Community-based education in benin: a socio-anthropological appraisal of the social players' perception of state

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Abstract

Many strategies are adopted by various stakeholders to promote education in the world as a whole, and in Benin in particular. This research work revisits the traditional conception of state-oriented and local management of international reforms proposed in order to resolve crisis situations in Africa in general and Benin in particular. This work focuses on the implementation of "partnership" in the sector of education. One of the guidelines of the 1990 Jomtien Conference has highlighted the dynamics surrounding this partnership and its implications for the perceptions that social actors' develop about the state. The methodological approach adopted is the classic socio-anthropological one, which is intended to be as close as possible to the experiences of social actors. This is concretely based on interviews and empirical observations. The findings reveal that, while the call for partnerships has gone through the process of bringing under state control through the mobilization of different types of actors and resources for promoting a pro-mass education, it has also contributed to deconstructing the traditional conception of the state and building social actors' perceptions about it. As a result, these deconstructions and re-construction reveal that the perceptions and meaning of the State are not only dynamic, but also constantly constructed by international socio-political and economic contexts on the one hand, and local management of these contexts on the other.

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1 Introduction

The aim of this research work is to revisit the issue of state-building based on the local/national dynamics of the implementation of the partnership policy in Benin's education sector. Indeed, state construct has been approached by the number of studies from various angles: some focus on the State's public services functioning along with the various players (institutional, State or non-State actors) in the different spheres (public-private or formal/informal) that interact within it in a concerted or non-concerted manner. The reflections of this first category of work culminate with the analysis of the multiple stakeholders and spheres involved in public services delivery and State construct as well as the analysis of the functioning of the latter, the different governance register types it encompasses and its relations with the citizens (Hansen *et al.* 2001; Bierschenk, 2008; 2014; Olivier de Sardan, 2008; 2001; Tidjani Alou, 2011; Hamani, 2011; Fichtner, 2012; Tama, 2012; Tchantipo, 2016; Mouhanna, 2001; Blundo, 2001; Abram, 1988). The second category of work analyzed has to do with the conceptualization of State regarding the central functions each State is expected to perform and which are based on some of its characteristics in terms of territory, populations, monopoly of legitimate violence. That is what Weber (1963); Norbert & Scotson (1997); Bayart (1993); Braud (2011); Médard, 1992), "Monopole de la Violence Légitime Symbolique", in Bourdieu (1977), or "Monopole de la contrainte Légitime for Braud (2011). In the same vein, other scholars like Debbasch & Pontier (1995), have focused on the changes occurring in the functions of the State without which it is quite impossible to refer to the construct of State.

The third category of work focuses on the origin and nature of the state with a great emphasis on the process through which it takes shape and becomes "adopted" in the mindset of citizens. Some view the State as the outcome of socialization, or the construction and massive imposition of a set of common ethical and logical representations (Corrigan & Sayer 1985), whose purpose would be to bring citizens together in order to share the same universes of values and "logical categories" (Durkheim, 1911) i.e. "Social categories (groups, clans) that have become ingrained in the mindset thus, mental categories. Works in this category perceive the origin of state as a result of socialization work the purpose of which is to inculcate in the minds of the same vein with national identity, the characteristics and requirements supporting identity and which are imposed on the socialized subjects in such a way that their behaviors and comments give the feeling of an inborn consubstantial with any socializing matter. The brainstorming carried out in this research work leads to the cognitive component that confers legitimacy upon the State, portraying it thereby as "an omnipresent actor". That is, an entity that takes shape above all through the rules that establish it and allow it to be viewed as abstraction and an embodiment symbolizing ascribing it some permanent presence beyond the men who apply it (Tidjani Alou, 2011). This proceeding shows that the legitimacy of state produces an effect of "it is thus...... "that is consubstantial with the nature of the State and which, according to Bourdieu, I borrow this expression "it's like that..." from Bourdieu *et al.* (2012), to emphasize the external character of the State, so that everything happens as if the actors were saying to each other: "that's it, that's all and it's not possible to see the State differently" and which encompasses the field of possibilities (Bourdieu *et al.,* 2012) so as to no longer foresee ways of doing other than those recommended by the State (Corrigan & Sayer, 1985; Bernhard, 1988; Gramsci, 1978; Bourdieu *et al.,* 2012; Bankole *et al.,* 2015). The fourth category of work analyses the dynamics of policy transfers in sub-Saharan Africa and their effects on the functioning of the state. This work focuses on the dysfunctions or "emerging effects" that result from these policy transfers, which very often require the implementation of new solutions or policies, sometimes hasty and often worse than the previous ones and which constantly constrain States in Africa (Tama, 2012; 2014; Tidjani Alou, 2010; Hugon, 1994; Welmond, 2002; Mantra, 2017).

