment... qu'est-ce qui a surtout fait chose là. Au même moment où on paie ces gens là

d'une telle somme, l'Etat dit qu'il n'y a pas l'argent pour avancer. Et où est-ce qu'il a trouvé l'argent pour payer, pour sortir ces sous là. Il y a tout ça qui a soulevé les gens. Il y a ça qui a soulevé.

Interviewer : Donc si je comprends bien, l'Etat a essayé de contractualiser des inspecteurs retraités, mais ne permet pas aux directeurs et aux directrices d'école de se faire former comme le conseiller pédagogique.

P 1 : Il n'y avait pas une politique parallèle qu'ils ont en même temps promu.

Interviewer : Comment ?

P 1 : Promu. D'accord ! Ils ont promu. Ils n'ont pas promu la formation des directeurs comme conseillers pédagogiques ? Non ! Non ! En ce moment non. Ils n'ont pas promu les directeurs. Ils n'ont pas promu. Il y a quand-même des gens CP.

P 2 : Beaucoup.

P 3 : Beaucoup en herbe.

P 3 : Il a déjà des CP qui ne sont pas employés. Non ! Ils sont employés. Qui peuvent concourir pour devenir inspecteur. Ils disent qu'il n'y a pas assez d'inspecteurs. C'est pour ça qu'ils ont fait appel à ceux qui sont à la retraite. Ils n'ont qu'à permettre à ceux qui sont là d'aller au concours d'abord. Ils disent que les jeunes d'aujourd'hui qu'ils ne veulent pas travailler. Les jeunes ne veulent pas travailler. Les jeunes ne veulent pas travailler. Comment ils sont venus à ce point. Comment eux ils savent que nous ne voulons pas travailler. Laissez-nous le temps d'abord pour voir effectivement si on veut travailler ou pas.

Interviewer : Il me semble que pour les diplômés des ENI, il y avait aussi des grèves. Est-ce que vous y avez participé ? Est-ce que vous pourriez me dire un peu ? On me dit par rapport à la dictée.

P 1 : Ceux qui sont recalés là. Les recalés. Oui ! Et ça a donné gain de cause hein. Parce que la grève qu'on avait faite entre temps là, ces points là aussi étaient dedans. Oui ! Les recalés là. Recalé. Ce sont les recalés.

Interviewer : Ça veut dire quoi ?

P 2 : Ils ont repris.

Interviewer : Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres éléments que vous souhaitez ajouter à la discussion. Moi j'ai pu faire le tour des questions.

P 2 : D'autres éléments non. Puisque nous, nous sommes des pratiquants de la chose pédagogique.

C'est ça beaucoup ce que nous... notre métier, notre quotidien. Oui ! La formation. Il faudrait qu'après nos formations professionnelles, qu'il ait des séances de recyclage. Parce qu'il y a des innovations. Même dans la sous-région, il y a des innovations. Donc on ne peut pas rester là, là. Donc il faudrait que ces décideurs puissent repenser. Ils sont en train mais il faudrait que cela prenne. Ils sont en train. C'est ça d'ailleurs qui fait que nous avons des écoles normales qui sont là. Et par moment on invite des enseignants à des moments donnés. Et on a des thèmes et on s'échange sur les thèmes. Donc il faudrait que cela soit périodique. Là cela permettra à chaque enseignant d'être bien outillé et aguerri pour faire face aux difficultés. Puisque les enfants ne sont pas les mêmes. Les années ne sont pas les mêmes. Donc il faut qu'il ait ces formations de recyclage.

Interviewer : Effectivement aujourd'hui on a négligé un peu le côté pédagogique. Ce qui est au cœur de votre travail peut-être. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres aspects que vous souhaitez partager ? Ou bien ça va ?

P 1 : Ça peut aller.

9.6.2 National level: interview N° 67

Interviewee 1 (decentralisation): I1

Interviewee 2 (education): I2

Interviewee 3 (decentralisation): I3

Interviewee 4 (education): I4

I4: On peut commencer. Merci, bien, Madame. Alors que nous sommes arrivés au Bénin à cette étape la partir de la situation socio-économique que nous avons socio-politique et colonique que nous avons vécu dans les années 80. Et il y a eu des problèmes effectivement économiques ou l'Etat arrivait même plus à payer les salaires. Ensuite, c'est qu'il y avait que sur le plan politique il était difficile ou impossible même de créer les partis politiques officiellement reconnus. Il y avait un seul parti, c'était sous le régime révolutionnaire ce que appelions PRBP et à la faveur donc de cette, je dirais, décadence et le pouvoir en place avec son chef à décider pouvait lui dire que programmer peut-être, disons la la la paix dans le pays qu'on se retrouve tous les béninois quelques soit leurs couches sociales pour réfléchir sur les voies, les moyens et les pistes pour entreprendre ou ramener au niveau de chacun des citoyens ce que nous appelons la paix, la libre expressions, la possibilité de s'organiser et c'est comme ça que nous sommes allés à la conférence nationale et est ressortit que désormais il faut laisser le pouvoir au peuple, que le peuple lui-même décide de son avenir. C'est comme ça que les recommandations, les stratégies qui ont été abordé dans la période. Nous avons outils à ce processus de décentralisation qu'on [...] là la constitution 1990, réaffirmé par les Etats généraux de l'administration territoriale en 93. Voilà un résumé, voilà le parcours qui nous a conduits à ce processus. Les collègues, mes frères vont me compléter. Je ne suis pas allé dans les détails.

Interviewer : Oui, après on peut y aller.

I1 : [...] planter le décor [...]

Interviewer : Est-ce qu'il y a peut-être de la perspective éducation un aspect à ajouter puisque quand même les communautés, comment je peux dire, ils se sont impliqués dans l'éducation depuis même avant l'avènement de la décentralisation. Est-ce qu'il y a un aspect de cette perspective là que vous souhaitez ajouter ?

I1 : Pas particulièrement. Pas particulièrement. Parce que comme il le dit dans la période, au fait c'est pas l'éducation qui a..., ce n'est pas ça le problème. C'est pour cela que je n'ai pas abordé l'aspect culturel. Personne n'est gêné que j'aille chez mon frère de Parakou ou chez mon frère de Porto Novo. Ce n'est pas ça, cela ne gênait personne.

I3 : C'était même mieux structure en ce temps-là. Le préfet par exemple, en ce temps, il n'allait pas servir nécessairement dans sa zone.

I1 : J'étais sous-préfet à Abomey. Sans problème.

I3 : Alors qu'actuellement la tendance, c'est d'envoyer le fils du territoire/ du roi dans telle zone. Et puis, il n'est pas bon.

I4 : Je ne sais pas, c'est... Le préfet pourrait nous imprégner d'avantage. Est-ce que par rapport, moi, il y a une idée qui a souvent trotté dans ma tête, hein... Au fil des années, non seulement la population [...] par nombre, les [...] ont commencé à se multiplier, sur le plan des écoles, on est passé avec la réforme de ce [...] de l'internet, l'école, et il y avait un boum de l'école au point où auparavant jusqu'aux années 70, il y avait 12 inspecteurs pour le Bénin. Et puis, et puis, on pouvait commenter le nombre des CEG, mais à partir de 72, il y avait eu [...], c'est-à-dire il y eu [...] de création d'école. Et l'école a commencé à se démocratiser petit à petit. Alors, cette gestion de l'école a commencé à poser problème puisqu'avec 12 inspecteurs dans le temps, l'école était bien gérée. L'inspecteur, je crois dans le Mono, c'est l'inspecteur était à Athieme, il pouvait aplater jusqu'à Grand Popo. Et c'est l'inspecteur de Savalou qui couvrait de Bassila jusqu'à Tchaourou en passant par Dassa. Et puis ça marchait d'une manière ou d'une autre, mais aujourd'hui, vous voyez, avec la [...] de la carte scolaire, on pouvait plus, on a dû commencer, hm, multiplier les inspections juri..., les instances de décisions et autres là pour que l'administration [...] puisse avoir des répondants beaucoup plus proches de la population. Je me dis qu'avec cette politique de décentralisation, c'était aussi une opportunité pour améliorer cette gestion de l'école. Et, mais, en même temps a déjà commencé par, ça a commencé par poser des problèmes, ça échappait déjà d'une manière ou d'une autre à l'administration central, d'où la création des différents corps que nous avons avec les enseignants communautaires ; une expression aussi de ce que les populations se préoccupaient par la chose scolaire. Des enseignants communautaires, ce sont des enseignants, les parents d'élèves qui ont recruté ceux-là pour gérer leur école parce que l'administration centrale était dans l'incapacité d'envoyer des enseignants. Donc, une, hm, une bonne politique de décentralisation pouvait venir, donc, à organiser

tout ça, bon. Je mets les choses comme ça puisque je me dis que « Est-ce que tout ça n'avait pas concouru à cette, à cette [...] de la décentralisation et voir que c'est en même temps des perspectives pour mieux organiser l'Etat. Je mets ça dans le panier comme ça.

I3 : Un autre aspect que je voulais soulever, le système éducatif comme l'a dit le doyen xxx, au cours de la période révolutionnaire, tout était étatisé, tout appartenait à l'Etat. Donc, il y avait plus d'école, hm, professionnelle, école privée, tout appartenait à l'Etat. Donc, au lendemain de la conférence, on a voulu aller dans une forme de libéralisation, libéralisme colonique. Donc, tout a été libéralisé, hm, certaines communautés devaient prendre en charge, c'est là la naissance également des enseignants communautaires, de prendre en charge du fait du manque des enseignants dans certaines zones, devaient prendre en charge l'éducation des enfants, surtout au niveau primaire et même au niveau secondaire. Donc, ils ont dû recourir à des cadres qui n'ont peut-être pas le niveau pour pouvoir assurer cela. Maintenant, la décision de la conférence ne visait pas seulement le secteur de la décentralisation, elle visait de façon globale...

I4 : ...le secteur de l'éducation...

I3 : ...le secteur de l'éducation. Elle visait globalement l'économie et tous les, tous le, tous les secteurs politiques de la vie du pays. Donc, au lendemain de la conférence, ils parlaient non seulement libéraliser, mais démocratiser et, plusieurs, le processus de décentralisation a démarré et les lois de décentralisation sont allées dans le sens de, hm, d'alléger, de ne plus centraliser le circuit pouvait se faire au niveau local ; de le garder au niveau central, ça n'aurait pas été bien, donc les lois sont allées également dans le sens de déconcentrer, de décentraliser pour beaucoup d'aspects dont l'éducation. Il y a d'autres aspects comme l'économie locale et autres qui ont été également déconcentré, décentralisé.

