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The Decentralization and Centralization of Curriculum in the Primary Education of Burkina Faso

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE DECENTRALIZATION AND CENTRALIZATION
OF CURRICULUM IN THE PRIMARY EDUCATION
OF BURKINA FASO

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

SIMON A. ZIBA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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¹ CCEB/BF is a consultative framework of the organizations and associations working in the field of basic education in Burkina Faso.

For my father, Tiassay Ziba.

To know what we want from education we must know what we want in general, and in this sense our theories of education must derive from our philosophy of life.

Mallinson

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	Approche Par les Compétences
CCEB/BF	Cadre de Concertation des ONG et Association Actives en Education de Base au Burkina Faso
CONFEMEN	Conférence des Ministres de l'Education des pays ayant le Français en partage
DEP/MEBA	Direction des Etudes et de la Planification/Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation
DG-CRIEF	Direction Générale du Centre de Recherche des Innovations Educatives et de la Formation
DPEBA	Direction Provinciale de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation
DRDP	Direction de la Recherché Documentaire et Pédagogique
DREBA	Direction Régionale de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation
ENEP	Ecole nationale des Enseignants du Primaire
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IAPM	Institut Africain de Professionnalisation en Management
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPB	Institut Pédagogique du Burkina
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MASSN	Ministère de l' Action Sociale et de la Solidarité Nationale

MEBAM	Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation de Masse
MESSRS	Ministère des Enseignements Secondaire, Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique
NGO	Non Governmental Organization.
PDDEB	Plan Décennal de Développement de l'Education de Base
PDSEB 2011-2020	Plan du Développement Stratégique du Secteur de l'Education de Base 2011-2020
SCADD	Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et du Développement Durable
TFP	Technical and Financial Partners
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABSTRACT

A critical analysis of the case of curriculum in Burkina Faso is necessary if strict decentralization relates to a local transfer of authority and resources, leading to more ownership at the local level. Indeed, this country's decree, which transfers the competences and resources related to basic education to municipalities, does not mention the case of curriculum. This study seeks to understand how do educational policymakers in Burkina Faso explain why educational decentralization initiatives have not heretofore affected curriculum issues, and how do they view the possibility and desirability of a decentralized curriculum. It uses qualitative as well as quantitative methods to collect, present and analyze data. This nationwide study has participants who are primary education bureaucrats and educational policymakers at the central, regional and provincial levels of the ministry in charge of basic education in Burkina Faso. They have an average of 16 years of experience in general education, particularly in curriculum issues. A comprehensive sample was used. The main results of this study show that curriculum is a state-protected category; policymakers at different levels of decentralization have almost the same comprehension of curriculum decentralization, even if policymakers at sub-national levels wish to play a greater role in decision-taking about the curriculum; that certain categories in the curriculum such as national values, curriculum contents and the determination of teaching methods greatly influence the reason why curriculum is a state protected category. Finally, it is found that policymakers

preferred being at the core of decision-making, even if curriculum was to be decentralized.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The term decentralization in general implies transferring decisions, resources, and competences from the state to a lower level of administration. In the sector of education, there are possible decision-making locations involving issues such as the financing of education (Bullock and Thomas, 1997; Abu-Duhou, 1999; McGinn and Welsh, 1999; National Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002; Chikoko, 2009); the curriculum (McGinn and Welsh, 1999; Chikoko, 2009); decisions about human resources (Calderwell and Spinks, 1992; Rideout and Ural, 1993; National Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002; Chikoko, 2009) decisions about school organization (Bullock and Thomas, 1997; Abu-Duhou, 1999; Chikoko, 2009); and decisions about external relations (Bush et al., 1993; Chikoko, 2009). As for decisions about curriculum, they concern subjects, content, textbooks, textbook provision, language policy, instructional methods, evaluation of teachers according to McGinn and Welsh, (1999, p. 53).

In Burkina Faso, the decree N° 2009-06/PRES/PM/MATD/MEBA/MASSN-/MEF/MFPRE transferred to municipalities, competences and resources related to basic education² among other resources. However, there is no mention or allusion to the case of curriculum in this decree. Also, 85% of education policymakers said that they are not

² More information about these transferred competences and resources can be found on section 3 of the Review of the Literature.

informed about a project of decentralization of curriculum and 13 % do not know if there are plans in this sense. Curriculum is of paramount importance in the education system of any country. As for decentralization, it is considered by certain scholars to be the most popular educational reform of the last twenty years. If decentralization, in its strict sense, relates to a transfer of authority and resources to give more ownership to the population, a critical analysis of the case of curriculum in Burkina Faso is necessary.

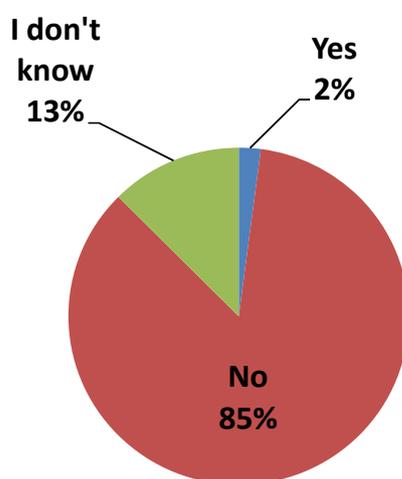


Figure 1. Policymakers' answers about whether they are informed about a current curriculum decentralization in Burkina Faso (N = 48).

Research purpose

The issue of curriculum has been of interest to scholars for a long time and has been discussed in the work of many non-contemporary thinkers of educational philosophy. To Plato (in Cahn 1997) for instance, each individual person is different and has natural gifts or endowments. “No two persons are born alike, but each differs from each in natural endowments” (p. 41), and the ideal city can exist only if everyone does

what they are best suited for. According to Plato, nature is important in the process of making a man a good guardian. Since each individual must perform a particular task, in order to be a good guardian, the nature in each individual must be brought up and directed toward the right direction, toward the right object. In his *Republic* Plato questions his readers in these terms: “And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they grow up?” (in Cahn 1997). However, he doesn’t only draw attention to this quest, but he also proposes contents of what the upbringing of children towards being a good guardian must seem like. The way he discusses the place of the contents of education underlines how curriculum is important in framing the guardians of the ideal city. Also, teachers educate children in classrooms as well as on the playground, with the objective that they internalize habits which will allow them to find their way when they grow up and become politicians, i.e., taking part in the management of the city by exposing children to certain curriculum.

Brint (2006) remarked that “Sociologists use the term socialization to describe the effort of the carriers of a society’s dominant ways of life to shape the values and conducts of others who are less integrated into those ways of life” (p.132). So, socialization is a process of learning to participate in a group. School, because of its functions and the great amount of time children spend there, constitutes one of the paramount assets of socialization to children. Dewey (in Cahn, 1997) observed that “Any education given by a group tends to socialize its members, but the quality and value of the socialization

depends upon the habits and aims of the group’’ (p. 289); this is to pinpoint that for Dewey, there is a relationship between the content of curriculum and the social context of any society. As a consequence, curriculum is of great concern to governments, especially when decentralizing an educational system.

The plethora of literature around the issue of decentralization as well as the issue of curriculum in comparative education underlines the significance of these concepts. According to Sadler the aim of comparative education is to ‘*verstehen*’ (Epstein, 1992); the purpose of this study will be to understand why certain countries, like Burkina Faso keep curriculum centralized in the decentralization of their education system.