This work falls within the realm of the fourth category of work which consists in analyzing the effects of national and local dynamics of partnership policy in the sector of education and on the perceptions and representations that citizens (agents and not agents of the State, including illiterate ones) have of State.

"Learning Partnerships"

Benin ranges among the African States that have experienced the implementation of four different Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs): those are respectively SAP I from 1989 to 1992; SAP II from 1992 to 1995; SAP III from 1995 to 1997 and SAP IV from 1996 to 1999)" (ROCARE, 2008). Subsequent measures focused on the following issues: the privatization of State-owned as well as Joint Venture Companies, the down-sizing of public service personnel, reduction of social expenditure allocated for the sectors of education and health (Tidjani Alou, 2010). Those education sectors have equally witnessed the reduction of their expenditures along with the State interference through the slogan: "the less State interference, the better".

In sub-Saharan Africa, the implementation of SAPs has given room to reconsider the public social benefits in the sectors of education and health with the view to, on the one hand, reconstructing the roles of State by refocusing on the priority sectors, and, on the other hand, engaging in a competitive process based on the idea of a market that is more efficient than the public sector, but also the proliferation of small social services providers (in particular, those private secondary, technical, vocational schools, and small medical centers) with the ultimate goal of finding solution to the youth graduates unemployment, mainly in health sector (Savina & Boidin, 1996). The state is therefore perceived with its weakness and the need for private sector' support. These measures were "imposed on the sub-Saharan African States in view of the widespread recognition of their failure to establish a reliable and accountable bureaucratic apparatus".

Subsequent to the 1980s crisis, a school in education systems in sub-Saharan Africa showed signs of weakness while political discourse was both on reducing government spending in the education sector and on "Education for All" with the 1990 Jomtien Conference. This was not to mention the fact that in the education sector, the privatization of services has shown that the market is not necessarily able to do better than the State (Savina & Boidin, 1996). Other measures were therefore needed, such as cost-sharing (student loans), promotion of the financing of public education by parents and the community (Boidin *et al.,* 1996). Thus, with the Jomtien conference, an appeal for urgent action was launched in order to reduce the basic gaps faced by many sub-Saharan countries in the sector of education and to set again the priorities and modalities of education policies at a global level (Petit, 2010). Priorities were defined, such as the introduction of partnerships as an essential strategy for the countries of the South to meet the challenge of education for all. Ten years after the Jomtien conference, the conferences in Dakar in 2000 (World Education Forum) and Geneva in 2001 (46th session of the International Conference on Education) made it possible to take stock of the progress noted in the world in terms of Education For All policy and to note that "governments cannot do it alone" (IBE, 2001). They, therefore, needed to be supported by the civil society of which the communities are part. Through these partnerships, the aim was to "better mobilize and control the resources needed for the universalization of basic education" (Petit, 2010). African countries, including Benin, need to find strategies to restore their education profile in order to meet the challenge of Education For All (EFA). The Jomtien conference has served as a forum for brainstorming on the incubation of these strategies. The decisions and commitments of this conference, including partnerships, have ushered in an era of re-institution of the school with new challenges and the involvement of new actors (institutional or collective). However, the gradual withdrawal of the State and the various partnerships from this sector has left on its trail some consequences both in the core education and in terms of the State's image.