I1 : Comme l'a dit mon collègue du Ministère de l'enseignement primaire, hm, il y a [...] de recommandations très fortes, hm, celle de rapprocher l'administration de l'administré. C'est-à-dire qu'il y avait, disons, une concentration des écoles et des apprenants à des lieux précis [...] avant la, le nom démocratique. Donc, c'est pour cela que l'inspecteur n'avait pas beaucoup d'école ou établissement à inspecter. Il y avait des centres qui étaient déjà fixes. Mais avec la réforme et les [...] généraux de l'éducation, il a été laissée la liberté au citoyen [...] faire des demandes, exprimer leur besoin en matière d'éducation. Comme ça l'éclosion des écoles un peu partout. Il suffisait de faire une demande, les parents d'élèves faisaient une demande, c'est accepté, et la [...].

I4 : ... Vous donnez le site, vous commencez à construire...

I1 : ...vous commencez à construire les bâtiments, même si ce n'est pas en matériaux définitifs. Et ça vous donnait droit à l'ouverture de l'école chez vous. Voilà, un peu une idée que je voulais ajouter... [...]

I4 : Sinon, hm, au fait, comme, hm, hm, évoqué, c'est des choses qui sont acquises qui ont certainement à la réforme, qui étaient des soubassements sur lesquelles la politique, la réforme, c'est-à-dire de décentralisation / déconcentration aurait, on voulait expliquer. Voilà, c'est pourquoi on a estimé que, bon, il faut sortir ça. Puisque vous parlez des questions politiques, socio-économiques et historiques...

Interviewer : Oui.

Interviewer 2: Donc, on pourrait prendre chaque dimension de la question, est-ce qu'on peut y voir l'influence de la colonisation sur l'élaboration même de la politique de décentralisation jusqu'à son émergence. Est-ce qu'on peut voir de façon détaillée l'influence hm, hm, de la colonisation française sur l'élaboration même de cette politique.

I1 : Je n'ai pas trop bien compris la question.

Interviewer 2 : Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, on peut garder l'idée que la colonisation française a influence chaque béninois. On peut l'estimer comme ça. Et partant de là, est-ce qu'on peut dire, étant donné que la colonisation a forme et peut-être a disposé la conscience pour l'être individu, est-ce que cela a participé en quelques sortes à l'élaboration de cette... Parce que nécessairement il y avait des cadres béninois qui étaient là, mais qui nécessairement étaient des produits de la France. Est-ce que cela a eu une influence sur l'élaboration de cette politique de décentralisation?

I1 : Est-ce que la question n'est pas trop [...]. Ce n'est pas très bien pense. On peut dire, je ne dirais pas que c'est la colonisation qui a eu une influence sur..., je dirais plutôt que, hm, hm, le vécu, le vécu d'avant le Renouveau Démocratique a eu à se référer à cette période, voyez-vous ? A se référer à cette période, si nous avons désormais, nous voulons qu'on introduise de l'arme dans l'éducation. Et on a créé même un peu avant la révolution [...] des saisies des écoles ou on envoie les enfants qui apprennent la langue maternelle. Ça avait commencé. Je ne sais pas si on peut dire que c'est l'influence de la colonisation ou de la décolonisation.

Interviewer 2 : Ok, autrement dit, est-ce qu'il y avait des traits français qu'on avait colportés dans l'élaboration de la politique de la décentralisation ? Est-ce qu'il y a des traits, il y a des schémas français que qui qu'on peut retrouver.

I1 : Oui, nous sommes dans le système français. Donc, tout ce qu'il y a aujourd'hui entraîne, bon, avec la petite [...] que j'ai, j'étais en Allemagne, je suis allé chez les anglais, ce n'est pas la même chose. Nous n'avons copié que le système français, que le système français. Ça la, d'accord, c'est pour cela que j'ai dit que la question n'était pas du tout clair. L'excellence française a influencé les autres propos.

I3 : Oui.

I4 : La réforme est arrimée sur le système français. Il faut reconnaître qu'après la colonisation, nous avons connue l'indépendance, nous avons connu la période révolutionnaire, et la révolution avait été véritablement une révolution.

I3 : Ah oui.

I4 : Tu sais, déjà, la révolution avait déjà fait la politique de décentralisation.

I1 : Si, bien sûr.

I4 : Vous voyez ? C'est avec la révolution que on est passé à un certain, voilà...

I3 : aux 77 communes.

I1 : Oui, c'est ça.

I4 : On a trouvé, c'était les sous-préfectures qui existaient. On est passé aux districts. On a créé des districts. C'est en ce moment que Cotonou a été divisée en 6 districts. Et... on a démultiplié les arrondissements qu'on appelait les mairies. Donc, il y avait et...Et c'est en ce moment qu'on parlait de rapprocher l'administration de l'administré. C'était déjà une politique de décentralisation. Et et donc, ça aussi, ça fait partie de l'historique.

I ? : Oui.

I4 : Donc, en même temps on dit qu'il y avait les communes

I ? : ...ce qu'on appelait commune avant...c'est [...] d'aujourd'hui.

I4 : Il y avait soucis de créer un CEG dans chaque arrondissement pour que les élèves aillent plus loin. C'était, vous voyez, ça c'était la déconcentration puisque c'est en même temps le les ordres du ministère [...]. Donc on a débuté, on a commencé, on a trouvé beaucoup de CEG, on a créé les, dans le temps, on parlait de CMG et pour les communales, la déconcentration du pouvoir du Ministère de l'Education, c'est la division, la division du district [...], la division de l'éducation et le ressort s'appelait RDDE. Vous voyez ? Donc, déjà il y avait déjà des soucis de décentralisation et de déconcentration. Donc, ce qui a été avancé ou bien une avancée sur la période coloniale. Donc, c'est la révolution. Vous voyez ? Et la révolution est venue dire non à la période coloniale. Dans le cadre béninois, xxx a été formé par l'administration coloniale.

I3 : Ils se sont libérés de mener une certaine politique.

I4 : Donc, voilà, c'est pour vous dire, même si nous sommes français dans la tête, il y a quand même une certaine indépendance qui a [...] ceci aussi.

Interviewer : J'avoue, je ne sais pas si ma question cadre, mais je suis très contente du développement de la discussion. Mais parce qu'on parle des éléments propres au Bénin qui ont, qui sont peut-être déjà des éléments de décentralisation, est-ce que les chefferies traditionnelles, hm, sont aussi un élément qui peut-être reflètent, se reflètent, hm, dans le concept de la décentralisation.

I1 : C'est une question plus difficile. Il faut dire, en réalité au Bénin, nous ne connaissons pas ce, disons, cette société civile là. Les, comme vous avez, les...

I (?) : ...chefferies traditionnelles...

I1 : ... chefferies traditionnelles, est-ce qu'on ne les a jamais impliqués dans quelques choses au Bénin ? Réellement non. Sinon, officiellement non ! Officiellement, les chefferies traditionnelles ne se sont jamais vu impliquer par l'Etat dans la gestion des affaires au niveau local. Mais les citoyens même au niveau culturel, ah non, je respecte beaucoup [...] ça là, mais lui il n'est pas obligé de connaître [...], ce le regarde même pas. Voyez-vous ? Contrairement à ce que nous vivons au Togo, au Ghana, au Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, ou c'est, mon dieu, c'est écrit là dans leur constitution. Nous autres, on a tout fait, mais ça, jamais. Donc, je ne peux pas dire que ça a influencé le processus-là. C'est vrai, c'était aux Etats Généraux, j'y étais, hm, c'était reconnu, mais on n'a jamais compris des

responsabilités de la gestion, la gestion du pays, quel que soit la période. Je n'ai pas compris.

I3 : Ce que je voulais dire, hm, [...] pas en terme de participation, mais en terme historique, quand je prends le cas des royaumes que je connais, qu'ils sont structure de façon décentralisé carrément : il y a roi, il y a des chefs de terre qui ont, les chefs de terre ont un certain territoire ou ils rendent compte, on peut dire que c'est une forme de et déconcentration ou de décentralisation du pouvoir qui a été fait. Donc, quand vous prenez les royaumes de Save ou les royaumes de Nikki, il y avait de ces, de ces trucs là qui étaient une forme de décentralisation ou bien de déconcentration du pouvoir parce que le le.

I1 : Attention, xxx. Si nous partons de la définition que le texte nous donne de la décentralisation/déconcentration, décentralisation, c'est la création état identité...

I3 : Non, je parle des royaumes....

I1 : Mais là là, vous ne pouvez pas parler de décentralisation.

I3 : Je parle en tant que royaume. Le royaume tel que c'était, c'était que le roi était quelque part. Quand je prends pour Save, par exemple, le roi est à Save, mais il a des représentants...

I1 : ...de régions...

I3 : des valets dans les villages qu'ils suivent et qu'ils rendent compte. Lorsque le problème les dépasse, c'est le roi qui envoie un émissaire pour résoudre le problème. C'est le même cas que vous allez constater, dans les pays, dans le royaume Bariba ou le roi est à Nikki, bon l'empereur, il y a des rois dans les autres villes et qui rendent compte également et qui attendent souvent une décision du roi, du supérieur ou [...] certaines décisions, à certaines, pour passer à certains problèmes, ils attendent la décision du roi pour prendre la décision. Donc, on peut dire de façon, peut-être, et, endogène, il y avait un peu cette culture dans, peut-être la culture du béninois, mais qui avec le colonialisme, on est parti à un truc central qui, après qu'on a réorganisé. C'est juste ce que je voulais, l'aspect que je voulais aborder.

I2 : Moi, je vais ajouter qu'historiquement, la déconcentration, la déconcentration a toujours existée. Quand [...], il y a des atouts qui existaient même bien avant la décentralisation. L'inspecteur [I4] a donné l'exemple maintenant que, pendant la révolution ou on a, je crois qu'on devait être là, au [...]. Il y avait les provinces qui existaient, ensuite, il y avait

les districts, villages, quartier... Donc, la déconcentration existait, c'est une vic..., victoire. C'est la décentralisation qui est peut-être plus

I3 : ...qui est nouvelle...

I2 : ... nouvelle dans le processus.

I3 : A partir de, bon, de la conférence, mais qui a pris réellement truc avec les promesses de l'édition, il faut dire que, il faut dire que..., pour répondre à votre deuxième question sur, hm, quel est le rôle, la place et le rôle de la population dans l'élaboration du document de politique...

I1 : Est-ce qu'on a fini avec la première question ?