Definition of terms

Organization of instruction: organization of the instruction refers to the way different categories work together in the curriculum. It is the elements that compose the curriculum. The following categories constitute non-exhaustive points for the organization of curriculum:

- Set instruction time³
- Choice of language of instruction (language policy)
- Definition of curriculum contents
- Determination of teaching methods

³ In certain countries like Burkina Faso for instance, there are more than 60 recorded languages. A choice of a language of instruction between these many languages may be a complex cultural, social and political issue.

Research questions

Decentralization processes are ongoing within the educational sphere in Burkina Faso; so far, curricular issues have not been significantly affected. Why not? And will they be in the future? If so how and in what elements/dimensions?

To come up with answers to these questions the primary research question of this study is as follows:

How do educational policymakers in Burkina Faso explain why educational decentralization initiatives have not heretofore affected curriculum issues, and how do they view the possibility and desirability of decentralizing curriculum issues?

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Socioeconomic and administrative context of Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country located in West Africa. It is geographically located in the Sahel-the agricultural region between the Sahara Desert and the coastal rain forests. Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than 80% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, with only a small fraction directly involved in industry and services. Drought, poor soil, lack of adequate communications and other infrastructure, a low literacy rate, and an economy vulnerable to external shocks are all longstanding problems. The export economy also remains subject to fluctuations in world prices.

Few Burkinabe have had formal education. Schooling is in theory free and compulsory until the age of 16, but only about 72.5% of Burkina's primary school-age children are enrolled in primary school due to actual costs of school supplies, school fees, insufficient infrastructure and teachers, and to opportunity costs of sending a child who could earn money for the family to school. Of those enrolled, only about 40.7% complete primary school (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs 2010). The gross school enrolment ratio for the school year 2009/2010 was 74.8% (78.3% for boys and

71.2% for girls) according to the statistics of the DEP/MEBA⁴. In its planning, the MEBA seeks to increase access to education while stressing quality and institutional and human capacity building.

The PDDEB ended in 2010. This ten-year program made important achievements but also had weaknesses. To carry on with its effort of education promotion, the government adopted another ten-year plan called the *Plan du Développement Stratégique du Secteur de l'Éducation de Base 2011-2020* (PDSEB 2011-2020). This new plan pursues the objectives of the PDDEB and also takes into account the *Stratégie de Croissance Accélérée et du Développement Durable* (SCADD) which is the national governmental policy of Burkina Faso to address the issue of poverty in this country.

Table 1. Significant Indicators of Burkina Faso Human Development

Basic indicator	Figures
Under-5 mortality rate, 2008	169
Neonatal mortality rate, 2004	32
Total population (thousands), 2008	15234
Annual no. of births (thousands), 2008	721
GNI per capita (US\$), 2008	480
Life expectancy at birth (years), 2008	53
Total adult literacy rate (%), 2003–2008	29
Primary school net enrolment/ attendance (%), 2003–2008	47

Source: Adapted from UNICEF, Burkina Faso, Statistics (November, 2010)

⁴ DEP/MEBA (Direction des Etudes et de la Planification/Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation). It is the department in charge of research and planning of the ministry of basic education.

The Ministry of basic education, in collaboration of three other ministries, is working for curriculum reform. This reform that is characterized by a change in the pedagogic approach and the effective implementation of what is called 'Thèmes Émergents' or emerging themes. The 'Thèmes émergents' are new programs that are introduced in the curriculum and take into account issues related to environment, national languages, gender, traffic security, children rights, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), HIV/AIDS, etc., and also try to develop certain competences in students. The current curriculum reform may be the most important one in terms of change in content but it requires considerable resources.

Decentralization is a major challenge of Burkina Faso's ministry. It traces back to the June 1991 Constitution. In Burkina Faso the law N)055-2004/AN '*Portant code général des collectivités territoriales au Burkina Faso et texts d'applications*'⁵ stipulates that decentralization acknowledges the right of local collectivities to be freely responsible for their administration and manage their own business in order to promote development at the bottom and strengthen local governance. It organizes the democratic participation of citizens in the administration of territorial collectivities. From 1998 to 2004, the legal framework of decentralization was reviewed and the texts of orientation of decentralization are adopted. Materials and financial resources have already been transferred to local collectivities. The finance and budget commission of the National Assembly and different monitoring sessions of the *Plan Décennal de Développement de*

⁵ It is the main governmental official document dealing with the issue of decentralization in Burkina Faso

l'Education de Base (PDDEB)⁶ underlined insufficiencies in quality concerning the building of facilities resulting from this transfer of resources. As a consequence, the creation of an inter-ministerial commission in charge of monitoring and controlling education facilities has been envisaged. This commission will be decentralized and will help local collectivities with the maintenance of facilities.

States, decentralization and globalization

Decentralization has been promoted by certain international institutions such as the World Bank which, is also primarily concerned with reducing the cost of public service delivery (Carnoy, 2000). Indeed, decentralization has been recommended as one of the strategies of the World Bank Educational Sector Paper (1995), “a paper which traditionally summarizes the Bank’s recommendations for educational strategies in donor countries [and] focuses attention on the need to expand education” Carnoy (2000, p. 47). (Carnoy, 2000) argues that “globalization enters the education sector on an ideological horse, and its effects on education are largely a product of that financially driven, free-market ideology, not of a clear conception for improving education” (p.50). To Watson (2000), the concepts of decentralization, improved school management, privatization and out-comes-based curriculum reforms have “largely come from Northern, often World Bank, ideologies” (p. 140). As for Zadjia (2004), “In short, privatization and decentralization policy initiatives in education should be viewed in the context of economic recession, budget cuts and shrinking funds for the public sector” (p. 211). In other words, according to these two previously cited scholars, decentralization has not

⁶ PDDEB: It is the ten-year plan (2001-2010) that the government of Burkina Faso wrote in order to promote basic education in the country.

been an explicit goal of the states where it has been implemented on one hand, and on the other hand it has not been implemented with the main aim as the improvement of the quality of education. Daun (2002), in dealing with privatization, decentralization, and governance in education in the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany and Sweden, finds no evidence of a direct relationship between academic achievement and changing school governance.

In the literature of the science of education, many scholars elaborate on the role of the state in public education; according to Zadjia (2004), examples of these authors are Bowles and Gintis (1976), Carnoy (1974, 1984, 1989), Apple (1979), Giroux and McLaren (1989), Torres (1989, 1998), Ginsburg (1991), Avalos-Bevan (1996), Stromquist (2002), Levin (1978, 2001), Bray (1999), Daun (2002), Zadjia (2003). Indeed, Zadjia (2004) deals with the ambivalent responsibilities of states in their educational systems. In the context of globalization, he argued that states themselves may be influenced by external institutional actors in their educational reforms and policies making. For him, it is important to understand the diverse relationships between states and their educational systems before elaborating on any issue deriving from this perspective. He also noted that global economic context has gone from capitalism to neo-liberalism; and that for Morrow and Torres (2000), from the welfare model of education to the neo-liberal model of schooling that implies withdrawal of state, privatization, and localization. However, the main concerns of the state are to guarantee efficiency in cost-saving, global competitiveness, technological supremacy, social change, accountability. The new global economic policy, demand for equity, participation and diversity fosters the policy of decentralization.

