



Pedagogical supervision of school headmasters, an important lever for the quality of teaching

Capacity-building in pedagogical monitoring for primary school headmasters in the lower north-west of Haiti as part of a project to improve the quality of public education

February 2024

Main objective of the project

To improve the quality of basic education in the lower north-west of Haiti by strengthening the practical knowledge of national school headmasters in terms of pedagogical supervision.



Why capitalise on this project?

It seemed very important to all the players at the head of this project to share with as many people as possible the approach put in place to strengthen the teaching skills of school headmasters. Although this pedagogical role is of fundamental importance, it is often neglected in Haiti and certainly in many other countries around the world.

This theme was chosen to raise awareness of the issue among education stakeholders and to encourage them to use this lever to improve the quality of education. This capitalisation was also chosen because it represents the philosophy of ADEMA's Support for Public Schools project, a philosophy based on strengthening institutions and education professionals, as well as increased collaboration with decentralised public technical partners.



Context of capitalisation

General context

In recent decades, great efforts have been made to develop Haiti's education system. Various plans and strategies have been drawn up, resulting in significant progress in access to basic education for young children. Today, the net enrolment rate at basic level exceeds 80%¹. Despite these efforts and the marked improvement in results in recent years, Haiti's educational provision is still characterised by imbalances and inequalities. In the North- West department, for example, the proportion of public schools in relation to total provision remains extremely low, at just over 20%². Improving the quality of teaching is also a major challenge facing the education system. Among other things, the system lacks qualified teachers and headmasters. Only 30%³ of teachers in basic schools in the lower north-west have the qualifications required to do their job. Most of them have a very low level of initial training (28% of teachers in the 1st and 2nd cycles have a level below the final level) and do not have a professional diploma.

This phenomenon also affects school headmasters, and this generalised lack of skills has a considerable impact on the quality of teaching and, consequently, on pupil attainment.

¹ MENFP (2020). Ten-year education and training plan (PDEF). Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

² <https://sigeee.menfp.gouv.ht/census/dashboard/ecole> (February 2024)

³ Data extracted from the 2017 School Maps of the communes of the Lower North-West

Lexicon

BDS: School District Office

Administrative and management sub-unit of the "Direction Départementale d'Education" for a district. It brings together the zone inspectors and the principal inspectors.

EFACAP: "École Fondamentale d'Application et Centre d'Appui Pédagogique" (Basic Application School and Pedagogical Support Centre)

A public institution working alongside the BDS, with a dual function.

It is, on the one hand, a Fundamental Application School (EFA) with 3 cycles welcoming students and also enabling future teachers to undertake work placements.

It is also a Pedagogical Support Centre (Centre d'Appui Pédagogique - CAP), staffed by pedagogical advisers who provide in-service training for teachers and school headmasters in a given region.

ENINO: "École Normale d'Instituteurs du Nord-Ouest" - North-West Teacher Training College

School training future teachers in the North West department.

Anchoring the project

By strengthening local educational players, the ADEMA organisation is continuing a process of helping to upgrade national schools in the lower north-west of Haiti and is trying to restore families' confidence in state schools. The project presented here is the result of collaboration between the School District Offices (BDS) of Jean-Rabel, Bombardopolis and Môle Saint-Nicolas, the Basic Application School and Pedagogical Support Centre (EFACAP) of the Lower North-West, the North-West Teacher Training College (ENINO) and ADEMA. It is entirely rooted in the problem of the lack of qualifications among teaching teams, and especially among school headmasters. Through a comprehensive training module and, above all, follow-up in the field, it aims to strengthen the skills of school principals in terms of pedagogical supervision of their respective teaching teams.

The educational role of directors

The Practical Guide to School Administration ("Guide Pratique d'Administration Scolaire", GPAS), which has governed the operation of Haitian state schools since the late 1990s, sets out a number of main tasks for school headmasters. In addition to their role as administrative managers, headmasters must also take responsibility for the pedagogical supervision of their schools and teaching staff.

Although the GPAS may be updated as part of the 2020-2030 ten-year education plan, the headmaster's pedagogical role is still of vital importance today and should never disappear. In this specific role, the headteacher is responsible for carrying out regular pedagogical assessments of teaching staff, supporting them on a day-to-day basis, identifying their training needs, building their capacity and, more generally, ensuring that curricula are respected.