Indeed, the "partnership with communities" approach is not new in the history of the Beninese education system. Prior to independence, officials in each community formed a school discipline committee (USAID, 2006). It was with independence and, more precisely in 1975, that the first associations were created in a few schools and then spread to all schools. Thus, "under the guidance of the administrative authorities, parents and supporters had set up the Parents' and Friends of Schools Associations (PTAs) to resolve conflicts between school officials and school users" (USAID, 2006). The Parents' Association is placed under the democratic management of basic education schools according to circular letter No. 1895/ M.E.N / D.G.M / D.E.P.D. / S.E.M.B. Thus, the National Orientation Law on Education provides that parents have the right to participate in the management of school life and all MEPS decrees and circular letters clearly specify their roles. Less than two decades after the generalization of EPAs, with the crisis of the 1980s, the question of state support, now at the heart of concerns, prompted the involvement of all social strata, including civil society. New actors whose communities have opted to support the State through the health and education sectors. This is a measure taken following the États Généraux de l'Education en République du Bénin held in October 1990 following the Conférence Nationale des Forces Vives to involve communities in school management. The reason is that "the few available studies on community participation show that Beninese schools have never succeeded in integrating into their settlement environment; and that parents feel little concerned about their school's life, their role being confined to its funding" (Salami & Kpamegan, 2002).

It was therefore with the Jomtien conference in 1990 and the Dakar conference in 2010 that the issue of partnerships became even more explicit in the speeches of governments and development finance organizations. "These are in fact partnerships, both internal and external. Family and community organizations, voluntary associations, religious organizations, teachers' unions, other professional groups, employers, the media, political parties, cooperatives, universities and other institutions, as well as education authorities and other ministries and administrations (labor, agriculture, health, trade, industry, defense, etc.). External partners include United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, multilateral development banks, bilateral development agencies, international non-

governmental organizations and foundations" (WCEFA, 1990). Gradually, the idea of partnership narrowed to that of "community participation" which shifted towards a communization of education.

From "learning partnerships" to the communitarization of education

The community, with a view to its use here, should not be perceived as a homogeneous entity. It certainly goes beyond the elysian conception which focuses on the residential unit but does not move away from it. Indeed, according to Norbert Elias, the community encompasses "existing networks of relationships between people organized as a residential unit according to where they normally live" (Norbert & Scotson, 1997). The community, therefore, refers here not only to individual actors living in the same residential space but also to a set of institutional actors who participate alongside the State in the management and proper functioning of the education system. The morphology of this entity is related to two opposing phenomena: the decline of the "welfare state" (or "resigning" state) and the occupation of the space it liberates by non-state entities. Around the expression community thus crystallizes a central idea which, depending on the case, can be presented as a substitution for the State or assistance from the State in the delivery of public school services. Through this mechanism, structures such as parents' associations, mothers' associations, development associations, religious denominations, "friends of the school", individual or collective actors involved in the organization of the education system are therefore emerging.

Community involvement in the education system takes in some respects the form of self-promotion where collective local initiatives are taken to promote the school. As Olivier de Sardan (Olivier de Sardan, 2001), has pointed out, this Community dimension aims to oppose forms of development from above, by the State. More than a simple entity synonymous with solidarity, understanding, complicity, and cohesion, the community can, therefore, be part of a development process from below. The reduced community participation in the diversification of school financing in order to improve its quality and functioning was limited not only to "tuition and fees imposed on parents" (ERNWACA, 2008) but also to the involvement of communities in decision-making processes concerning the education of their children, the mobilization of material and financial resources and the educational process such as the construction, extension and maintenance of premises, the purchase of teaching materials, the functioning of the institution, management, etc. One might think that if the objective of community involvement in school management was to reduce government burdens in the education sector, to "re-massify" the school in order to achieve the objectives of the Education For All policy and to involve communities in decision-making for effective school management, the fact remains that this "communitarization" of education has experienced dynamics and has been implemented "in a metamorphosed form" (ROCARE, 2008), or even inflected. Analysis of these dynamics would provide a better understanding of the growing satellite coverage of the professional group of teachers, on the one hand, and the community-state relationships and current perceptions and representations of the state, on the other.

It is necessary to find out what dynamics are observed around the participation of communities in the management of education alongside the State and what are the implications in terms of building the image of the State and community-state relations?