In the United Kingdom for instance, since the early 1950s, the ambivalence centralization-decentralization, especially as theorized in the work of Isaac Kandel, has represented a major focus of comparative studies in education. Kandel argued that issues relating to the internal conduct of the classroom (internal) should, so far as possible, be decentralized, while issues relating to administration, school structure and organization of the educational system (external) might safely be centralized. However, according to Turner (2004), after 1988, successive governments in the United Kingdom have undertaken reforms which have placed more central control on the curriculum and even methods of teaching (internal), while school finance and administration (external) have been devolved to the school level. For these reasons, Turner argues that a simplistic approach to centralization and decentralization is not likely to be fruitful. Instead, people should acknowledge the role of the state in creating a 'permissive framework' for educational systems. To him, local action can then be seen as part of a policy accommodating or resisting the implications of that framework (p. 347).

Carnoy (2000) notices that “if knowledge is fundamental to globalization, globalization should also have a profound impact on the transmission of knowledge” (p. 43). However, he mentions that according to McGinn, this has not always been the case as educational delivery in classrooms such as teaching methods and national curricula has remained generally intact. Carnoy writes that McGinn explains this phenomenon “by focusing on one of the most important educational reforms associated with globalization, the decentralization of educational administration and finance” (p.44). Carnoy shares the

same point with McGinn concerning the idea that educational decentralization is a paramount manifestation, if not of globalization itself.

Decentralization of education between World Culture and Anthropological Theories

Accounting for the variability of decentralization on the ground within ministries of education, in the context of globalization, a synthesis of decentralization processes of the educational systems of certain countries may be comprehensively done through specific instances. This will also explain certain implications of globalization on the decentralization of educational systems in practice; it may also help to envision the effects in terms of world culture and anthropological theories.

Educational systems of developing countries are influenced by external donors' policies. According to Berman (1992), "The degree to which donor agencies can influence the shape of Third World educational systems is suggested by the lament of the Director of Educational Planning of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), who noted that 74 percent of his educational budget was dependent on external aid." (p. 64). In Zimbabwe, decentralization happens as a means to better the quality of education; the advent of the neo-liberalism movement mainly accounts for the decentralization of the educational system of Malawi. In France the state's difficulty in handling welfare, the European and international challenges seem to significantly account for the rising of decentralization, while in the United States decentralization was at the heart of the federation from the beginning of the USA. Although a global phenomenon, these examples show that rational for decentralization vary from one country to another.

In certain countries such as the United States of America, states have a more relative freedom about curriculum development; in Malawi, there has been an attempt in decentralizing curriculum. In Burkina Faso, and France, curriculum has been kept centralized. Whatever the case, in these four different countries, governments have a control of their educational systems up to a certain extent. In Burkina Faso and in the United States of America, the central government transfers the location of certain decision making to decentralized bodies (states in the United States of America, municipalities in Burkina Faso), but in France, decentralization of the educational system is understood rather as a de-concentration because education decision makers in territorial collectivities are government civil servants. In Zimbabwe decentralization means allowing the power previously vested in central government to flow down to individual and clusters of schools whereas in Malawi, education stakeholders' have different perceptions of decentralization.

In the case of the United States of America although decentralization can be dated from the period of the founding fathers, it remains that the eminent rise of decentralization in the field of education has been strengthened by globalization. However, decentralization is well understood in the United States of America, France, and Burkina Faso, Malawi and Zimbabwe as a clear cut transfer of authority is; nevertheless, there is variability in the processes and actions undertaken within the framework of this dynamic process of decentralization of educational systems between these five different countries in the current context of globalization.

*Competences and resources transferred to territorial collectivities in primary education
in Burkina Faso by the state*

In Article 126 of Title IV of the Law n° 041/98AN in relation to the organization of the territory administration of Burkina Faso, it is stipulated that the state maintains territorial collectivities within the domain of their competences, relationships of contractual assistance and control. In this framework, competences and resources have been transferred to territorial collectivities through the decree n° 2009-106/PRES/PM/MATD/MEBA/MASSN/MEF/MFPRE. According to this decree, the state defines the national policy orientations in education and fixes norms and standards for infrastructure and furniture. It also elaborates the educative map and cares about supervision and control of the activities of educative structures. In addition, transfer of competence is done progressively and accompanied by resource transfer. Competences being transferred to municipalities are:

- Development of primary education in particular through construction or procurement and primary schools management.
- Development of literacy, in particular through the construction, procurement and management of centers of non-formal basic education and permanent centers of literacy and training.

The following resources (material, human and financial) have been transferred simultaneously by the state to municipalities:

- Buildings used for classrooms, accommodation, offices and depots, and school canteens.

- Water wells and drilled water holes belonging to infrastructures.
- Latrines annexed to infrastructure.
- Coppices and gardens of schools.
- Furniture, didactic materials, computers and computer items.
- Schools sport materials.
- Lots for playground activities,
- Literacy and non-formal education structures,
- Any good though not inventoried but belonging to primary and literacy education institutions,

Policy, national values, and curriculum in education

The importance of curriculum is not a new finding. In *The Republic*, Plato, in an informal way, spoke about educational content for the upbringing of a good guardian for the ideal city, which resembles the organization of curriculum. According to Brint (2006), “the first appearance of the term ‘curriculum’ occurs in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1633. Thus, the creation of deliberate order, each subject in its own time block, comes less from classical sources than from the ideas of the protestant reformers” (p. 104). In order to show the relationship between curriculum and social practices in the Calvinist world, Hamilton et al. wrote that “Curriculum was to Calvinist educational practice what discipline was to Calvinist social practice” (1980, p. 14). Westbury I. (2003, p. 529), defined curriculum as follows:

In its organizational aspect the curriculum is an authoritative prescription for the course of study of a school or systems of schools. In their traditional form, such prescriptions set out the content to be covered at a grade level or in a course or sequences of courses, along with recommended or prescribed methods of

teaching. In their contemporary form such prescriptions have been re-presented as national and state *standards*, outlining outcomes to be achieved by schools without prescribing the specific bodies of content to be covered or methods of teaching to be used. Curricula in both of these senses are seen as defining what schools purposefully do.

However, in certain modern states, the specific bodies of content to be covered are also prescribed by states; Burkina is an example. Nevertheless, generally speaking, curriculum is not a single entity and is influenced at national as well as international levels by many factors including history, economy, culture and politics. To Kliebard, curriculum is “a historically specific pattern of knowledge, which is selected, organized and distributed to learners through educational institutions” (1992, p. 181).

According to Zajda, “The state’s manifest control over the curriculum can be partly linked with its teleological goals of economic growth, nation-development and nation-building” (2004, p. 202). Jansen (1991, p. 76) argues that the relationship between the state, education, and curriculum is a site of contestation because this relationship embodies “the values, norms, objectives, interests, priorities, and directions of the state and other powerful sectors of society.” The relationship between state, school, and curriculum is very important to figure out in the analysis of the way the education system of any country is framed. In the schools, transmission of knowledge is mainly done through curriculum.

Policies can be perpetuated through curriculum. Indeed, many theorists believe that education is never neutral. In the sociology of education, the social power or ‘conflict’ theory advocates are of this branch of thought. Brint (2006) pinpoints “It is clear that the interests of the powerful have been an important influence on schooling

from the beginning. The first formal school began because they served the needs of religious and political leaders for scribes. The first compulsory schools in Europe served the interest of rulers in creating loyal subjects, who would be willing to pay taxes and bears arms ...” (p.15).