Interviewer 1 : D'accord. En fait, je voulais proposer de faire la transition à la deuxième, mais s'il y a encore des éléments à ajouter pour la première...

Interviewer 2 : Oui, est-ce que, hm, à partir des interventions, je comprends qu'il y avait l'aspect culturel qui déjà dans l'esprit ou la conscience des béninois qui poussait à capter la déconcentration. Mais ce n'était pas encore réellement la décentralisation. Donc, est-ce que cet élément culturel influence la décentralisation dans ce sens...

I1 : Attends, quand vous dites ce n'était pas encore la déconcentration...

Interviewer 2 : Ce n'est pas encore la décentralisation.

I1 : Mais, non, je ne suis pas d'accord avec vous. On vient de le dire. Est-ce que c'est parce qu'on a donné une définition à ça, qu'estimez que ce n'est pas encore ça ? C'était la décentralisation aussi !!

Interviewer : Ok.

I1 : Voyez-vous ? On vient de dire, sous la révolution il y a mairie, il y a arrondissement, il y a tout ça. Mais est-ce que ça veut dire que ce n'était pas décentralisé ?

Interviewer 2 : Voilà.

I1 : C'était bien décentralisé.

Interviewer 2 : Et, je, je, je parle de la [...]

I4 : Non, seulement qu'il y avait le pouvoir, une partie du pouvoir qui était déléguée a [...] cette base là, mais il y avait aussi, même si ce n'est pas consistant, il y avait un peu de compétence. Même si l'Etat central tenait fortement encore à la tirelire, et encore il y avait quand même une petite parcelle d'intérêt qu'on donnait. Oui. Donc, tout ça, comme ce n'était pas des, c'est-à-dire la politique vient donner toute l'ouverture.

Interviewer 2 : En fait, je m'inscrivais dans, hm, la définition, hm, macro de de la démocratie. Excusez-moi beaucoup, veuillez moi excuser, parce que nous en sociologie, la démocratie a un autre sens qui, qui ne dit pas forcément la même chose qu'on on le prend à des niveaux donne. Donc, il y a forcément, hm, des implications. Et je parle d'implications en ce sens que quand l'Etat délègue de pouvoir, hm, l'Etat est toujours là sous le contrôle. Maintenant, si l'Etat est toujours sous contrôle, comme, hm, hm, le Monsieur le disait tout à l'heure, c'était culturellement, je partage ça, que les rois avaient aussi des délégués qui..., donc tout ça là, c'était l'aspect encore de la déconcentration. Parce que la décentralisation exige quand même quelque part une liberté de l'autorité que vous mettez à la place de cette instance, une liberté, une autonomie, une certaine indépendance. Et donc, la déconcentration n'autorise pas tellement.

I1 : Non, la déconcentration n'autorise pas parce que quand vous êtes déconcentré, vous n'êtes pas autonome.

Interviewer 2 : Voilà :

I ? : Vous êtes un bon délégué.

I1 : Délégué, c'est un pouvoir délégué. Vous l'exercez au nom de quelqu'un.

Interviewer 2 : Voilà.

I3 : Mais la notion de décentralisé, il y a certaines...

I1 : ...certaines [...]

I3 : ... qui font que vous ne pouvez pas exercer parce que...

Interviewer 2 : Donc, dans la décentralisation, est-ce que ces compétences qui sont déléguées...

I3 : ...transférées...

Interviewer 2 : ...ou transférées...

I2 : Non, ce n'est pas décentralisation, c'est compétence transférées, Déconcentration, compétence déléguée...

Interviewer 2: Ok, compétence déléguée. Et donc, quand on parle de compétence déléguée, déléguée, c'est à dire que l'Etat est en contact en permanence et contrôle tout. Maintenant, au niveau de de de de la des compétences transférées, nous sommes déjà dans la décentralisation. Et est-ce qu'il existe une autonomie ou une indépendance...

I1 : C'est clair, c'est clair.

I (?): ...autonome et vous avez une personne juridique.

Interviewer 2 : Maintenant, à partir de la...

I (?): et vous prenez les décisions vous-mêmes.

Interviewer 2 : Donc, à partir de là, est-ce qu'on peut dire aujourd'hui que réellement que les compétences qui sont transférées s'exercent de façon libre, indépendante, autonome ?

I1 : C'est une question que vous posez ?

Interviewer 2 : Oui, c'est une question.

I1 : Moi, je peux vous répondre que oui, que oui. La loi a tout transféré et on dit : ces compétences transférées sont accompagnées par des moyens financiers. Pourquoi pas humain pour les exercer [...]. Mais ce que nous vivons aujourd'hui que les moyens, les ressources financières et humaines ne l'accompagnent pas le transfert, les compétences transférées.

I3 : Tout ce qui est transféré, ils sont libres de les exercer. Seulement dans les, avec des conditions, ce n'est pas parce que tu es libre qu'on te transfère des ressources que tu vas faire tout ce que tu veux.

Interviewer 2 : Oui.

I2 : Les compétences transférées sont exercées sous la tutelle. Parce qu'il y a ce qu'on appelle le contrôle de la légalité des actes poses le maire et aussi l'assistance conseil exercé par l'autorité. C'est vrai vous avez la compétence, mais où est l'Etat qui va contrôler la légalité des actes ?

I3 : Tout ce que vous faites... de Malanville, indépendant, [...] bon je me [...] désormais au Niger. Donc, vous êtes toujours sur le territoire [...]. Donc, il y a la loi que vous devez respecter.

Interviewer 2 : Ok.

Interviewer : Peut-être, hm, regardons l'heure, on va faire encore une fois un pas en arrière parce que maintenant on est au niveau de la troisième dimension, les contextes et des pratiques aujourd'hui, les compétences transférées, les ressources etc. Si on peut faire un pas en arrière à l'élaboration de la PONADEC et l'implication, le rôle et la place des populations, de la population dans, dans le document, si cela vous convient.

I1 : C'est [I3] qui a notre [...].

Interviewer 1: Voilà. En fait, excusez-moi, hm, servez-vous, et servez-vous...

I3 : Le processus de décentralisation a été lancé comme on l'a dit toute à l'heure. Il y a eu la conférence de 1990 qui a dit on va, et c'est dans la constitution, qu'on va à la décentralisation. On a dû attendre décembre 2002 pour avoir les premières élections communales et municipales. Donc, entre ces deux temps, 1990 à 2002, il y avait les Etats Généraux de l'Administration Territoriale, il fallait rédiger toutes les lois et de la décentralisation, quelles sont les compétences transférées, quelles sont les compétences propres, compétences partagées, et déléguées. Donc, l'Etat a organisé les élections en janvier, décembre 2002, janvier 2003 et les premières mandatures se sont installées en 2003. Donc, à l'expérience de ces premières mandatures, il y avait beaucoup de difficultés parce que on a dit que la commune est autonome, mais nous avons les communes méritent de quoi, d'un personnel de commandement ou, hm, c'était le sous-préfet qui était peut-être le cadre le plus élevé de la commune et les autres étaient que des agents d'exécution. Or, lorsqu'on parle de développement des [...] des communes, ce n'est pas des cadres de catégorie c, d qui vont aider le maire à impulser le processus de développement. Il n'y avait pas de ressources. Certaines communes ne pouvaient pas mobiliser les [...], c'était difficile, et lui demander de résoudre les problèmes de sa commune. Donc, les communes étaient réellement confrontées à un problème non seulement de ressources humaines, en ressources financières, et il y avait de gros problèmes. Les premiers PDC étaient vraiment envergue, mais les ressources n'ont pas pu se mobiliser. Jusqu'à ce que l'Etat a dit. Bon, hm, bon... Peut-être bien avant ça, il y avait aussi le fait que l'Etat devait accompagner les communes dans ce sens avec l'assistance-conseil, la tutelle et tout. Mais on a constaté que l'Etat ne s'est pas déconcentré. Il est resté tel qu'il était. Donc, l'Etat dit, bon, on va

élaborer une politique qui permet de coupler les deux, la décentralisation et la déconcentration pour accompagner les communes. Et là, on prévoit comment faire pour transférer les ressources, transférer les compétences, comment aussi les communes doivent s'exercer, à l'exercice du pouvoir local et tout. D'où est née la politique nationale de décentralisation et de déconcentration. Les populations ont été impliquées dans le processus du diagnostic et de, hm, de l'élaboration pour le Ministère, les maires, et les autorités locales ont été impliquées... Je vais laisser le doyen, puisque moi je n'étais pas encore là quand c'était élaboré en 2008 et adopté en 2009 quand moi j'arrivais, la PONADEC, donc c'est les doyens qu'ils l'ont élaboré, pourra mieux...

Interviewer 1 : Ok

I1 : Bon, ce que je pourrais ajouter, au départ, les populations n'ont pas joué un rôle au départ.

C'est parce que, comme il a dit tantôt, on s'est retrouvé, on s'est retrouvé en face à une situation. On a dit qu'à vue. Il n'y avait pas une politique, il y avait pas un document qui place la voix sur pour que ce processus devienne une réalité. En réalité, qu'est-ce que nous faisons ? On se lève aujourd'hui, bon, on peut transférer, hm, telle compétence, on le fait rapidement, [...], on fait ceci, mais non, nous devons avoir une boussole, un guide et c'est à partir de cela que la réflexion a commencé à murir et on est arrivé à l'élaboration de cette politique là, ce document politique. Evidemment, hm, c'est beaucoup plus intellectuel. C'est beaucoup plus intellectuel. C'est pour cela que tout de suite, vous ne verrez pas le rôle et la place des populations dans l'élaboration. Elles n'ont pas été impliquées dans le processus de l'élaboration même. Par [...], comme il a dit tantôt, dans le processus on a dû les consulter puisque ce n'est pas nous qui allons-nous asseoir pour mettre en œuvre. Ils ont leur rôle à jouer à partir de, donc de la mise en œuvre.

I3 : A partir de la mise en œuvre de la politique ...

I1 : La, ils ont un rôle à jouer.

I4 : Donc, il parlait de les impliquer à un moment donné

I1 : Quelques choses comme ça... Que demain là, ce document, c'est toi qui doit faire ci. Il n'y a personne pour le faire à ta place. A partir de là, ils étaient impliqués. Voilà, ce que je voulais ajouter.

Interviewer 1 : Hm

I1 : [...]

Interviewer 1 : Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres, autres perspectives sur cette question ou des éléments à compléter?

I1 : Il faut plutôt poser des questions.

Interviewer 1 : Ok.