2   Materials and Methods

The methodological approach used to carry out the ongoing research draws on the so-called classical socio-anthropological approach based on the field survey. It is a process of observing concrete situations and daily life, of conversation and all forms of exchange in a situation of prolonged interaction with the actors whose meaning they give to their practices and attitudes I try to identify. This approach is appropriate in that my observations and interviews on the issue of the dynamics observed around community participation in school management and the implications of this participation on the construction of the state image and the community-state relationship have begun since 2006 and therefore reflect this prolonged interaction. The proximity to the respondents and the almost constant search for real situations in many localities such as Parakou, Djougou, Gogounou, Banikoara, Calavi, Nikki have provided better information than any other process on the usual practices and perceptions of the actors regarding the object as well as on the local meanings they give to their actions and the different relationships they maintain with other social actors and the State.

A reasoned choice sampling coupled with the "snowball technique" has made it possible to collect the data. The data are thereafter screened, disaggregated and analyzed using the content analysis method. This has to do with

conducting thematic, sequential, lexical and semantic analyses. Popular semiology has been decoded and deciphered for this purpose.

3 Results and Discussions

3.1 Some dynamics around community participation

The implementation of the educational partnership approach in Benin has led to dynamics that have structured the education sector, in this case, the professional group of primary school teachers and their practices, on the one hand, and the perceptions that citizens (agents and not agents of the State) have of the State, on the other hand.

From the emergence of community teachers to the negotiation of an "employment standard

The emergence of community teachers' category goes along with a dynamic observed in the implementation of community participation in school management. Roles are associated with community participation. However, the recruitment freeze as one of the conditions of the Bretton Woods institutions through the SAPs, the reduction of expenditure in the education sector, the shortage of teachers in the education sector in a context of EFA policy implementation, are situations that have led the various actors involved in education management to go beyond their roles to play the role of recruitment that is the responsibility of the State. Thus, communities, with the support of school principals who are struggling to see students without teachers, are recruiting teachers called "community teachers". The term "community teacher" is said to be due to the fact that these teachers live in the communities and are recruited from these communities to work in already existing public schools due to a lack of teaching staff. Most of them are "young graduates, baccalaureate graduates, graduating students or unemployed graduates in areas where these resources were available" and "people who were able to at least supervise learners and give them the basics and basics of the French language and mathematics, in other words, people without a diploma" in disadvantaged areas. These recruits were known as repeaters (without a diploma or with the CEP only and with little knowledge) and later as community teachers more and more after 2001. (ERNWACA, 2008).

In doing so, communities, aware of their importance in school management due to the government's withdrawal from education sector spending, have gradually imposed criteria for recruiting community teachers on the pretext that their remuneration comes from them. Indeed, the criterion required to become a community teacher was the Basic Undergraduate Certificate (BEPC). Teachers not holding this diploma had been recruited subject to passing this examination in the coming years. This prerogative, left to the discretion of parents, even if implicitly, has led to the recruitment of teachers who do not hold a BEPC, disabled or handicapped teachers and has led to the emergence of a new application criterion: that of the son of the land. The latter was automatically recruited if only to play a childcare role in the classrooms until he could find someone with a BEPC equivalent of "O" Level.

In some localities, people with PEBCs had not even been found. Given the needs on the ground, it was necessary to find someone to keep the children in the classrooms and the parents of the students were only concerned about recruiting their own children because they did not see the level and since they are the ones who will pay, they preferred to recruit their own sons from the locality and pay them. In this perspective, we met community teachers who were not able to do so, people with motor disabilities who we recruited. (Interview on 3/2/2018 with a former school district head and Departmental Director of Nursery and Primary Education in Parakou).