The practice of pedagogical supervision also makes it possible to harmonise procedures within the school and ensure the uniformity of the teaching-learning process. It helps to improve the performance of the education system and facilitates the success of learners by enabling teaching staff to identify their strengths and weaknesses, while giving them a systematic opportunity to develop their skills and practices. Finally, educational supervision plays an important motivational role for teachers, who feel supported and supervised by the headteacher.



Origin and purpose of the project

Main findings

During their regular visits to schools in the Lower North West, the zone's inspectors and educational advisors found that the tasks of pedagogical monitoring and supervision were most often neglected or even deliberately left to one side by school headmasters. Most of the time, these managers concentrated more on the administrative management of their school, regularly forgetting that their role was also to provide pedagogical supervision of their team of teachers.

Among the principals of the 36 schools monitored as part of the ADEMA's program, only 3 were already paying particular attention to this aspect of education before the project began, by carrying out regular, high-quality monitoring of the teaching staff. In the case of the others, monitoring did take place from time to time, but most of the time it was not formalised. The directors suffered from a lack of concrete tools on which to base their work. In their defence, none of the headmasters targeted by the project had received a formal set of specifications when they took up their posts, and more than a quarter of them were not even aware of the teaching role they were normally expected to play.

The government does not ask headmasters to report on the management of their schools, and even less on the pedagogical aspect of their work. Before this project was set up, even the educational advisers paid little attention to the headmasters' pedagogical supervision practices. They preferred to concentrate mainly on monitoring teachers.

Project objectives

With this in mind, and with technical, logistical and financial support from ADEMA, the BDS, the EFACAPs in the lower north-west of Haiti and ENINO decided to set up a comprehensive training module on the pedagogical side of the job of school headmaster, and more specifically on the pedagogical supervision of teaching staff.

The main objective of this training session was to make the headteachers of the state schools monitored as part of the ADEMA's program aware of the importance of their pedagogical role, as first-line supervisors. In particular, the module aimed to provide them with the necessary skills to practise pedagogical supervision, a central element that is essential for improving the quality of teaching and therefore the success of pupils.

Mixing theory and practice, the initiators of the training course also set themselves the goal of providing headmasters with concrete tools for carrying out their supervision and encouraging them to prepare a genuine annual monitoring plan for their teaching team.

Finally, in order to anchor the headmasters' pedagogical supervision in the school's operating practices, the idea behind the project was also to put in place, after this training, regular support and evaluation for the headmasters in carrying out this monitoring.

Project implementation

Carrying out the training

The training module itself took place from 26 to 27 December 2022 at the ADEMA training centre in Jean-Rabel. The school year in Haiti usually starts at the beginning of September, but this year the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP) postponed the official start of the school year until January, primarily for economic reasons at first, and then because of the *Peyi lòk*, which froze the entire country for the last three months of 2022. As a result, this training course was held in a particular context, where many schools had not yet opened their doors.

Of the 36 headteachers invited, 28 attended and were guided for 2 days by a group of 5 speakers, all zone inspectors or educational advisers from the Lower North-West of Haiti, well known to the participants.

The planned program was based on a training course initially developed by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP). The content of this pre-constructed module did not therefore require much adjustment. The preparation focused mainly on structuring the program, creating a speaker's guide, a course pack and a pre- and post-test to assess knowledge acquisition during the course.

The days were dense and built around 9 sequences with the aim of :

- define the key concepts related to educational supervision ;
- identify the importance of educational supervision ;
- describe the process of a class visit ;
- plan and observe a supervision session in a much more professional way.

The various sequences followed one another, varying the forms of work and alternating between individual reflection, group work, theoretical presentations and debates.

While the first day focused on theoretical concepts relating to pedagogical supervision, the second day was used exclusively to simulate classroom visits and pedagogical supervision interviews in small groups. Each teacher thus had the opportunity to practise these practices and to receive advice and critical feedback from colleagues and speakers.

The training took place in a very good atmosphere and with mutual respect. The group and the speakers knew each other quite well, which made it much easier to talk to each other.



Continuation of training

The theme of educational supervision extended well beyond a 2-day course and continues to do so today.

- ***Provision of tools***

Each director left the course with concrete tools for carrying out pedagogical supervision. Participants were given examples of pedagogical monitoring grids and a planning template. These tools had all been developed and discussed at length beforehand by all those involved in the project.

- ***Promoting the theme***

Following this training module, pedagogical supervision also became an important theme in the monitoring of directors by inspectors and teachers.

educational advisers. A specific evaluation form has been drawn up for this purpose by ADEMA and the various educational players, to monitor the development of headmasters' skills in this area during observation visits to schools.