According to conflict theorists, schools train those in the working classes to accept their position as a lower-class member of society. Conflict theorists see the educational system as perpetuating the status quo by dulling the lower classes into being obedient workers. They think of education not only as a social benefit or opportunity, but as a powerful means of maintaining power structures and creating a docile work force for capitalism. For instance, Tyack (1974) argued that “In the United States, the large business corporations provided the decisive models for the “one best system” of schooling that became popular during the Progressive Era. According to Brint (2006), Bernstein (1971, p. 47) is among the sociologists who think that the way in which a society selects and classifies knowledge reproduces both the distribution of power and the principles of social control in that society (p. 104). Brint concludes by arguing that “This brings out an important point: the curriculum does not exist as an emanation from the brows of wise men; it has been created through the struggles of contending interests and ideologies” (p. 104).

As for the relationship between curriculum and resources and competences, existing literature suggests that appropriate resources and adequate competences are required to develop and manage curriculum (McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Gurhrie, 2003; Chikoko, 2009).

Curriculum in the decentralization of the education system of Burkina Faso

In the framework of the implementation of the PDDEB and the reform of basic education in Burkina Faso, it is decided that there will be a core national curriculum and a local curriculum. It is planned that 80% of the curriculum contents will be national based and taught to all Burkina Faso students and 20% will be taught according to regional and provincial specificities in local collectivities.

Dealing with decentralization, responsibilities have been given to staff of the regional directions of basic education to monitor the experimentation of the new programs that have been written alongside the curriculum reform. The regional directions give feedback resulting from the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these new programs to the central state level of administration. In the framework of decentralization and at the pedagogical level, provincial pedagogic committees have been created to respond to the central level of the ministry of basic education. The central level is a department within the ministry of basic education (the DG-CRIEF) and is in charge of curriculum issues regarding the formal type of education. Yet, the implementation of innovations related to the different training and monitoring of the curriculum will not be done by the central level anymore; the created provincial pedagogic committees will be responsible for these activities at the regional level and will report to the DG-CRIEF. The provincial director of basic education in each province is the president of this committee.

However, it is not planned that the curriculum be designed at the regional or provincial level. Specificities of the provinces and regions will be collected and sent to

the national committee in charge of writing the curriculum, who will then take them into account when designing the different parts of the curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Type of research study

In this study, quantitative as well as qualitative research methods were used.

Questionnaires were used to collect data related to the research question.

This study also used a phenomenological research framework to understand how education policymakers for primary education at central, regional and provincial levels of decentralization experience the phenomenon of centralizing curriculum in a decentralized educational system. Open-ended questions were included in the survey to enable participants to communicate thoughts and ideas regarding the research question. Interviews were also conducted; secondary data/existing data were also explored in the framework of the analysis.

The purposes for using both qualitative and quantitative data were to account for 'triangulation' i.e. to "seek convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from different methods," and 'development' i.e. "seeking to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly construed to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions" (Greene, Caracelli & Graham (1989) cited in Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 451). Additionally, the quantitative and the qualitative components were carried out concurrently.

Participants

Participants in the study were primary education bureaucrats and educational policymakers at central, regional and provincial levels of the Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation (MEBA)⁷. These participants are officials at the central level of the MEBA, and are regional and provincial directors in charge of basic education for this department (there are 13 regions and 45 provinces in the country). The directors of primary teachers' national training schools also took part in the study; there are 5 teacher' national schools in Burkina Faso called 'Ecole Nationale des Enseignants du Primaire (ENEP).'

A comprehensive sampling was used in the framework of this study in the framework of the survey. The size of the population (N) was composed of:

- Provincial directors (*Directeur Provincial de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation (DEPBA)*) = 45
- Regional Director (*Directeur Régional de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation (DREPBA)*) = 13
- Director General of teachers' national schools (ENEP) = 5
- To these participants, 2 curriculum specialists at the central level were to be selected through convenience and purposive sampling, according to their availability and voluntariness.
- The total number of the population (N) was 65 participants.

⁷ MEBA is the state department in charge of primary education in Burkina Faso.

The total number of policymakers who took part in this study was

composed of:

- Provincial directors = 30
- Regional Director = 13
- Director General of teachers' national schools (ENEP) = 5
- Curriculum specialists at central level = 4.

The total number of participants in this study was 52 out of 65 expected. In term of percentage, this represents 80 % of participation. From the survey it is revealed that these specialists have an average of 16 years of experience dealing with education issues in general, and curriculum aspects in particular. Provided information about their professional training show that 77 % of participants are inspectors of primary education, 15 % are pedagogic counselor and 8 % are school and academic administrations counselors. This is a national study, which involved specialists of all the 45 provinces and all the 13 regions of the country.

Instruments

Three main data collection instruments were used in the framework of this study. The first instrument used to collect data was a paper survey. Since this study used qualitative as well as quantitative research tools, closed-ended as well as open-ended questions were asked to the participants. The closed-ended and open-ended questions were mingled in the chronology of the questions. The surveys have been mailed to the participants and they were free to respond back, and free of charge. The second instrument is referred to as secondary data or existing data. These data included official

documents such as constitutions, law and decrees. The last instrument was the interview. Four persons, specialized in curriculum design at central level were interviewed. The guided interview approach was used for this latter method of data collection and these interviews were tape-recorded. Each interview lasted about half an hour. The interviews took place within the MEBA central offices. The survey, the interview protocol, the consent documents were translated in French by the researcher because the participants do not speak English. The researcher is also fluent in French.

Procedures

A pilot test of the survey was done to ascertain the clarity of the questions. After this step, the questionnaire was reviewed according to the pilot test feedbacks. Then, it was sent to participants through mailing. During the same period, the interview with the curriculum specialist took place. The use of existing data occurred along with the study. The data collection last from December 18, 2010 to February 1st, 2011. Rapport was established before with the interviewees and impartiality regarding what they said during the interviews was observed. Triangulation was also used to look for convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from these different methods of data collection. Before, informed consent documents were given to the participants who took part in the study. They agreed after being informed of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures and limits of confidentiality. This study research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Loyola University Chicago IRB under the IRB project number #448 and IRB application number #129.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistic techniques were used to convey and communicate the essential characteristics of the collected data set. Percentages were used in the process in an attempt to identify which categories of the curriculum greatly influence the centralization of curriculum in the decentralization of education system in Burkina Faso. Qualitative data collected from the interviews also allow for describing and exploring rationales for the centralization of curriculum in the decentralization of this primary educational system. Existing and secondary data and official documents such as constitutions, law, decrees, and published articles, were also used in this critical analysis and allowed an historical overview of curriculum reform in Burkina Faso.

The findings from the interviews with the curriculum specialists were related to the other findings. Through comparison, a relationship between the main findings from the two types of data collected was established.

In this study, comparison of the viewpoints of policymakers according to the decentralized level at which they are serving (central, regional, provincial) was made in order to see if there was variability or differences.