The aim was, therefore, to find additional teachers while the Bretton Woods institutions authorized new staff recruitment and the re-opening of teacher training schools. There was, therefore, a question of temporary substitute teachers as opposed to "monitors" who were trained in regional or Dahomean schools. Such a situation has led to the definition of a minimum set of criteria for the recruitment of community teachers. In the years 2004, the recruitment of community teachers was entrusted exclusively to school districts, which did so on the basis of a number of considerations such as filing, studying and testing. (ERNWACA, Op. Cit.). It was in the same year that conditions were listed for eligibility for this position, such as: being a BEPC holder, having submitted a file to the Departmental Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education (DDEPS) in his area; and undergoing a test organized by the DDEPS. This category of teachers was therefore made official until 2008, the year in which they were transferred by the then Government to the category of State contract teachers and their recruitment was prohibited by the same State. However,

until 2008, alongside school district heads, communities through parent associations and school principals continued to recruit community teachers, using various terms to circumvent the prohibition on their recruitment.

Those teachers recruited by the community or by us are occasional agents or service providers. It depends on the title everyone gives.

> *(...). The State itself knows that there is a glaring lack of teachers and that communities are recruiting. The authority had even asked to readjust so that in all schools there would be 5 teachers out of 6. It does not matter by which term they are referred to. Sometimes we are embarrassed when we are asked to do the statistics. The authority asks us to put them under the heading "others" or else, we ourselves drop them without mentioning them in the statistics we send.* (Interview with a school principal in Djougou, 10 April 2018).

As a result, regardless of the name, these are teachers recruited by the communities. As a result, community participation has led to a shift from regulatory to alternative recruitment methods that have helped to negotiate what could be considered a "norm of employment" (Montoussé & Renouard, 2006), i.e. the framework of teaching officials or the teacher-public servant. This "employment standard" is constantly being negotiated through the introduction of other types of precarious status that seem to be becoming obligatory passages in the teaching profession.

A second dynamic is an appropriation by communities of a fringe of school personnel, leading to the fragmentation of State authority. Indeed, the shift from community participation in the management of education to the sharing of the costs of education between the State and the communities has also led to a reduction in the prerogatives of the State to the benefit of the communities, which now assume the right to be involved in the management of the staff recruited by them. Thus, the speakers' speeches reveal that the communities take part in defining the specifications of these teachers for the proper functioning of the schools since they are responsible for the remuneration of these community teachers. Elsewhere, where the parents of students pay them, they, in collaboration with the school principal, try to tell them what they must do so that both parties and especially the students can win something good. (Interview of 10/4/2018 in Djougou with a school principal). Thus, they do not hesitate to "retort that it is their own teachers (...) thus leaving no room for maneuver to the principal who wants to ensure competence (ERNWACA, 2008). Community participation has thus led to co-management of teaching staff by the communities and the State, thus overriding the prerogatives of the communities, ranging from financial participation to the recruitment and management of part of the teaching staff. This situation has not been without structuring effects on teaching staff and on relations between communities and the State. Constant satellite coverage of the teachers' professional group.

A first consequence of community participation through the emergence of the category of community teachers refers, on the one hand, to a constant reconfiguration of the teachers' professional group and, on the other hand, to the presence, in the teachers' professional group, of "substitute teachers" or "teachers of alternative or satellite categories".

> *I refer to "alternative category teachers" as teachers whose method of recruitment does not comply with the regulatory recruitment system or the parallel recruitment system previously authorized and regulated by the State, as in the case of former community teachers (Tama, 2014). I use this term as opposed to the term "cadre des fonctionnaires de l'enseignement" which refers to teachers as Permanent State Agents, or as opposed to what Montoussé & Renouard (2006), refer to as "typical jobs". These are "stable, full-time salaried jobs (i.e. permanent contracts) that provide a decent and increasing wage with seniority, social protection and, consequently, a certain social recognition (Montoussé & Renouard, 2006). Satellite categories" therefore refer to all those categories that are different from the regulatory category of EPAs and in relation to which this regulatory category constitutes the reference or dream status in a given trade. I describe these categories as "satellites" by analogy to satellites that gravitate around the main satellite that is comparable here to the category of Permanent State Agent teachers (APE or civil servant teachers) around which the other categories gravitate. Their existence is linked to that of the EPAs. It is the EPA category that is responsible for their on-the-job training in the field.* (Tama, 2014).