- ***Regularity and quality of supervision as performance criteria***

The regularity and quality of pedagogical supervision have also become performance criteria in their own right for schools, with overall performance monitored regularly by ADEMA to track progress. Headmasters are now monitored at least once a month by educational advisers specifically on this topic.

Main results and lessons learned

The main results

- ***Increasing theoretical skills***

A pre- and post-test carried out by all the participants during the two days of training highlighted a significant increase in the theoretical skills of the directors in the field of educational supervision.

- ***Better formalization of pedagogical follow-up***

To assess the changes in practices over the longer term, more than half a year after the training, the project team also brought together all the players involved in debriefing and capitalisation workshops. One workshop was attended by the headteachers, another by the teachers and the final one by the educational advisers and zone inspectors. Although it was noted that around ten headmasters continue to neglect the pedagogical supervision of their teams, changes were nevertheless noticed by all the stakeholders in the way all the other headmasters organize and carry out pedagogical supervision. The training and tools have enabled them to gain confidence and to plan, formalize and structure their supervision more effectively. Supervision schedules were drawn up and communicated more regularly to the teaching staff, who welcomed the supervision grids and the much more formalized debriefings than in the past. As a result, they felt better supervised and more motivated to create high-quality lessons.

Pedagogical supervision has also become more frequent and planning more closely adhered to. Each teacher is now generally monitored at least once a month by their headteacher.

- ***General awareness***

The headmasters realised that pedagogical supervision should not only be undertaken to identify the weaknesses of teaching staff, but that it also served to identify the positive, to establish a climate of trust with teachers and to thank them for the work they had done. They were also better able to explain to their team the objectives of such an approach, thereby overcoming certain frustrations, concerns and reluctance with regard to pedagogical supervision.

Key success factors

- ***A multi-stakeholder approach***

One of the main factors in the success of the project was probably the multi-stakeholder aspect of the approach. In fact, the training on pedagogical supervision techniques for headteachers was the fruit of intense and productive collaboration between the various School District Offices, the consultants from the Pedagogical Support Centres (“Centres d'Appui Pédagogiques”- CAP), the ENINO and the ADEMA association. They all worked hand in hand to identify training needs, build the course tools and provide optimal framework conditions for the capacity-building process for headteachers. Collaboration between these players is not new in the lower north-west of Haiti, and it has become increasingly robust over the years. The fact that we had a problem that was actually observed on the ground and whose resolution everyone felt would be an important lever for improving the quality of education meant that the project had a close-knit group.

- ***The importance of pedagogical supervision in monitoring schools***

The continuation of the project beyond the training module, by making the concept of pedagogical supervision an important criterion for monitoring schools, undoubtedly also played an important role in the success of the approach and the upgrading of the pedagogical aspect of the headmasters' terms of reference. This has helped to ensure that enthusiasm for the subject does not fade quickly after the training course, and that the awareness-raising work is not in vain.

- ***Practice-oriented training***

Finally, the practical side of the training and the simulations carried out during the 2nd day also seem to have been a key success factor for this training module proper. The directors particularly appreciated the role-playing exercises, which were based on real-life situations and added a concrete touch to the module.





Difficulties encountered and areas for improvement

The difficulties encountered

A number of difficulties were encountered during the project.

- ***Date of course***

First of all, the choice of dates for the training course did not meet with unanimous approval. Many directors felt that the dates were unsuitable, as they were often reserved for family time. This may explain why 8 directors for this module. In future, it would be preferable to avoid this period for training.

- ***Lack of time to put learning into practice***

According to current observations, the training has not been well assimilated by all the headmasters. Even though pedagogical follow-up is now being carried out in all the schools, 19 headmasters are still not fulfilling their pedagogical role to the satisfaction of the established criteria, and 10 of them have obtained the lowest score on this theme in the definition of the schools' performance. In the vast majority of cases, however, it is not a lack of motivation but rather a lack of time. Seven of these people

are as much head teachers as teachers, as there are not enough staff in the schools. Solutions should be found as soon as possible at Ministry level for the schools concerned, so that each person has only one role.

- ***Factors specific to the Haitian context***

Finally, certain factors specific to Haiti and the lower north-west of Haiti still have a negative impact on compliance with supervision schedules. These include:

- The state of the road infrastructure following frequent bad weather. Roads quickly become impassable, keeping children and teachers at home.
- Strikes by teachers are also a major risk for the continuity of education of pedagogical supervision. In 2023, teaching was once again suspended for more than 2 months due to unpaid salaries by the state, and this put a major brake on ongoing pedagogical supervision.