Microsoft Office Excel 2007 was used for data processing as for quantitative data and for qualitative data from the interview, data processing was manually made.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Historical perspective of curriculum in Burkina Faso

According to specialists of the ministry of basic education, there have been very slight changes in the evolution of curriculum in Burkina Faso from the colonial period until now. While it is undeniable that many curriculum reform attempts have been made, these changes have not significantly altered the fundamental curriculum.

A French expatriate, the director of basic education at Haute Volta (the former name of Burkina Faso), undertook a review of the syllabi that were in use during the period of colonization. This review led to the creation of the syllabi and timetables of 1962. This review concerned certain subjects such as history, geography, science, and civic instruction. However, the review has not adapted the content of these syllabi to a national context.

From 1967 to 1972, the Crespin Reform was initiated and it aimed at setting a connection between rural and basic education. Due to political reasons, this reform was not put into practice. In 1972, the department of education planning conducted a survey related to the reform of the educational system. The results of this survey as well as conferences, seminars, and declarations about rural community development composed the basis of a document entitled 'Dossier Initial.' This document had three main axes:

- The diagnosis of instruction in schools of Haute Volta

- Listening to grassroots population from the results of the survey
- Education for community development.

The reform of 1979 is articulated around Education for community development. This reform brought new policies that took into account national languages (Mooré, Jula, Fulfuldé) in instruction and they introduced life skill activities in primary school.

From 1984 to 1986, a reform based on revolutionary ideology was developed and took root in the 1979 reform. This reform designed an organization of schools in sub-cycles and introduced professionalization in basic education. However, this reform was not put into practice.

CONFEMEN the conference intended for ministries of countries where French is spoken (*Conférence des Ministres de l'Education des pays ayant le français en partage*) initiated seminars dealing with objective-oriented planning from 1986 to 1988. Within the 'Institut Pédagogique du Burkina' (IPB)⁸, a department of programs and pedagogic evaluation was created in which qualified staff were trained in evaluation. It is in this context that the programs of 1989 and 1990 were elaborated. Their objectives were:

- To adapt the contents to the individual and societal needs
- To improve the contents of basic instruction
- To integrate the approach of the objective-oriented planning pedagogy in instruction.

In 1994, a committee was created to review the programs for primary education instruction within the Ministère de l'Enseignement de Base et de l'Alphabétisation de

⁸ IPB was an institute in charge of pedagogic issues in Burkina Faso. Currently, it has been renamed DRDP that stands for "Direction de la Recherche Documentaire et Pédagogique".

Masse (MEBAM), the ministry in charge of basic education at that time. This review took place in 1995 through IPB and was financially supported by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This review created the 'écoles satellites,' a type of school thought to be schools based on local realities. The 'écoles satellites,' train students for three years; after this training, students pursue their schooling in the classic schools and are enrolled there in grade 4. The objective-oriented planning approach was used in this new program. Subjects related to environment, sanitation, nutrition, social education, gender, national values, civism, and human rights were introduced in the programs of the 'écoles satellites'.

Within the framework of the PDDEB, a curriculum reform was planned. This reform was seen as a way to help improve the quality and relevance of basic education. Bilingual education and the reorganization of the primary education cycles into sub-cycles were on the agenda for this reform. The document (letter) of education policy in the MEBA made the decision that the competence-oriented approach would be adopted as a method of instruction in this reform. IPB issued a couple of introductory documents in 2000 dealing with the implementation of the curriculum reform. Currently, IPB has been replaced by the '*Direction Générale du Centre de Recherche des Innovations Educatives et de la Formation (DG-CRIEF)*'⁹, which has issued a draft of a document presenting the basis of this reform. This draft has been discussed in several meetings and after collaboration with the Ministère des Enseignements Secondaire, Supérieur et de la

⁹ The DG-CRIEF is the department within the ministry of basic education that is in charge of curriculum issues regarding the formal type of education.

Recherche Scientifique (MESSRS)¹⁰ and the Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Solidarité Nationale (MASSN)¹¹, it has been turned into a final document entitled 'Réforme des programmes d'enseignement selon l'Approche Par les Compétences (APC).' This document, which argued that the assessment system was selective and that the inadequacy of the content of the instruction programs and their pedagogic approaches were also disparate, was submitted to the Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) for a review. The FTP reacted by writing a seventeen point document. The discussions between the FTP and the three ministries are still ongoing. However, according to the DG-CRIEF specialists, the curriculum is a domain of sovereignty for the state.

Brief description of curriculum design in the framework of the current reform

A reform of a curriculum is undertaken when specialists notice that the ongoing curriculum fail to meet schooling terminal objectives. Burkina Faso is currently experiencing a reform in its curriculum. The curriculum that is now used in classrooms is based on the objective-oriented approach. High national level officials have held many meetings in which they have examined and evaluated the education system; they have found that the objective-oriented approach has certain insufficiencies. In order to face these weaknesses and improve the curriculum and the students' profile, a positive evolution of research in pedagogy called the competence-oriented approach has been proposed.

The national community participates in a curriculum design. Each participant is associated with a specific step in the curriculum design mechanism. The department of

¹⁰ The Ministry of Higher Education and Research

¹¹ The Ministry of Social Affairs and National Solidarity

the ministry of basic education, which is technically in charge of curriculum aspects, establishes the institutional mechanism at the start of the design. Introductory work consists of producing the references for establishing the guidelines for the different managerial committees, creating these committees, and in preparing information and awareness documentation for the public and the teachers. After the information and awareness activities, the public and teachers will be asked what they wish to see in the new curriculum and what their expectations are; these information will be collected and send back to the technicians of the ministry of basic education. They will transform these information into terminal instruction objectives according to the different cycles of the school.

This will be done taking into account the ‘La loi d’orientation de l’éducation.’ Next, a document introducing the terminal instruction objectives and the implementation process will be drafted and validated. The first validation will be made working with the public at different levels such as the provincial and regional. Suggestions and recommendations from these validations will be taken into account in an updated version of the document. Then the document will be presented to technical bodies such as inspectors, provincial and regional directors of basic education, and teachers for reaction. After this step, a working document will be written, taking into account all these suggestions and recommendations.

A national multi-disciplinary committee will start writing the curriculum after being trained for more than two years according to the competence-oriented approach. This committee is composed of forty-four individuals consisting of basic education

inspectors and counselors, teachers, education specialists, bureaucrats from the central level in charge of curriculum issues in Burkina Faso, parents, and specialists of certain disciplines such as history, geography, mathematics, etc. When this committee finishes writing the curriculum, it will be experimented on a small sample and then a larger one. It may take up to ten years of experimentation processes before generalization at national level. This curriculum will be written according to the current great reform of basic education in Burkina Faso. Individuals who take part in the curriculum design are people who either have significant experiences related to education and curriculum or have studied in curriculum oriented programs.

Burkina Faso specialists' comprehension of curriculum

Specialists in the Burkina Faso education system have a shared understanding of the notion of curriculum. With reference to the 'Loi d'orientation de l'éducation'¹², they mention that the main objective of the curriculum is to train people who are able to promote development, able to harmoniously make their ways into their social environment, and that the basis for this curriculum is rooted in the universal values and the culture of Burkina Faso. However, these specialists have elaborated further in the definition of curriculum. In its broadest sense, they define curriculum as an education project which embodies the finalities and the terminal objectives of education, the learning competences to be promoted in students, and the instruction baselines to be used in order to develop these competences. The curriculum is also comprised of a mechanism

¹² It is a governmental document (law) that underlines the general orientations of education in Burkina Faso, its finalities, goals and objectives, education system structure, the organization of instruction and training, the rights and duties related to the education system, the funding and management of instruction and training, as well as education staff and the system of monitoring the education system.

for evaluation, the fundamentals for teachers' training, and the didactic school materials to be used within this education project. It also includes the pedagogical and administrative organization of schools. In addition, curriculum is viewed as a whole set of texts related to the training of a given public. It states general and political intentions of learning finalities and takes into account global as well as local challenges.