Interviewer 2 : Ok, par exemple, dans la mise en œuvre, hm, dans l'élaboration ici, par exemple, hm, concrètement, qu'est-ce que la population fait, qu'est-ce que la population fait, concrètement ?

I3 : Bon, la population devrait être informée qu'il y a une politique qui est en élaboration, qu'ils doivent prendre en compte, hm, la volonté de, du destinataire d'aller dans le sens de la décentralisation et voilà, ce que le document prévoit par rapport aux lois qui ont déjà été prises. Donc, avant l'adoption du document, il faut informer la population, bon, voilà la politique qu'on a élaboré, peut-être on a pas pu prendre en compte certains aspects qu'il peuvent voir, donc, ils ont eu un moment pour eux d'apporter leur contributions, bon tel aspect, parce que dans ma communauté peut-être, nous aussi, pourquoi vous avez pensé au nouveau décentralisation, aux nouvelles communes, mais la communauté aussi pourrait s'organiser ; pourquoi ne pas aussi donner de l'expérience aux communautés, donc ces des aspects peut-être qu'on, bon, c'est vrai c'est pris en compte dans la document, mais peut-être ils n'ont pas pris en compte que la communauté pourrait se lever. Parce que si on dit décentralisation, on a mis ça au niveau commune, mais, hm, actuellement l'exercice peut se faire avec les communautés pour voir comment ils eux-mêmes s'approprient de leur développement. Donc, ils parlaient de leur élaboration, voir, hm, prendre en compte le, la voix des populations à la base pour peut-être corriger ce qui n'a pas été pris en compte et surtout les informer que quand ça va venir désormais, c'est vous parce que la décentralisation, hm, comprend le mot intrinsèquement, le mot, le développement, c'est la population, c'est pas le maire, vous mettez, mais c'est vous. Si le maire doit acheter une boîte de lait, c'est vous qui donnez l'argent pour qu'il achète la boîte de lait. Il ne faut pas attendre de l'Etat qu'on vous donne de l'argent. Donc, pour également expliquer tout cela, à la population.

I1 : Comme il le dit, là, on va illustrer un peu. Le législateur a dit désormais, c'est vous-même qui éliez...

I2+3 : ...le maire...

I1 : ...le maire. Est-ce que sans vous vous acceptez d'élire vos responsables vous-même. Parce qu'on a, on vous a habitué à faire venir tout, tout du sommet, du haut. Mais désormais, ça va partir de vous-même. C'est une manière de les impliquer désormais dans les prises de décision. Il a dit, votre maire, il a géré pendant un an. Comment peut-on savoir s'il a bien ou mal géré. Voyez-vous ? On a donc recueilli l'avis de la population de tout ça pour améliorer les textes que les législateurs ont proposée. Voilà, un peu l'implication dans cette politique-là. Parce que la politique, on l'a élaborée après, après la mise en œuvre, n'est-ce pas. Bon, après le processus 2002/03. Donc, il fallait maintenant cadrer, cadrer. C'est comme ça qu'on est allé à l'élaboration de la PONADEC en consultant, en repérant l'avis des populations sur le contenu qu'on a dans cette politique.

Interviewer 1 : Une phrase qui m'a interpellé, si j'ai bien noté, on vous a habitué que tout vient du haut. Pour moi, c'est un phénomène culturel et... Est-ce que vous pourriez élaborer un peu plus sur ce, disons, ce phénomène culturel et les implications sur la mise en œuvre de la décentralisation?

I1 : L'Etat, tout se faisait par l'Etat, l'Etat seul.

I 2 : Pour construire une école c'est l'Etat. Pour faire une piste même, c'est l'Etat. Pour faire une xxx, c'est l'Etat.

I1 : Maintenant, on vous dit, non, l'Etat ne peut plus continuer à le faire. Il vous revient maintenant de décider de oui, je veux faire une piste, on veut le faire ici, voilà les moyens qu'avez aidé à mobiliser pour le faire.

I4 : ...mais voir ce que nous avons.

I1 : ...mais vous qu'est-ce que vous nous apportez.

I4 : qu'est-ce que vous nous apportez. Donc, ce n'est plus un ingénieur qui va quitter là-haut et qui va s'asseoir pour le faire. C'est déjà le maire qui suit l'appel d'offre, xxx, designer, hm, ou bien il y a quelques choses qu'on appelle...

I1 : ...maîtrise d'ouvrage...

I4 : ...hm, maîtrise d'ouvrage. Il y a aussi une autre pratique là, entrepreneur locale de la population qui...oui, l'initiative de Dogbo.

I ? : ... les gens faisaient ça aussi des listes non ?

I4 : Ah, IMO. C'est des choses que la décentralisation a amené pour permettre à la population d'être acteur de, de développement.

Interviewer1 : L'initiative de Dogbo, j'ai entendu, 'laissez tomber'. Je connais un peu le concept, mais je suis intéressée par la phrase 'laissez tomber'. Pourquoi ?

I3 : C'est politisé parce que l'initiative de Dogbo, ce n'est pas, c'est pas de Dogbo que c'est ne, c'est un truc qui était là depuis, ce que les gens faisaient. Donc après, on a politisé, et on n'a pas voulu envoyer les ressources tel qu'il faut. Et on dit, on met ça sous l'initiative de Dogbo. On ne sait pas. Le doyen (I1) même en a parlé, de laisser tomber.

I4 : Oui, je crois cette histoire est un manque de patriotisme.

I1 : C'est tout. C'est le fonds du problème, ça. Parce que, bon, le chef de l'Etat, elle est en tourne, et, dans les soucis de, de, de construire toutes nos écoles en matériaux définitifs, il a dit à la population, 'mais impliquez-vous !'. Mais si on vous envoie 10.000 francs au lieu des 15.000, les 5.000 c'est à vous de les apporter.

I3 : ...en envoyant du sable...

I1 : ...du sable, de l'eau, des briques pour aider le maçon. C'est ce qu'on leur demandait.

I4 : Et c'est ce qu'on appelait 'Comptons sur nos propres forces'.

I1 : ... sur nos propres forces. Sous la révolution, c'était ça.

I4 : Vous voyez ?

I1 : là-bas, comme c'était la force xxx. 'L'Etat prend en charge sans moi.'

I2 : Dans la mise en œuvre de ce programme au niveau du sous-secteur de l'enseignement maternel et primaire, nous avons espéré, écoutez, il y a xxx parce qu'il y a des gros sacs de xxx. Vous savez lorsque nous avons mis l'accent sur l'entrepreneuriat locale et la participation communautaire, au début, bien avant qu'on a conçu ce programme, on construisait avec deux trois million un module trois salles de classe, un bureau, un magasin. Mais avec l'initiative de Dogbo, nous avons ramené ça à 17 millions. Il y a des communes pour ça. Ça a pris simplement parce que au lieu d'envoyer un entrepreneur de

Cotonou, pour prendre un marché à Natitingou, par exemple, on choisit un entrepreneur local. Ce qui agit forcément sur le cout. Il y a la participation communautaire, la communauté doit contribuer à deux millions cinq cents, soit en nature ou en espèces, ça dépend. Il y a des communes ou ils se sont arrangés ou c'est, disons, ramasser de sable. Quand la communauté se sent intéressée, se sent préoccupée, se sent associée, ils s'y donnent. Donc, par contre, il y a des communes ou quand on est parti, ils ont dit, 'non, ça ne peut pas marcher parce que ce que tu dois au marché, le cout est à 10%. On les a habitués à 23 millions et on a ramené ça à 17 millions. Sur trois ans, Athieme était toujours le premier. Ils ont construit avec 17 millions en matériaux. Mais par exemple, à Abomey, à Cotonou, ils ont dit, 'mais non'. Cotonou n'est pas intéressé à la chose.

I1 : Moi, j'ai vu pendant que on faisait l'audit du FADeC, mais l'école qu'on a prise [...]. 'Vous avez l'argent et vous nous dites de venir. Quand j'abandonne un champ, qui va me payer. 'C'est des questions qu'on me posait.

I2 : A un CODIR, on nous a dit, 'prenez vos sous et vous-même vous gérez votre histoire-là. Nous, on ne veut pas.' Ils ne se sont pas intéressés à ça. Parce que du coup les autorités, ils se sont dit dans ça là, on aura rien. Ce n'est pas la peine quand c'est comme ça. Alors que PNDCC a fait l'expérience aussi avec la participation communautaire, ça a marché.

I1 : Même actuellement, le PNDCC avec les philo-socio, tout va. Vous voyez ?

I3 : Au plan ou, ça commence à exporter l'expertise chinoise au Togo.

I1 : C'est incroyable ! Comme il a dit, il faut qu'on revoie...

I2 : Il y a des aspects culturels aussi qui... Parce que certaines personnes...

I1 : Il faut que... je ne vois pas la personne qui a lancé le projet..., hein ?! Mais on voit l'avantage du projet.

Interviewer 1 : Est-ce que vous mettez ça dans les faits culturels ?

I1+3 : Oui, c'est des faits culturels.

I1 : Autre question ?

Interviewer : Oui, je regarde toujours l'heure, hm, on aura plus autant de temps, mais je souhaite quand même partager deux proverbes. Voilà, le premier...

I1 : Moi, je ne suis pas fort en proverbe.

Interviewer 1 : Ce n'est pas grave. Nous, on va le fournir. Le premier proverbe dit, 'Le chef ne doit plus devenir le subordonné ou l'apprenti.' C'est vrai on avait pas trop de temps de parler de la, disons la mise en œuvre et du décalage qu'il y avait peut-être entre la politique même, les compréhensions and les pratiques sociales. Mais je crois, vous êtes au cœur, ou du levier au au au quotidien. Moi, j'ai eu des éléments pendant la collecte de données et..., on ne va pas parler du manque de transfert des ressources financiers et humaines, mais, donc, disons, on va laisser, survoler cette étape, et si ça vous inspire, hm, parler ...pour approfondir encore certains aspects.

Le chef ne doit plus devenir quoi... ?

Interviewer 1 : ...le subordonné ou l'apprenti. [...] Et l'autre proverbe, c'est, 'Je t'ai donné un mouton, mais j'ai gardé la corde.' Donc, on m'a offert ça pendant les entretiens et j'ai beaucoup aimé. Je ne sais pas si ça vous inspire autant que moi. Le premier proverbe, moi je me réfère plutôt au contexte d'influence, c'est-à-dire aux conditions qui ont fait émerger la réforme et peut-être aussi au contexte de la production de la PONADEC ; le troisième plus au contexte des pratiques sociales. Donc, ...