A second consequence is the strong satellite coverage of both this category of satellite teachers and the professional group of teachers in general. Indeed, the primary objective of these new "community teachers", or these "service providers" or "occasional" teachers is to become "official community teachers", i.e. to obtain recognition from the State, (through the possession of a green card and their transfer to the category of State Contract Teachers and later to the category of PTA teachers). This situation, therefore, makes the teacher's trajectory a succession of sequences corresponding to the teacher's entry into given categories in such a way that the end of a sequence consecrates the exit from the equivalent category and the entry into a new category with much better advantages than those in the old category. The final status targeted by teachers in these satellite categories is the dream status: that of the civil servant who gives access to the category of civil servant teachers with the related benefits. The satellite categories constitute,

in the teacher trajectories analyzed, categories induced by the policy of community participation and whose forms vary according to the measures taken by the State to manage them. Indeed, a prohibition by the State leads to a modification of designations to circumvent the prohibition. When they are not recruited by the school management committee, namely parents and principals, they are recruited by teachers or principals on the pretext of using them in the repetition of lessons and the processing of exercises with students in examination classes. The result, whatever the scheme, remains the same: these teachers infiltrate the group of regular teachers and consider their integration into the category of civil servant teachers. An individual entering the teaching profession through the category of casuals or providers, i.e. through the category of community teachers not recognized by the State, aims first of all at being recognized as a non-regulatory teacher who can be included in a training plan (or module) with a view to his inclusion in the category of contractual teachers of the State. Once in the latter, the next category targeted is civil servant teachers. The community's involvement in teacher recruitment had generated the category of community teachers, much of which was transferred to the category of state contract teachers, which was an intermediate category between the community and civil servants. By not concealing the fact that contract teachers had also benefited from out payments in the category of civil servant teachers, it goes without saying that the community teachers it goes without saying that community teachers who have become contract teachers also think they will become teachers-civil servants, as shown in the words of this former departmental director of primary and secondary education:

> *(...) I am pessimistic about that. Because what's going on? The communities are asking to be repaid as contractual. Contractual workers ask to be transferred as permanent agents of the State. And everyone is asking for a bonus, revaluation, etc. The weird thing is that we open teacher training colleges, we leave someone who has left the teacher training college unemployed, we take the old carpenter there because he is from the locality. Yes, I've known some. It is taken in place of the one who was trained at the normal school. Or we can do a test to recruit contract workers. Those who have gone through the teacher training colleges are left because they do not know anyone* (Interview with a former Commissioner for Primary and Secondary Education in Banikoara).

Undeclared (or unrecognized) community teachers are now an initial category in the path of teachers "entering the profession from below". The involvement of communities in teacher recruitment has generated two intermediate or satellite categories, namely that of undeclared community teachers and that of community teachers who are declared and paid out on State contracts. The result is a constantly "reconfigured" professional group of teachers incorporating "intermediate satellite categories" giving the impression of a constant "satellite" around the main category of teacher-public servants.

The emergence of new models for community teachers

Another dynamic known with community participation in the education sector is the gradual downgrading of the initial diploma for entry into this profession: the Brevet d'Etude de Premier Cycle (BEPC) in favor of the Baccalauréat. Indeed, if the BEPC was the diploma required for entry into the teaching profession and also for community teachers, because of the growing number of graduates from Benin's national universities, we are increasingly witnessing the entry into the profession of a large number of university graduates with a minimum Bachelor's and maximum Master's degree, thus giving the impression that these different degrees are undermining the former social homogeneity of the teaching profession (Berger, 1957). If the Baccalaureate was considered as a higher diploma whose unexpected outcome would be the profession of teacher, we are witnessing with community participation and growing unemployment the realization of what was once perceived by graduates of Benin's universities as shame or failure, chimera or prophecy for the managers of the colonial school, as shown in this extract from the speech:

> *(...) Certainly, we do not fail to say that we produce very few teachers. But isn't it just due to the circumstances? The growth of African States requires a rapid Africanization of professional and managerial staff. Many careers are available to young people. Why shouldn't they take advantage of this situation? Of this wide-open spectrum? But how can we not also see that, as the number of baccalaureate holders increases and the Africanisation of managers comes to an end, the day will come when there will be more baccalaureate teachers. And if today among our former students who have obtained higher education scholarships, we see them not abandoning teaching, but coming back as teachers, as we have here even happy examples of them, should we complain thinking that they will not be teachers?* (The Normal, 1960).