According to them, curriculum explains the baselines of the terminal instruction objectives which are translated in competencies and in specific objectives and activities. It also explains the integration of pedagogic and evaluation mechanisms. Composites of the curriculum include instruction programs, organizational texts, timetables, and students' and teachers' profiles. There are also other instruction tools available for teachers.

Currently, there is an attempt of the government to reform the curriculum in Burkina Faso; in the new curriculum, there are many changes that are projected:

- In the pedagogic approach: a transition from the objective-oriented approach to competence oriented approach
- In the organization of the system: the new curriculum takes into account the general reform of the Burkina Faso education system (From the kindergarten and the primary basic education to the three first grades of high school).
- In the curriculum contents: the content is reconsidered within the framework of the new curriculum by formally introducing new programs called the 'Thèmes émergents.'

The control over the curriculum

The government has a particular advantage in controlling the curriculum created by specialists. Curriculum is the main part of the essence of education upon which the culture of any country rests upon. “If a state loses the control over its curriculum, all the country slips away from it,” said one of the technicians of the DG-CRIEF. In Burkina Faso, any internal or external educational partner wanting to do any education experiment in one of the primary schools must submit a request to the ministry of basic education that will analyze it and react accordingly. This is a way of controlling the curriculum.

According to the specialists, the government which sets the curriculum mechanism must have a clear control over it. However, in reality, the government serves as a guarantee for the overall education reform and the curriculum in particular. This is the reason why the government endows the ministry of basic education departments (the DG-CRIEF as the main respondent) with the responsibility of managing curriculum issues at a national level. Very importantly, the technicians underline that the curriculum is a domain of sovereignty of the state.

To the question about whether curriculum is a protected state category in the process of decentralization of education in Burkina Faso, 98 % of policymakers at sub-national level answer in the affirmative.

Possibility and desirability of curriculum decentralization

Specialists agree that currently in Burkina Faso, curriculum cannot be decentralized by being transferred to locally-elected collectivities even if certain resources and competences have been already transferred to them. One specialist's

viewpoint is that “a central government who loses the control over his curriculum is like a driver who loses the control of his car.” They feel that transferring curriculum in Burkina Faso is not even an option to consider. The country is not ready for such a process, they argue. In Burkina Faso, there are more than sixty languages of which few are transcribed. A diversified curriculum may be linguistically difficult to translate and handle. However, there is a current bilingual schooling experiment in the country. A past experiment that lasted for a few years was stopped without any evaluation.

When dealing with the issue of decentralization, policymakers do not often mention the issue of curriculum to a degree where it could be significantly affected by decentralization. The state primary schools teachers are still being trained in the ‘Ecole Nationale des Enseignants du Primaire,’ the national teachers’ training school and the same curriculum being taught throughout the country. “Curriculum decentralization, in a sense of transferring it to locally-elected municipal people, is not for tomorrow,” according to certain curriculum specialists. However, in the long term, it might not be impossible to decentralize curriculum.

Curriculum specialists don’t see the curriculum reform and its design in the framework of the occurrence of decentralization event. They relate the reform to the difficulties the educational system is experiencing; certain specialists have made a clear mention that there is no significant relationship between decentralization and the curriculum reform, even if they occur at the same time. However, they don’t ignore decentralization as they are aware that sections of the education system have been transferred to local collectivities and that specificities of geographic regions will be taken

into account in the new curriculum reform. Nevertheless, they pinpoint that curriculum is a domain of state sovereignty and in a framework of decentralization, the government must keep control over the curriculum through the technical department in charge of curriculum issues of the ministry of basic education. Stressing on the fact that curriculum also has political, cultural, linguistic, and national cohesion stakes, they insist that it should not be transferred to local collectivities.

To these specialists, speaking about de-concentration is more indicative for curriculum in the process of decentralization of the educational system of Burkina Faso. Indeed, provincial and regional governmental committees in the provincial and regional basic education departments of the government will monitor and provide for training and counseling to education stakeholders in the framework of decentralization.

There is nothing which indicates that curriculum may be transferred to local collectivities. Not only has it been said that local collectivities don't have adequate staff to handle such a strategic constituent as curriculum, but also that teachers' training schools are nation-based and taught in the same way and that the technical department in charge of curriculum issues (DG-CRIEF) is well embedded within the ministry in charge of basic education. Furthermore, in their summary of the curriculum design within the framework of the curriculum reform, local collectivities don't play the most substantial role. Decisional, managerial and technical parts are piloted by the DG-CRIEF, the technical department in charge of curriculum issues of the ministry of basic education. Most important is that curriculum specialists don't even think about transferring curriculum to local collectivities.

The influence of curriculum categories in its development

In order to understand what categories in a curriculum development are the most important/influential when designing a curriculum, sub-national education policymakers have been asked to give their point of views.

Table 2. Influence/Importance Given to Categories in Curriculum Development According to Sub-national Education Policymakers in Burkina Faso.

Decentralized levels Categories in curriculum	5	4	3	2	1	Total Answers
The determination of instructional time	1 2.3 %	4 9.3 %	4 9.3 %	7 16.3 %	27 62.8 %	43 100 %
The definition of curriculum content	16 37.2 %	16 37.2 %	6 14.0 %	3 7.0 %	2 4.7 %	43 100 %
The determination of teaching methods	6 14.0 %	12 27.9 %	10 23.3 %	12 27.9 %	3 7.0 %	43 100 %
Language policy	3 7.0 %	7 16.3 %	15 34.9 %	10 23.3 %	8 18.6 %	43 100 %
National values	19 44.2 %	4 9.3 %	9 20.9 %	9 20.9 %	2 4.7 %	43 100 %

Note. 5 represents the most and 1 the least important in this ranking scale.

The determination of instructional time is not of much importance in a curriculum design according to sub-national education policymakers. Indeed, 62.8% of them rank this category 1 on a 5 to 1 scale ranking with 1 being the least important. Only 2.3 % of these policymakers gave 5 to this category. This ranking position may explain why they think that in a curriculum decentralization process, initially, the region level of administration should be able to make a regional class schedule for schools belonging to

its area of administration. Subsequently, the municipalities would be able to administer instructional time. However, they add that class schedule should be made taking into account the particularity of each region, but particular attention must be paid to the number of hours a student should spend at school. The same applies to teachers regarding the amount of time spent per subject.

Regarding the definition of curriculum content, this category could be considered to be significant when designing a curriculum. The plurality of policymakers has shown it because 37.2 % ranks this category a 5 and another 37.2 % a 4. Only 4.7 % found the definition of curriculum content less important in a curriculum design. Though they found the definition of curriculum content very important, policymakers think that, taking the national education policy defined by the government as a basis, each regional level of administration can define certain curriculum content for its teachers. They consider that there could be a core national curriculum content, from which each region could add other specific training needs to meet their special needs. Whatever the case, curriculum, at sub-national level, must take into account national and global values. In addition, at the regional level, curriculum content must reflect the economic, social and cultural needs of the region and promote its development. Also, certain subjects, such as history and geography for instance could be used to deal with historical and geographic particularities of regions and provinces.