I1 : Est-ce que le deuxième proverbe ne s'approche pas au proverbe chinois la qui dit : 'Au lieu de donner du poisson tous les jours, il faut apprendre à pêcher.'

I4 : 'Non, c'est le contraire. C'est-à-dire, tu donnes le mouton et tu tiens la corde. Donc, en réalité, tu n'as rien reçu.

Interviewer 1 : Par exemple, tout à l'heure vous avez parlé de l'autonomie des communes, hm, hm, ...

I3 : En fait, c'est ce qu'elle veut dire quoi, autonomie, mais en réalité, est-ce qu'il y a autonomie ? Est-ce que ce n'est pas une autonomie de façade ? Est-ce que le poids central n'a pas toujours, hm, hm, sa tuilerie...

I1 : Bon, écoutez, qu'est-ce que vous voulez qu'in dises, l'autonomie elle est réelle, elle est une réalité parce que les communes, c'est elles-mêmes qui exercent leurs compétences. Comme ça quand les fonds sont transférés, ensuite, hm, la gestion de leur communauté leur revient actuellement. L'Etat ne regarde que là où il a mis quelques choses. Dans les compétences déléguées, par exemple, c'est délégué, c'est clair, on ne peut pas empêcher

l'Etat de regarder. Ensuite, le FADeC ou le cabinet d'argent, chaque année on fait l'audit parce que, il y a de l'argent [...] qui a été mis à la disposition de l'autorité communale. On veut voir comment il a géré l'argent. Par contre, les ressources propres qu'ils mobilisent, personne n'a jamais vérifié comment il dépense jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Donc, moi, je pense en matière d'autonomie, bon c'est discutable, ça dépend de la position de chacun.

I2 : Moi, je prends un autre aspect de la chose. Quand nous prenons les compétences, les compétences spécifiques ou partages, nous savons qu'aujourd'hui que la commune qui doit construire et réhabiliter les écoles au niveau du sous-secteur des enseignements maternel et primaire, et le secondaire dans les villes à statut particulier. Moi, je n'arrive pas à comprendre pourquoi jusqu'à présent le niveau continue à construire. J'ai souvent trouvé ce problème dans le cadre quand on élaborait le Plan2D, c'est-à-dire on m'a dit que même au niveau du Ministère de la Décentralisation qui est censé vérifier, je ne sais pas, la chose est encore, se fait là-bas. On ne peut pas aujourd'hui aux communes qu'on leur a transféré des compétences et continuer de les exercer au niveau central. Vous avez dit tout à l'heure....

I1 : Donnez-nous un exemple...

I2 : ... j'ai donné un mouton...

I1 : Donnez-nous un exemple... Nous sommes ici.

I2 : Nous avons au niveau du sous-secteur encore des projets qui continuent à construire depuis le niveau central et parfois même...

I1 : Vous avez donné un exemple du Ministère de la Décentralisation.

I4 : Donnez-nous un exemple.

I2 : C'était lors d'un atelier...

I ? : Il ne faut pas dire les choses...

I2 : ...c'était même un responsable [...] du Ministère de la Décentralisation qui m'a dit, 'Ecoutez Monsieur ..., même chez nous, il y a des trucs qui se font qui devaient se faire au niveau au niveau des communes'

I3 : Mais bon, c'est possible avant, mais maintenant c'est corriger. Il y a une seule chose qui se faisait, c'est la construction des marchés centraux.

I1 : Les marchés centraux seuls qui se faisaient. [...] C'est les marches, c'est tout. Parce que tout simplement les marches étaient inscrites dans sur les PIP...

I3 : Oui, et dans ce sens, normalement on a fini de corriger parce qu'on a constaté que quand c'est inscrit sur le PIP, on n'arrive pas à les exécuter. Ainsi depuis la, les gens ne le constatent pas dans les PEP parce que les marches qu'on a annoncées depuis 2012/2013 sont encore en concours et on arrive pas à les payer Sinon, depuis 2015 on a élaboré le manuel, et c'est à transférer. Dès qu'on identifie la commune, on évalue, on lui transfère les ressources. Parce que quand c'est transférer, l'Etat libère les fonds et la commune [...] à dégager. Quand c'est nous, quand c'est l'Etat central qui fait, tu vas faire le DAO, tu vas tout faire, ça traîne, l'institut sera ferme, mais quand vous dites c'est [...], c'est 10.000 en début de l'année, pft, c'est envoyé. Lui, il prend ça là-bas, il fait le travail, après vous allez voir, si c'est bien fait. Donc, on a déjà pris la décision d'enlever comme ça.

I1 : Mais, ce qu'il dit est vrai. Certaines écoles, certains centres de santé, continuent..., certaines pistes continuent [...] par l'Etat. Ça la, il faut avouer, c'est vrai. Bon, il ne faut pas expliquer ce qu'il y a ... Moi, je peux leur donner un exemple. Quand j'étais plus [...], il y a un des ministres qui, malgré que la loi le précise, qui a fait fabriquer les tables bancs et qui m'apporte le bordereau à signer. Je dis, 'Je ne signe pas. Je ne sais pas où vous avez fait fabriquer les tables-bancs, je ne connais pas la quantité, je n'ai pas vu, et vous voulez que je signe. Bon, nous sommes dans un même Etat.' Ce ministre a réussi à se faire payer au trésor. En tout cas... Alors c'est vrai, alors que la loi est claire !

Interviewer 1 : La loi est clair, disons le cadre légal est clair. Maintenant le volet justice, bon, je me pose la question comment la justice, quel est son rôle pour que la décentralisation peut être effective? Par exemple...

I1 : Le Ministère de la Justice ?

Interviewer 1 : Non, pas le Ministère de la Justice, mais revenir sur l'exemple sur la construction des écoles. Le MEMP continue, tout le monde le sait, à construire certaines écoles. Donc, quels sont les mécanismes pour prendre en compte, c'est violations des lois ?

I3 : Pour moi, c'est une volonté politique, hein, c'est-à-dire si l'Etat dit au Ministre de l'Enseignement Maternel et Primaire que désormais tout ce qui est école, tu transfère les

ressources, je pense que aucun ministre va dire 'non, je le maintien'. Il va le faire. Mais si on n'a pas cette volonté politique de le faire, les cadres seront toujours résistants parce que quand le projet est là, c'est des missions que je fais. Donc, c'est des ressources pour moi.

I1 : Mais on peut aller plus loin. C'est tout ce plan, je crois qu'on tient compte du niveau d'évolution de la population. Mais il ne peut pas traduire cette autorité devant les tribunaux ?

Interviewer : Voilà, c'était un problème...

I1 : Ah oui, conformément aux dispositions tels, tel ministre continue à..., malgré tout ce que j'ai dit, il porte plainte contre ce ministre-là, hm. [...] Il y a un problème de culture aussi.

I3 : C'est politisé.

I1 : Et quand nos populations auront ce niveau-là, Vous allez voir que c'est pareil. Il contestera tout ça. Bon. L'Etat va répondre devant les tribunaux.

Interviewer : Peut-être ce qui justifie le deuxième proverbe 'Le chef fait tout pour rester chef'.

I1 : Le premier...

I3 : ...le premier. Parce que moi je rangerai deux proverbes dans le même côté. Parce que les chefs qui nous a dit 'que désormais il n'est pas le chef qu'il était, mais il ne fait pas tout pour permettre à l'apprenti de grandir, comme tu ne me permets pas de grandir, tu restes toujours chef. Or, en me disant, je suis libre, décentralisé, libre, tu dois me donner tout le pouvoir d'exercice que je dois..., c'est-à-dire pour le pouvoir que tu m'as confié, tu dois me donner les ressources pour que j'exerce ma liberté. Mais tu tu le garde aussi pour dire, 'si je te laisse tout ça, qu'est-ce que moi je deviens ?' C'est ça quoi..., si les services, si les ministères envoient tous les ressources là-bas, qu'est-ce qu'ils deviennent ? Ils deviennent...

I1 : Il y a un ministre qu'il a dit aussi : 'Si vous voulez tout ça, qu'est-ce que moi je fais ? Je suis la pourquoi ?' Qu'il soit l'uniquement pour élaborer les politiques, voilà, les politiques et stratégies, c'est tout ce qu'ils ont à faire désormais là.

I2 : Mais... moi je veux comprendre puisque xxx est là. Je ne sais pas, ce qui pose toujours problème, je n'arrive pas à comprendre parce que j'ai suivi une étude [...] sur la décentralisation au Ruanda et au Benin. Mais ce qu'on a nous [...], était très bonifiant.

I1 : Au Ruanda ?

I2 : Au Ruanda ! On nous dit que le Ministère de l'Education n'a qu'à rester calme. Je n'ai pas dit Enseignement Maternel et Primaire, éducation n'a qu'à rester calme. Et, tout est opérationnel. Niveau central : élaboration des normes, pilotage, suivi, ça s'arrête là. On ne peut pas comprendre ici à l'ère de la décentralisation tout ce qui se fait encore au niveau central. Les activités opérationnelles, on doit les faire au niveau déconcentré. [...] On ne veut rien lâcher. Alors, j'imagine, pour moi, le Ministère de la Décentralisation a encore du travail. [...] Le Ministère a encore de travail parce que je me dis, les gens ne se sont pas du tout appropriés du contenu. Vous sentez au MEMP quand on parle de la POANDEC, sur les 100 ou 200 cadres que nous avons dans la maison, à peine 50 ou bien 20 pourront vous parler de cet outil.

I1 : ...même 10...

I2 : Même 10. La dernière fois, il faisait un très bon discours au niveau du Ministère des Finances, on prenait la parole pour dire voilà, ça s'est conditionné, financement de l'Union Européenne de 2012, élaboration des Plans2D, des PDDI, les cadre de budget, les financements par l'aide de développement... 'Mois, je leur ai dit non, le plan n'est pas là. Le problème n'est pas, il y a deux problèmes : approbation de la politique. Il faut vulgariser la politique, ce n'est pas connu. Ensuite, la volonté politique. Il faut faire un lobbying auprès des autorités. Je vous assure, vous m'excusez il y a des ministres qui ne savent pas le contenu de la PONADEC. De l'élaboration du Plan2D, nous avons au assez de difficultés aujourd'hui, assez de difficultés aujourd'hui pour des gens, des individus qui se sont mis à élaborer un truc et qu'on voit ce truc. Et quand on vous voit, on se moque de moi à la limite. C'est comme si ce n'est pas dans les textes. Tant que les gens ne vont pas maîtriser, on ne pourra pas aller à l'ère de la décentralisation. On doit plus continuer, les choses [...] Quand vous prenez le contexte de la PONADEC, c'est quand même bien dit. Il faut l'articulation de la décentralisation/ déconcentration, il faut l'articulation entre les clos au niveau déconcentré et au niveau national. Tel qu'on ne va pas commencer à élaborer, mettre en œuvre les Plan2D, les PDDI, le problème va toujours se poser. Et pourtant, je dis, c'est la décentralisation, la structure faitière de cette histoire, c'est ce ministère. Le séminaire gouvernemental, on a parlé depuis des années, mais on

n'a jamais fait. Et tant on ne va pas faire..., puisque nous avons aujourd'hui un nouveau gouvernement, il faut que ça soit une réalité ce qu'on met dans la PONADEC. Qu'est-ce qu'on doit faire, on est à quelle étape ? Des partenaires et des communes, il faut s'approprier de ça. Quand nous allons commencer, ça va prendre.