Areas for improvement

A number of areas for improvement were identified by project stakeholders.

- **More emphasis on practicality**

For some, the training could be even more practical than it has been. In particular, the simulation sessions could be replaced by real sessions in schools with small groups of headmasters, supervised by educational advisers and zone inspectors.

- **Provision of an educational supervision kit**

The headmasters greatly appreciated the model pedagogical supervision grid provided. However, they suggest that this grid should be printed regularly in good quality by the inspectors and be part of a wider pedagogical supervision kit also containing notebooks and binders.

- **Follow-up support**

For teachers, headmasters should also pay special attention to

to the general weaknesses of their teaching team and regularly offer training courses, pedagogical days or various group activities to make up for this common skills deficit.

- **Liability for structures**

It goes without saying that the educational role of headmasters is of fundamental importance. However, school management structures (BDS, EFACAP, ENINO) also need to focus on teacher training (particularly in lesson preparation and the use of new textbooks) and on the framework conditions for teaching, such as the availability of the right infrastructure and appropriate textbooks. The headteacher alone cannot manage the monitoring of teachers. Future projects along these lines have already been devised and in some cases even initiated as part of the collaboration between ADEMA, BDS, EFACAP and ENINO.



Key points

With this project, supervised by ADEMA, the pedagogical role of school headmasters has become a strategic element in fostering the quality of teaching in public primary schools in the lower north-west of Haiti. Whereas previously only the administrative management of schools was really observed when it came to the duties of headteachers, the supervisory bodies - the BDS, EFACAP and ENINO - are now keen to promote and enhance the role of headteachers in the pedagogical supervision of their respective teaching teams by various means.

The training provided on this topic can be seen as a central pillar of the project and a good starting point. However, it will only be beneficial if it is accompanied by the provision of relevant tools for school headmasters and if there is significant ongoing promotion and awareness-raising on the subject. The role of inspectors and educational advisors is vital in these initiatives. Supporting headmasters and advising them on this key role is essential to the long-term success of the project.

Reminder of the project objective

To improve the quality of basic education in the Lower North-west region of Haiti by strengthening the practical knowledge of national school headmasters in terms of pedagogical supervision.

Target audience

36 national school headmasters at basic level (cycles 1 and 2) in the lower north-west of Haiti

Files and documents available

In addition to this presentation sheet and the basis of the course produced by the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP), files and documents specific to the project are available to those interested in initiating capacity-building initiatives for the pedagogical supervision of school headmasters:

- Facilitator's guide
- Course material for directors
- Knowledge test (pre/post test) with answers
- Training activity sheets (8)
- Specific tools for educational supervision and evaluation of directors

Technical information

Keywords

School headmaster / Pedagogical skills / In-service training / Basic schools / National public schools / Pedagogical supervision techniques / Quality of education / Lower North-West of Haïti.

Geographical area

Country: Haiti

Department: North-West

Borough: Môle- Saint-Nicolas

Towns: Jean-Rabel / Bombardopolis / Môle Saint-Nicolas / Baie-de-Henne

Contact details

ADEMA

association@ademahaiti.org

www.ademahaiti.org

Technical partners

School District Offices (BDS) of Jean-Rabel, Môle Saint-Nicolas and Bombardopolis

Basic Application School and Pedagogical Support Centre (EFACAP) in Jean-Rabel and Bombardopolis

North West Teacher Training College (ENINO)

Financial partners

PARTAGE - <https://www.partage.org>

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) - <https://www.afd.fr>

ADEMA in brief

Since 2005, local NGO ADEMA has been contributing to the development of Haiti's Bas-Nord-Ouest region, mainly by strengthening local authorities, decentralised government services and other civil society organisations. Its aim is to improve the population's access to basic services, by working in the fields of education, local development, food security, water and sanitation.

Support project for state schools

Through its project to support public schools in the Lower North-West region of Haiti, ADEMA aims to support the upgrading of the country's basic education provision by making it more accessible and of better quality. In this way, the association hopes to make its own contribution to achieving the goal of free and compulsory universal schooling.

Its main projects involve taking direct action at the level of governance of the regional education system and strengthening local players in the field of education to ensure greater collaboration and greater resilience in the face of crises. It provides technical and financial support to public institutions, in particular the school district offices of Jean-Rabel, Bombardopolis and Môle-Saint-Nicolas, educational advisers, EFACAP supervisory staff, the headmasters of 36 public schools and their teachers.