As for the determination of teaching methods, there is no important differences in ranking because policymakers' answers are balanced, even if only 3 % esteems that this category is of little importance (these 3 % ranked it 1). For the determination of teaching

methods, 27.9 % rank it 4 and the same percentage of participants too ranks it 2. Also, 23.3 % ranks it 3, and 14.0 % gives 5 to this category. To policymakers, in the beginning of curriculum decentralization process, the regional level of administration should be able to determine teaching methods for its schools. Teaching methods must be chosen in accordance with the curriculum content. If regions were given responsibility to design aspects of curriculum content within the framework of decentralization, it is logical that they be in charge of elaborating on the teaching methods of these aspects as well. According to policymakers, later in the process, the provinces and the municipalities should be able to deal with it. However, a couple of specialists think that teaching methods must keep being centralized and the same pedagogic approach used everywhere in the country.

There is also no important difference in ranking regarding the category 'language policy'. Indeed, among policymakers, 7.0 % gives 5, 16.3 % gives 4, 34.9 % gives 3, 23. Also 3 % gives 2 and 18.6 % gives 1. Certain policymakers argue that the government itself must be in charge of language policy. National cohesion is the reason many of them provide to justify their point of view. Other policymakers also mention that an inadequate language policy may be a source of exclusion and discrimination in the society. Nevertheless, part of them consider that responsibility can be given to regions and provinces to decide about the choice of language of instruction and teaching; and until which level/grade of primary school a local language should be used. For instance, in a 'écoles satellite', a local language and French (the official language of the country) are used together during the three first school years of instruction of this type of school.

Certain specialists at sub-national level made the proposition that local languages, according to region and provinces, be taught as a subject in schools, while French will remain the country official language of instruction.

However, policymakers are unanimous as for national values. Actually, 44.2 % of them believe that this category is very important because they rank it 5. They deem that core of national values must be the same in the curriculum content whatever the level of administration is and dealt with by the central government. However, at regional, provincial and municipal level, certain specific cultural values may be stressed on, in a decentralized curriculum.

From the data of this table 2, conclusions can be made that national values, the definition of curriculum content and the determination of teaching methods greatly influence curriculum and account for curriculum centralization.

Conception of decentralization according to the different levels of decentralization

Curriculum specialists at central level and those at local level (regional and provincial levels) agree that curriculum is a domain of sovereignty of the state. Almost all of them make it clear that the government must have control over the curriculum. They provided reasons that are sometime common even if specialists at local level elaborated more on the question. For instance, 94% of policymakers at sub-national level agree that government should make more of an effort to decentralize curriculum.

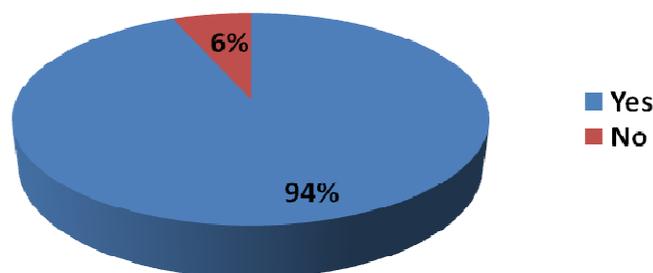


Figure 2. Viewpoint of policymakers about whether government should decentralize curriculum (N = 47).

However, how policymakers at sub-national level discuss the possible decisions-making location in a decentralized curriculum, show that they intend to play a great role in the process of decentralization. The determination of instructional time is seen by them as a category that could be managed at sub-national level; in point of fact, 46.8 % of them believe the region can manage this category in a decentralized curriculum. About the definition of curriculum content, 53.2 % of policymakers think that the region can play a great role in this process in a decentralized curriculum.

Notwithstanding, a plurality of policymakers at sub-national level (48 %) wish the state to play a significant role in the determination of teaching methods; but the fact that 32 % of them want also to have a certain amount of control over the determination of teaching methods may be explained in this manner: since these policymakers want to play a role in the curriculum contents regarding the specificities of each region, it is

logical that they also judge that they have to place a role in decision-making regarding the determination of teaching methods.

As for language policy, policymakers at sub-national level charge the state with this responsibility as 56.5% of them agree that decision about language policy should be located at the state level; they have provided reasons such as national cohesion, risk of discrimination and exclusion and the plurality of languages that justify why they prefer the state to have more power in the decision-making regarding this category. Also, 75% of policymakers at sub-national level bear in mind that the state must have the responsibility on the subject of national values.

Table 3. Desirable Location of Decisions on Curriculum Categories in a Decentralized System of Education According to Sub-national Education Policymakers in Burkina Faso.

Decentralized levels Categories in Curriculum	Decentralized levels					Total Answers
	State	Regional	Provincial	Municipal	School	
The determination of instructional time	2 4.3 %	22 46.8 %	10 21.3 %	7 14.9 %	6 12.8 %	47 100 %
The definition of curriculum content	20 42.6 %	25 53.2 %	1 2.1 %	1 2.1 %	0 0.0 %	47 100 %
The determination of teaching methods	24 48.0 %	16 32.0 %	3 6.0 %	0 0.0 %	7 14.0 %	50 100 %
Language policy	26 56.5 %	17 37.0 %	2 4.3 %	1 2.2 %	0 0.0 %	46 100 %
National values	36 75.0 %	9 18.8 %	2 4.2 %	1 2.1 %	0 0.0 %	48 100 %

However, at the central level, technicians of the DG-CRIEF see themselves legitimate to be on the top of the decision making process when dealing with curriculum management. Not only are they at the heart of curriculum design and management and trained for this purpose, but the government endows their department (DG-CRIEF) with the management of curriculum issues. Acting from the central level, they think they have an overall view, a national view of the education system in general, and the curriculum issues in particular; then, they can act accordingly. Nonetheless, the curriculum specialists at central level support the idea of letting regional and provincial sub-national directions of basic education, take care of certain transferred activities already mentioned in this document (stakeholders' training, the management of the activities related to 'les thèmes émergents' ...). Yet, even if policymakers at the local level of state administration recognize the attributes of the DG-CRIEF, from the survey, they are pinpointing that they must have more responsibility in the process of curriculum management. However, it is imminent that further discussions be carried on between education policymakers regarding the location of decision making in the process of curriculum management in the framework of the current reform of Burkina Faso educational system.

Nevertheless, policymakers at central as well as at sub-national level do not see stakeholders at the local level (municipal and school) play a role of paramount importance in the process of curriculum management in the framework of the current reform of Burkina Faso educational system. Their viewpoint is emboldened by how they see decision making in this process concerning these levels of decentralization. Indeed, for the determination of instructional time, only 14 % of policymakers at sub-national

level think that municipality may play a role in decision-making process; and 12.8 % of them also think that schools can also play a role in the determination of instructional time. Also, dealing with the determination of teaching methods, only 14 % of policy makers think that schools may be able to make significant decisions with reference to this category. Except for these two categories, only one policymaker or sometimes, in the survey results, no one think that municipalities and schools should be associated with curriculum issues when speaking about locating decision-making.