Ii : Ce qu'il vient de dire est une réalité. Ce que nous voudrions souhaiter est que nous voudrions partager nos ouvrages avec tous les ministères. Il ne faut pas toujours voir le ministère de la décentralisation seule. C'est transversal désormais- et multisectoriels. Chaque ministère doit se dire à partir des textes, qu'est-ce que j'ai à attraper, qu'est-ce que j'ai à déléguer et travailler en conséquence. Par ce que le Ministère de la Décentralisation est au même niveau que tous les autres. Ce n'est pas un super ministère, voyez-vous ? Il faut qu'on en tienne compte. Cependant, tout ce [...] juste, nous avons eu beaucoup de choses là-dessus sur ce document-là. Séminaire gouvernementale, conférence annuelle, tout ce que vous voulez pour que cela soit une répétition tout le temps. Mais combien de ministres, combien de gouvernants de mon pays vous pouvez prendre maintenant passez mois à quel vous pouvez dire, 'je connais la PONADEC'. Il n'y a pas. Passez ou à l'heure actuelle, il n'y a pas. Déjà les cadres, c'est difficilement comme l'a dit le cadre même ça, il y a un quand tu lui parle de PONADEC, c'est de gros yeux qui s'ouvre. C'est quoi PONADEC ? C'est quoi PONADEC ? Et là heureusement, nous avons commencé maintenant. Maintenant, nous allons commencer. Parce que les équipes sont renouveler périodiquement. Au ministère même, nous avons déjà fait un atelier de l'appropriation de la [...]. On vient de finir hier la première session du comité interministériel de pilotage de la PONADEC. Tous les représentants des ministères, et nous avons insisté que le niveau de représentation soit désormais carte juridique.

I4 : je n'étais pas informé.

I3 : C'est la DPP qui était présent.

Ii : C'est plus les secrétaires, secrétaires de, je ne sais pas quoi, voilà, va t'asseoir, ça peut être un compte-rendu, ou bon. On ne veut plus. C'est pour les secrétaires généraux des ministères charges des reformes ou c'est les DPP ou leur adjoint. Tout simplement plus personne d'autres. Tous ceux qui étaient là, sauf malheureusement le ministère des finances malheureusement...

Interviewer1 : ...un ministère important quand même....

I1 : ...oui, celui qu'ils ont désigné, était en mission, était pas là. Voilà, donc, nous pensons maintenant, que ça va prendre maintenant. Déjà, c'est lui, c'est son activité. Le début, la première semaine du mois prochain, on a déjà un atelier d'appropriation de ces membres-là. On veut les former, renforcer les capacités parce qu'ils doivent maîtriser l'outil. Ça veut dire que à chacun de nos ministères, il y déjà au moins un élément qui pourra comprendre le contenu cette politique-là. On le fait progressivement. Ça va être autour des préfets et au niveau de chacun des cadres de chacun des ministères. Ce n'est pas prévu dans le budget 2017, mais 2018 le Ministère des Finances a dit, 'je vous accompagne prochainement'. Donc, nous allons insister que ça soit inscrit dans le budget de l'Etat, le genre budget de l'Etat. Plus au niveau de ministère tel, ministère tel... Non. L'Etat même qui vous doivent [...] ça désormais pour qu'on maîtrise effectivement la chose. Ce qu'il a dit est réel, est vrai. Donc pour corriger ça, et ça va être un recommencement..., sinon vous [...], demain vous allez partir. Il faut que on le reprenne encore. Voyez-vous ? C'est un [...] un commencement... Comme c'est une politique, on ne peut pas se fatiguer de la vulgariser, c'est à ça que nous sommes actuellement en atelier. Et le secrétariat permanent a un rôle presque futurien, pour que cela [...].

I4 : Moi, je voudrais savoir quelques choses. C'est vrai c'est un document comme vous le dites qui n'est pas suffisamment connu, il n'est pas partagé non aussi.

I1 : Si, c'est partagé !

I4 : C'est là le mal de notre administration aussi, hein, moi je, j'étais dans une direction ou j'ai vu partir le directeur partir et quand le nouveau le même jour à invite dans son bureau, j'ai failli pleurer.

I1 : Il n'y avait rien.

I4 : Rien ! Tous documents, toute la documentation...

I3 : C'est comme ça !

I1 : Quand on se met derrière les gens là, se met derrière les cadres, on nous dit...

I3 : Même à la DPP, [...], le DPP est parti cette année, il est parti avec toute la documentation.

I3 : La réponse à l'administration que j'aurai...

I4 : Donc, c'est, je ne sais pas, quelle est la mentalité, la mentalité que nous avons.

I3 : ...toute la documentation qui vient et si c'est accompagné par une lettre officielle, mettre le cachet dedans en même temps, bon. [...]

I1 : Avant que le monsieur s'en va, il fait son carton, tu vas lui dire 'je vais voir ce que tu as dedans'. C'est là où on sera obligé de [...].

I4 : On doit vraiment arriver là.

I3 : C'est compliqué.

I1 : C'est vraiment compliqué.

I3 : La solution c'est de renforcer l'archivage du ministère. Et avec des outils électroniques, c'est-à-dire nous avons désormais les DIP, direction d'Informatique et de Pré-archivage.

I1 : Il faut que tous les ministères aient des directions d'archivage maintenant, tous les ministères ont un archivage maintenant. Et c'est là-bas que vous retrouvez les documents. [...]

I3 : La structure qu'ils ont quittée, il reste un-là. [...]

I4 : Je vais te prendre ça avant de partir maintenant. Donc, je voulais aborder [...], c'est une idée qu'on est en train de murir, je ne sais pas encore exactement dans quel sens... Est-ce qu'on peut arriver à que la gestion des enseignants soit décentralisée ? Parce que si notre école est dans la situation où elle est aujourd'hui, c'est du fait de la mauvaise, de mauvais engagement des enseignants. Les enseignants ne travaillent pas, sinon ils ne travaillent plus.

I1 : ne travaillent plus. Voilà, combien d'inspecteur [...] beaucoup. Mais il est partout, partout (!) je vous dis et il se faisait respecter, il s'imposait. Ah...

I4 : Et je me dis lorsque on n'avait pas encore reversé les enseignants communautaires, ils étaient réguliers au poste. Parce que ils étaient payés sur le service fait. Les directeurs donnaient un document à la fin du mois qui rendait compte du nombre de jour effectif de travail.

I1 : Pourquoi vous [...]

I2 : Avant le compte-rendu, le Ministère des Finances a déjà payé le salaire.

I1 : Ce qu'il dit est faisable. Mais il y a des aspects, il faut revoir complètement la loi.

I3 : Ce que je dis.

I1 : Il faut revoir la loi ! Parce que ce n'est pas une compétence de la commune.

I1 : Moi, j'étais en train de dire, est-ce..., qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire puisqu'il faut qu'on aille là.

I1 : C'est le maire qui recrute, qui paie, mais c'est l'Etat qui l'oriente à le faire. Et d'abord cette orientation politique et tout le monde dans ce sens-là. Vous savez, au Ruanda ce qui a fait marcher tout ça au Ruanda, si vous aviez un régime fort comme celui de Kérékou. Ça pouvait marcher davantage. Même au Togo tout près. Mais au feu tricolore, est-ce que tu peux ? Tu ne peux pas ! Au Burkina, tu ne peux pas !

I4 : On avait raté le coche pendant la période révolutionnaire, [...] cache.

I1 : Même un délégué, un délégué te dis, il y a demain les travaux publics là, tu y vas C'est ça que le mandat a continué...

Interviewer 2 : C'est-à-dire que la démocratie...

I3 : Non, [...], surtout au Benin, ça a été mal compris.

I1 : Très mal compris. C'était tout simplement l'anarchie des ressources.

I3 : En période révolutionnaire, ceux qui sont dans ce vont là, si on dit que 'le samedi prochain, vous allez nettoyer votre vont...

Interviewer2 : Nous sommes très enfants là, hein !?

I4 : C'est vrai !

I3 : Tout le monde sortait...

I4 : Je dis, à la veille, si la rentrée scolaire est le quatre octobre, mais c'étaient les parents qui nettoyaient l'école.

I1 : Mais, c'est ça !

I4 : ...et les enfants. Tout le monde ! Mais aujourd'hui, on démarre l'école, le quatre-là, vous allez voir...

I3 : Combien de fois, on monte des établissements ou il y a des élèves que l'Etat n'a qu'à venir nettoyer.

I1 : ... que l'Etat n'a qu'à venir nettoyer !

I3 : Mais, ce n'est pas possible. [...] Est-ce que vous avez des enfants jusqu'en CM2, vous ne pouvez pas leur donner la roue pour nettoyer ?

I4 : Vous voyez, moi je crois que

I3 : La démocratie nous a pas beaucoup aide au Benin. On a mis de l'anarchie. On a cru, bon, démocratie, ça veut dire je patinage ce que je veux... Et on a transféré, c'est ça aussi le problème de notre décentralisation, on a essayé de, on a transféré les tas la du niveau central au niveau local. Et, et, la population élis le maire et se battent attendre pour voir ce que le maire va faire autour des 50.

I1 : C'est ça...

I3 : Elle ne sait pas que, non, le développement-là, c'est nous. Il faut que j'accompagne le maire. Il faut que le maire aussi me rende compte de si je lui donne 10 francs aujourd'hui, ce qu'il a fait avec les 10 francs pour que demain je puisse lui donner 15 francs. Donc, on est là, on attend encore de l'Etat. Le maire même ne sait pas que le développement, c'est lui-même. C'est-à-dire tu rentres dans certaines communes, le maire avec garde de corps, alors que tu as appelé...

I1 : Mais quel maire, quel maire... ? [...]

I ? : Normalement, tu es avec la population.

I4 : Si tu as une garde de corps, comment les gens vont se rapprocher de toi ?

I3 : 'Monsieur, le Maire, le maçon qui vous avez mis la, la, il semble qu'il vient les soirs prendre les sacs de ciment.' Voilà, que ton garde de corps est là. Qu'est-ce que je vais faire ?

Interviewer2 : Et personnellement, j'ai constaté que...

I2 : C'est un réel problème. Je ne parlais pas de, de, je ne sais pas, de patriotisme, voilà encore [...]. Vous voyez des maires qu'ils ne veulent pas, c'est-à-dire ils ne veulent rien ici. Moi, j'ai suivi la conférence budgétaire communale de, je ne sais pas, ce qu'on a eu à faire, hm en Septembre passe ou les communes... Pour la plupart des maires quand ils viennent,

les constructions sur fonds FADeC. Mais je dis quelle est la capacité d'autofinancement de votre commune ? Quelle est l'initiative de votre commune ? Allez, on attend tout du haut.

I3 : C'est ça.

I2 : Vous imaginez, on a fait 15 communes au Nord, tout se réalisait sur fonds FADeC. On ne veut pas initier. Quand vous les voyez, c'est comment construire le centre, comment appelle-t-on, la commune la... ?

I3 : Ah oui, l'Hôtel de ville.

I2 : La construction de l'Hôtel de ville et trainer l'eau, des caniveaux. Et quand ils finissent, quelle est votre capacité d'autofinancement ? Qu'est-ce que vous-même vous voulez faire dedans ? C'est parfois, peut-être 2 ou 3%. On veut tout faire sur FADeC ! Alors on est en train de vouloir faire le développement à la base.

I1 : Depuis qu'on a créé le FADeC, les efforts ne sont plus...

I3 : Oui, oui, la mobilisation...

I1 : ...la mobilisation des ressources propres, ça a pris un coup.

I4 : Parce que tu vois, il y a le renversement...

I1 : ça tombe, ça tombe, ça tombe.

I3 : Et on se base sur son électorat pour dire, bon, si je vais les recruter maintenant, est-ce qu'ils vont me renouveler encore dans cinq ans ?

I3 : Et effectivement, les gens viennent et deux mois après on les retourne dans leur... à Cotonou.

I4 : Yayi est venu en 2006 et, et, et, donc au profit des élections des enseignants ont été envoyé sur le terrain pour la distribution de la carte d'électeur pendant 17 jours. Et la plupart d'entre eux, c'est des enseignants communautaires, donc des enseignants qu'on a recrutés parce qu'il y a un vide et qui sont payés sur la base de leur travail fait, présence au poste. Donc, j'étais chef de circonscription scolaires, à peine je garais au bureau le matin vers 7h30, un directeur m'appelle pour me dire 'je suis à l'école et on est en train de finir le drapeau, mais sur les 3 enseignants communautaires que j'ai, ils sont 4, lui et ses 3

enseignants communautaires, mais il y a 2 qui sont absents. Et le troisième me dit 'qu'ils sont allés pour distribuer la carte d'électorat pendant 17 jours.' Quelques temps après, je reçois un deuxième appel. Et j'en ai reçu tellement que j'ai dit, je suis monte sur mon ordinateur, j'ai pris une note de service pour leur demander de retourner dans la classe.' J'ai écrit au maire pour demander au maire 'voici le constat fait, mais que cette cible la n'est pas bien indiquer pour faire le travail.' Et le maire a demandé par qui on peut les remplacer. J'ai pris une autre note de service pour informer l'association, la coordination de l'association des parents d'élèves. Et une note de service pour informer ma hiérarchie. Trois jours après, sur les 57 absents, c'est trois qui sont retourne en classe.

I1 : Trois ?!

I4 : 3 après 3 jours. [...] 54 sont restes sur le terrain. Moi, e n'ai plus rien dit. J'ai attendu la fin du mois et j'ai demandé aux directeurs de me faire le point. A la fin du mois, j'ai demandé qu'on m'envoie les certificats de service faits. Certains ont signé des documents comme quoi, qu'ils sont venu tout le temps. Je vais faire savoir le point qu'on m'a fait auparavant, c'est-à-dire mettez, faites-moi le bon point, j'ai fait les détails de paiement en conséquence. Et les gens..., pour 14 jours de travail. J'ai reçu une convention d'enquête après. On me demande pourquoi j'ai fait ça ? Et j'ai sorti l'arrêté qui gère les enseignants communautaires, ils sont payés sur le nombre de jours de service faits. Et on me demande, 'mais pourquoi dans les circonscriptions scolaires voisines, ça n'a pas été fait ?'. J'ai dit, allez leur poser la question. C'est un arrêté que j'ai applique. [...] C'est un arrêté que j'ai applique. [...] Dites-moi que l'arrêté...

I1 : C'est quoi ces problèmes la... ?

I4 : Vous voyez ? C'étaient, les enseignants ne manquaient plus l'école.

I1 : C'est ça.

I4 : Quand j'ai fait ça... puisque là [...] d'enquête, 'moi je n'ai jamais vu l'argent et puis on m'a dit que j'ai détourné l'argent sur 17 jours.' J'ai dit que 'c'est le trésor public qui paye.' Moi, je rende compte de ce qu'ils ont fait et sur la base le trésor publique paye.

I3 : Donc, moi, je ne vois même pas l'argent.

I4 : ... je ne vois même pas l'argent. Et les gens sont partis. Mais les moments qui ont suivis, mais j'avais, les gens sont devenus très sérieux, très studieux, très ponctuel à l'école.

I3 : Ah oui.

I4 : Donc, je dis si jamais ne on en arrivait la...ce que c'est la population qui commence à dénoncer les absences ou bien le manque de travail', je crois que notre école va [...].

Interviewer 1 : Oui, j'ai déjà le regard sur la montre. Moi, je suis sincèrement, je suis très très ravie de l'échange ce matin parce que ce que je sens, bon, ça a servi, c'est sûr, pour pour que je puisse faire une bonne rédaction de la thèse, donc je vous en remercie pour ça. Mais je sens qu'il y a aussi un échange entre deux ministères et peut-être que les échanges vont continuer sans ce projet doctoral. Donc, mon souhait c'est de faire une contribution, une contribution modeste, hm, a ce qu'il y a une politique de décentralisation qui est adaptée au monde enseignement maternel et primaire. C'est pas du tout pour dire qu'elle n'est pas adaptée, c'est un très très bon document, mais pour voir peut-être à travers des perspectives différentes que j'ai pu recueillir d'avoir encore une compréhension plus approfondie comment on peut l'adapter à ce secteur. Donc, je serais ravie de de de rester en contact avec vous. Il me reste un an et demi à faire et j'ai encore, je sais, on a dépassé le temps, j'ai encore deux petites questions qui sont sur un niveau méta, donc plus spécifiquement à la décentralisation, mais plus, hm, lie à la thèse. Donc la première question c'est quels sont les aspects importants pour vous que je devais prendre en compte dans la rédaction de la thèse et la deuxième question quel est le format, comment peut-on vulgariser la thèse après la soumission qu'il y a vraiment une utilité pour le gouvernement pour vos deux ministères ainsi que les populations à la base. Donc, c'est deux, deux, deux questions : la première est quels sont les aspects importants que moi je devrais prendre en compte et l'autre question c'est comment vulgariser une fois que le projet est terminé. Donc, vous pourriez si vous avez des idées spontanées, vous pourriez les lancer maintenant comme on peut aussi rester en contact, comme on peut aussi rester en contact par mail et on peut mûrir les réflexions après.

I4 : Moi, ce que..., on va garder le..., on va continuer les échanges par mail, mais moi je crois que, vous voyez, il y a, avait une habitude que vous connaissez et qui a disparu dans nos communautés et qui pouvait aider a, hm, hm, [...] à travers la décentralisation/déconcentration au niveau de notre sous-secteur, doit pourvoir, hm, faire développer suffisamment l'école. Sinon, ce n'est pas la peine, quoi. Et, mais sais qu'il y a de bonnes habitudes du passé qui ont disparu et que nos communautés pouvaient suivre à base de ce que le souci, de soucis de développement de leur école pouvait aussi, hm, hm, les communautés donc pouvait, hm, hm, choisir de resituer c'est l'ouverture à l'étranger. Auparavant, lorsque les enseignants viennent dans nos villages, il y a une certaine, un

accueil qui leur est réservé. Et, accueil simple d'abord, et, logement, et intéressement aux problèmes de l'individu du nouveau de l'étranger pour que l'étranger se sente à la maison et mieux faire son travail. En réalité, donc, ce n'est pas des choses, hm, qui relèvent de l'Etat, mais qui relèvent de la communauté. Et la communauté qui veut, qui souhaite que les efforts de l'Etat soient, hm, profite, profite, devrait pouvoir, comment dit-on, devrait offrir aux étrangers un certain nombre de de, hm, un accueil pour que ceci s'acquittent dignement ou bien honnêtement de leur travail. Et, je me dis que la politique de la décentralisation que je ne connais pas suffisamment, d'a certainement mis la communauté au cœur du développement a la base. Et je ne pense pas que ce développement puisse se réaliser s'il n'y a pas cet accueil-là. Donc, par rapport à l'école je dis qu'il y a des efforts à faire la et il faut trouver les bons moyens pour amener nos dirigeants à comprendre la chose ou bien les élus locaux à comprendre cette intention pour que ça profite à la communauté, à leur communauté. Je dis les choses comme ça pour que [...] pour voir quelle forme à donner. Puisqu'il y a l'un des problèmes que notre école qu'on affecte des enseignants dans les localités et ils n'y restent pas. C'est un problème et il faut régler ça. Ça, c'est un problème, c'est tout. Parce que les premiers cadres des villages ont pour modèles les enseignants. Mais lorsque l'enseignant vient, il ne reste pas. Lorsque que...

I3 : ...il devient un soûler.