From table 3, policymakers informed as about possible locations of decisions in a decentralized system. In comparison to table 2, relationships between the influence of categories and the decision location on categories can be established. For instance, the determination of instructional time is considered not to be of significant influence by policymakers in table 2; as a consequence, they think that this category can be managed at sub-national level. Also, the determination of curriculum contents received high grades in table 2; as a consequence, policymakers think that this category should be managed at central level in table 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Discussions of the findings

To policymakers in Burkina Faso, decentralization of curriculum may mean that the government transfers certain materials, financial resources and certain competencies to municipalities, but the majority of technical aspects of curriculum is managed by central and sub-national state administrations. However, municipalities and parents' organizations must be associated in the curriculum design as their preoccupations must be taken into account. Further, municipalities, in collaboration with sub-national state administrations, may be able to make decisions regarding the determination of instructional time.

Regarding the category 'definition of curriculum content,' 37.2 % of policymakers at sub-national level graded it 5; 37.2 % graded it 4; i.e. the highest scores. This shows the importance and influence of this category in a curriculum to them. Also, the plurality of them (42.6 %) thinks that the category 'national values' deserves a grade 5. In fact, 75.0 % of policymakers at sub-national level affirms that location of decisions regarding this category should be placed at central level. As for the determination of teaching methods 48.0 % (the plurality) thinks that the state should decide about it. With regard to these data, national values, the definition of curriculum contents and the determination of teaching methods could be said to be the categories that account the

most why the state keeps curriculum centralized in the decentralization of curriculum. Indeed, policymakers at central level also stressed on the importance of these categories; also, data coming from the reasons provided by policymakers at sub-national level to explain why the curriculum is a state protected category backup the significance of these three categories.

Even if policymakers at central level underline that curriculum decentralization may be possible in the future, they also argue about the unpreparedness of municipalities in general, an important component which make it difficult to even think about decentralizing the curriculum. One conclusion that could be drawn is that they do not think that curriculum should be decentralized that is, transferred to local collectivities; rather, they prefer the state apparatus (central, regional and provincial directions of basic education) to have the control over the curriculum. Yet, policymakers at central level are aware that municipalities must be associated in the process of the curriculum design.

However, policymakers at sub-national level think that the government should make more of an effort to decentralized curriculum (98 % of policymakers at sub-national level answer that curriculum is a state protected category and 94 % of them think that the government should try more to decentralized curriculum). Indeed, policymakers at sub-national level wish to play a greater role on decision-making about curriculum issues. One of the specialists at sub-national level said that “nowadays, school must mirror another face: the one which reflects the interests of regions as well as their aspirations.”

Policymakers' suggestions and recommendations

Policymakers made a couple of suggestions and recommendations regarding the decentralization process in Burkina Faso in general. These recommendations and suggestions could be implemented accordingly with the support of all the education system stakeholders. The same applies to the following final recommendations of this study. The main suggestions and recommendations of the policymakers are:

- In the agenda of the current curriculum reform, specialists mentioned that the entire community will take part in this process. However, bureaucrats insist that parents need to be more associated in the process of the decentralization of the education system in general in Burkina Faso.
- Learning and instruction must contribute to the consolidation of national cohesion.
- Decentralized curriculum stakeholders should be trained in issues related to curriculum management.
- Because training will be made taking more into account employment opportunity of learner's environment, curriculum decentralization will help in the fight against unemployment as it will be adapted to socioeconomic and cultural realities of regions and provinces.
- They also think that curriculum decentralization is so important that policymakers in this country must elaborate on it within the current general reform of the education system; this also implies that the issue of decentralization of education is not so much discussed in the framework of the reform.

Final recommendations and suggestions

To the recommendations and suggestions of policymakers, in the framework of this study, the following recommendations can also be added:

- A significant number of positive experiences linking school to its local environment exist and they can be used in order to strengthen the curriculum reform and its decentralization in the future. For example, the ‘Ecoles Satellites’ and the existing bilingual schools could be used as source of inspiration in case the government of Burkina Faso wishes to decentralize the curriculum in primary education.
- While specialists at central level don’t see the curriculum transferred to local collectivities, policymakers at sub-national level think that the government should think more about this issue. As a consequence, discussions between all the policymakers about the decentralization of curriculum must be strengthened.
- There is a need to train possible local stakeholders who may be involved in any curriculum decentralization in issues related to decentralization and curriculum.

Limitations of the study

This study does not use inferential statistics whereas they may have helped to establish correlations between certain variables from the data collected and give more statistical significance to the analysis.

The participation rate is significant, but 13 provincial directors have not sent back the survey out of 43 in total. However, participation in this study was voluntary.

Although using a comprehensive sampling, this study does not represent all the primary

educational system stakeholders. Indeed, participants in this study are specialists from the government. However, in this current process of decentralization of Burkina Faso education system curriculum included, the point of view of other stakeholders such as NGOs, municipal officials, parents, students and other resource persons are very important because they may bring other insights in this debate. Although decentralization is not effective in all the municipalities because it is a gradual process, in certain municipalities, there are resource persons able to deliberate on the subject. A couple of NGOs are piloting experiments related to curriculum issues and their views may be of help.

APPENDIX A:
SURVEY FOR THE STUDY ABOUT THE CENTRALIZATION OF CURRICULUM
IN THE DECENTRALIZATION OF THE PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN
BURKINA FASO (TO POLICYMAKERS)

Survey for the study about the centralization of curriculum in the decentralization of the primary educational system in Burkina Faso (To policymakers)

1-What is the most influential/important category in curriculum development? (Rank from most influential/important to less influential/important; 5 being the most and 1 the least)

- (a)- The determination of instructional time
- (b) -The definition of curriculum content
- (c) -The determination of teaching methods
- (d) -Language policy
- (e) -National values

2- In a decentralized system, at which level do you think the following curriculum-related decisions should be made? (Please check one box per row.)?

Decentralized level Categories of curriculum	State	Regional	Provincial	Municipal	school
The determination of instructional time					
The definition of curriculum content					
The determination of teaching methods					
Language policy					
National values					

3-Is curriculum a protected state category in the process of decentralization of education in Burkina Faso?

Yes

No

Provide few reasons to your answer?

4-Should the Government do more to decentralize curriculum?

Yes

No

5-What do you think would happen if curriculum were decentralized? (In relation to the following items)

(a)-The determination of instructional time

(b) -The definition of curriculum content

(c) -The determination of teaching methods

(d)- Language policy

(e) –National values

6-Are you aware of any current plans to decentralize the curriculum?

Yes

No

I don't know

7-Any other comments

8-Demographics:

Interviewee serving at:

Central level (In the capital city)

Regional level

Provincial level

Profession -----

Years of experience in issues related to education

City (Optional):

Date :.....

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Topics to be discussed in the interviews

I-What curriculum is

II- When, how, who participate in the curriculum design

III-The contents of a curriculum

IV- The bases of a curriculum and its purpose

V-The control over the curriculum

VI- Curriculum reform history in Burkina Faso

VII-Curriculum in the decentralization of the education system

VIII-Possibility of curriculum decentralization

IX- Anything else he/she wants to add

Demographics:

Years of experience in curriculum issues in Burkina Faso:

Date :.....

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Simon's work has taken him to Mali, Ghana, Senegal, and Uganda and offered him significant experiences.