I4 : Oui, ou bien devient [...] la, il y a beaucoup de choses. Mais je dis rester premièrement, c'est loger dans la localité et participer à la localité. Puisque quand vous êtes là, et qu'il y a une situation donnée, étant le cadre le plus, le plus avance, les populations viendront vous voir. Moi, je me rappelle, hm, mon premier poste, c'est à 18km de Glazoue, mon premier poste, c'est à 18km de Glaziou. Et il n'y avait personne pour lire les lettres. C'est moi qui lisais les lettres aux parents [...], alors que je ne suis pas de leur famille. Ce n'est pas aujourd'hui ou le comptable est dans tous les coins, mais ce besoin la quand quelqu'un va à l'hôpital et qu'il revient avec une ordonnance ou bien un produit qu'il a acheté, c'est les enseignants du coin qui sans cesse vérifient que si la prescription telle que l'infirmier ou le médecin a prescrit est respecté. Et c'est ce qu'il fait le respect des enseignants dans les localités. Et ça, c'étaient lorsque nous privions ces opportunités, c'étaient épanouissant pour nous-mêmes. Mais cette affaire a disparu. Les gens quittent Cotonou pour aller enseigner à Se. Ils veulent donner quel... ? Il est fatigué déjà !

Interviewer 2 : ...physiquement...

I4 : Il est fatigué déjà. Tu quittes la maison, d'abord, avec sa bonne volonté il ira avec retard. Mais pourquoi elle fait ça ? Mais parce que, je sais, dans des localités données, les gens, hm, les gens, hm, l'accueil n'est pas bon ou bien c'est l'enseignant même qui veut faire des courses de besoin à Cotonou tous les soirs.

I3 : Voilà, encore un frein pour le développement.

I2 : C'est terrible !

I4 : Bon, je dis les choses comme ça et on en voit en peu comment faire.

Interviewer1 : Pour moi, ça fait encore partie de la vision-là, bon, on peut-on aller à l'école dans un contexte décentralisé. Est-ce qu'il y a d'autres éléments a...

I3 : Par rapport à votre question, la première, bon, je ne sais pas si je peux répondre parce que... je ne connais pas le thème précis, donc vous dire ce que vous allez noter dans votre thèse, ça serait difficile pour moi. Donc, vous prenez tout ce qui entre dans le cadre de votre recherche et vous jugez, bon. Maintenant par rapport à la publication, hm, une fois que vous avez soutenu, vous pouvez nous envoyer ça au Ministère de la Décentralisation et au Ministère de l'Enseignement Secondaire ainsi que sur les sitewebs. Ce serait, bon, également vous pourriez envoyer ça à l'université parce que il y a des chercheurs qui s'y intéressent. Et dans nos, comme on a dit tout à l'heure, dans nos ministères, on espère que les services des archives vont prendre et que le document pourra rester pour que d'autres pourront s'en espérer. Bon, c'est les deux aspects qui je voudrais aborder par rapport à vos questions.

I2 : Ok, tout ce qui me concerne, je pense que ça serait intéressant si vous pouvez programmer encore une autre séance, une autre séance du genre quand vous finirez de rédiger votre thèse. Juste pour nous présenter une synthèse. Ça nous permettra certainement de voir le contenu, voir si nous avons des abords. Parce que en état, nous ne maîtrisons vraiment pas le statut du document pour voir qu'est-ce qui manque [...]. Donc, quand vous êtes prêts à soutenir et tenons compte de nos disponibilités, [...] programmer une séance de quelques minutes. Vous allez peut-être nous présenter une synthèse. Ça nous permettra de voir s'il y a des éléments qui manquent spécifiquement concernant le contenu. Pour le second aspect comme l'a dit M. xxx, en plus de ça, vous pouvez mettre ça sur mémoire online. Ça permettra à tout le monde de consulter, d'avoir le contenu du document. Et comme vous avez promis aux autorités des ministères sectoriels que vous puissiez

envoyer de façon officielle le document au niveau du sous-secteur. Ça permettra certainement aux cadres de s'en espérer de dire ou voir si...

Il : Non, je partage entièrement cette démarche, cette approche [...]. Maintenant les aspects spécifiques qu'il faut encore revoir. Comme on l'a dit, approfondissez ce que nous avons déjà vu l'ensemble. On verra s'il y a encore des insuffisances. Sinon, c'est bon.

Interviewer 1: Sylvain, il y a quelques choses que tu peut-être souhaite ajouter.

Interviewer 2 : Oui, c'est bon ou peut-être, puisqu'il peut apprendre une présentation après la soutenance de la thèse, une présentation, un livre au niveau des ministères ou au niveau de l'université, est-ce qu'il peut avoir une présentation directe ? Le, l'intention peut-être de faire approprier le document directement parce que quand c'est libéré sous forme de document, c'est seul ceux qui ont le temps, c'est seul ceux qui ont le gout de la lecture qui souvent le...

Il : ...le lisent.

Interviewer 2 : Est-ce qu'on peut avoir une telle pensée, quelques choses du genre ? Là, ça touche directement, un peu directement, un peu seulement.

Il : Bon, vous pouvez également l'envoyer au niveau du Conseil National de l'Education en ce qui concerne l'éducation. Parce que le chef de l'Etat dit que c'est désormais la commission ou quoi la qui sera charge de s'occuper des orientations. Prochainement, si vous pouvez déposer une copie là-bas, ça serait bon. C'est les acteurs même ça.

9.7 Analysis of how International Organisations approach decentralisation

What are the reasons that this IO promotes decentralisation?	How does the IO understand the concept of decentralisation?	How does its understanding refer to the definitions in the literature review?	What is the approach/ type of support of the IO to decentralisation?	Does the IO represent a liberal or a social conceptualization?	Conception of the role of the state	Structures and mechanisms	Conditions/ obstacles for successful implementation	Reference to international agendas or else
GIZ (Lampe, 2017)								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision of a modern state - Claim for more participation in decision-making and planning processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The title 'Decentralisation, Local Self-Government and Federalism' and the section on the benefits (Lampe, 2017, p. 2) allude to Germany's decentralised political and administrative system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devolution at provincial (Bundesland) and municipal (Landkreis) level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation - Participatory (inclusion of reform actors) - Systemic (all levels of the system are strengthened) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principle of subsidiarity - Principle of performance of public action towards citizens satisfaction - → liberal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State is one actor of the 'cooperation partners' - GIZ advises the state and local governments equally - You = the State? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State (governments, administrations and parliaments) - administrative units at subnational level / municipal and regional governments - Citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reference to the agenda 2030 and particularly <i>Localising the SDGs</i> - Refer to their own experience of decentralisation
DEZA (DEZA, 2018)								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The goal are more efficient services, which are adapted to the needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Decentralization, with a shift of power, competences and resources from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devolution and/ or privatisation to 'medium-sized business centers' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation - SDC links decentralisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Principle of subsidiarity - Decentralisation aims to enhance effectiveness and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They acknowledge the state with the claim for more effectiveness and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SCD tends focus on civil society and medium-sized business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk that local elites centralise power - Decentralisation may enhance the inequalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty reduction strategy

	of the population. - Decentralisation is the core to democracy.	central government to the <u>medium-sized business centers</u> , forms the core of the <u>democratization process</u> . - SCD refers to the WB definition of decentralisation ¹⁶⁴	- They critique decentralisation understood as de-concentration (60s-70s) and promote decentralisation understood as devolution since the 90s (Olsen, 2007, p. 3)	tion to local governance ¹⁶⁵	of local service delivery → neo-liberal	efficiency through far-reaching reforms, such as the civil service sector	centers rather than on the state	in terms of rich/ poor, gender etc. - ...possibly undermine the national unity - ...facilitate misuse or corruption of local government as	
AFD (Dafflon and Madiès, 2008, 2011)d									
	in post-communist countries, decentralisation in the public sector accompanies the march towards the market economy and democracy			- Co-financing with local authorities, NGOs, foundations, among others; public and private enterprises, local		- State has the role to redistribute resources	- State - Municipalities (<i>Collectivités territoriales</i>)		- Refer to their own experience of decentralisation

¹⁶⁴ 'Decentralisation is the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector. This is a complex, multifaceted concept. Different types of decentralisation should be distinguished because they have different characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success' (Olsen, 2007, p. 4).

¹⁶⁵ 'Decentralisation pertains to public sector institutional and organisational reforms and processes and the support thereof, whereas local governance pertains more to supporting the creation of an enabling environment where multi-stakeholder processes - including public and private sector, as well as civil society – interact to foster effective local-development processes' (Olsen, 2007, p. 8).

(Dafflon and Madiès, 2008, p. 8)			<p>communities, banks, investment funds and NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French local and regional authorities provide development cooperation - AFD supports local governments through direct interventions, e.g. support for local budgets or project financing - ... the central government through indirect interventions, which then consist in helping central governments to transfer 					
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				funds to the local governments (Dafflon and Madiès, 2011, p. 10)					
World Bank (World Bank, 2012)									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claims for economic efficiency, public accountability, and empowerment - rationale for decentralization in terms of democratization and pre-dominantly <u>economic efficiency</u>, public accountability, and empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decentralization transfers authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to intermediate and local governments or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector - including local governments, civil society, and the private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devolution and/ or privatisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political, administrative, fiscal and <u>market decentralisation</u> - WB links decentralisation to community-driven development (CDD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - economic efficiency, public accountability, and empowerment - greater voice and choice → neo-liberal approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communities to exert influence over local governance and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People at the local level - Local governments and community-based organisations - districts, villages, communities, and individual constituents - private enterprises and local non-governmental groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elite capture - Corruption - Patronage politics - Local civil servants feel compromised - Impedes further decentralization - Incomplete information - Constituent 		

								s not able to hold representatives accountable	
								- Opaque decision accountability upwards and downwards	
Delegation European Commission (EC, 2014)									
- Aim: institutional <u>modernisation</u> of the country & strengthening the rule of law and participatory democracy	- Decentralisation understood as ‘Bringing the state closer to the citizens through sustainable and balanced territorial development based on concerted local governance’	Coheres with PONADEC (decentralisation = devolution and de-concentration= de-concentration)	- Budget support	- Focus on state and international institutions	- Strong role (strengthening rule of law), decentralisation is only a sub project of the overall good governance programme	- State	N/A	- Poverty Reduction Strategy	
- In the context of Benin, they aim more precisely for separation of powers, the fight against	- It will contribute to the development and the well-being of the		- Decentralisation is part of the overall programme ‘Support of good governance for development’	→ liberal approach	- The state <u>has launched</u> the reform with the Territorial Administration	- Municipalities (<i>Collectivités territoriales</i>)		- OSD (<i>Orientations Stratégiques de Développement</i>)	

	corruption, the independence and efficiency of justice, among others.	population.		ity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secondly, rule of law and the fight against corruption - Thirdly, decentralisation and de-concentration - → tends to emphasize strengthening de-concentration, increasing financial transfer to municipality and strengthening human resources at the local level 		Reform in 2003, the financial transfer mechanism FADeC in 2008 and the adoption of PONADEC in 2009 (EC, 2014)			
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