More than a prophecy, the policy of community participation in Benin has led, despite the recruitment freeze, to the entry of baccalaureate graduates into education from below. The most important being salary, they agree to start in the category of substitute teachers or community teachers in primary schools. However, the communities (including parents and headteachers) still seem to allow PEBC holders or school drop-outs living in their midst. However, it remains that a national sectoral policy (implemented to correct the "emerging effects of community participation") has led to the gradual extinction of the former profiles of community teachers who were either BEPC holders or not, or dropouts or artisans). There is an increasing emergence of community baccalaureate teachers and community teachers already trained (at their own expense) in public or private teacher training colleges.

3.2 The implications of community participation

On the role of the State

In his analysis of the structuring dynamics of the transferred international policies, Tidjani Alou (2010), believes that in this particular field of reform, the State is downgraded. It is no longer the sole provider of public policy. It now shares this position with its external partners who finance its actions through development cooperation (Tidjani Alou, 2010). As such, its fields and margins of maneuver are reduced. This produces among citizens forms of engagement in intermediate solutions to problems generated or reinforced by these international policies for which no solution can be envisaged due to the decommissioning of the disappeared State as a decision-making framework for the community. (Tidjani Alou, 2010).

Indeed, the learning partnership has seen the participation of parents of pupils at the heart of the management of education. The latter, who are involved in the management of schools created by the State, is no longer required to recruit staff, find themselves at the heart of a dynamic that allows them to influence the recruitment of alternative educational service providers called community teachers to support regulatory staff. In some localities in Benin where school infrastructure does not exist, communities play the primary role of civil society, namely that of "alternative service providers", where State action is non-existent or insufficient (Petit, 2010). The possibilities of teacher recruitment by communities, to which the emerging effects of the partnership approach lead, appear to be a balancing of inequalities of opportunity between the sons of farmers and the sons of managers, which, according to the latter, are reinforced after the studies, particularly at the time of post-study recruitment. Parents are convinced that the positions available within the administration are reserved for the children of executives and intellectuals. It is not uncommon to hear them assert as this student's parent: *"until those at the top of the tree have finished picking, what can we who are down there expect from the fruits and leaves of this tree?"* (A student's parent).

Some parents, while justifying the recruitment practices observed in the localities, have raised the issues of prices as follows: *If we do not recruit our sons who have not had the opportunity to finish their studies or to be recruited, who do you think would come and do that for us.* (April 2018 interview with a parent in Djougou).

Two important elements emerge from such perceptions expressed by the grassroots populations portraying local practices or strategies for the professional integration of youngsters. First of all, these perceptions reveal some dysfunctions in the state apparatus and that call into question its responsibilities to professionally integrate trained citizens. Secondly, they reveal the emergence of local initiatives to restore the State to its sovereign roles and the fragmentation of decision-making or action spaces in a context of forced state indifference. While the implementation of SAPs has "led to a reduction in the size of the State and a redefinition of its role (World Bank, 1997), it has also led to local initiatives to help the State solve the problems generated by these SAPs, which have considerably eroded the prerogatives of the State, its image and authority. The State now plays a much greater role as a regulator of the implications of international policies and reforms through its various sectoral policies. As a result, international policies can create negative externalities in terms of recurrent disruptions of state processes leading to situations that undermine its "statehood" while community or local initiatives attempt to correct or influence them with a view to re-state them and restore the state's image.

On the State's relations with communities

The government's disengagement from education sector spending has led to a great distance between the education sector and the communities involved in school spending and management alongside it. Schools have been built with the participation of communities. In some deprived areas, school infrastructure has been built with teak wood, straw, banco walls, etc. to give children the chance to go to school. This has led to the existence of "fragmented" school

infrastructures in the education sector (Bierschenk, 2010), that do not offer any uniform appearance. This fragmentation manifests itself in several ways: the unequal distribution of school infrastructure (schools), the unequal distribution of school and classroom equipment in terms of furniture, teaching materials, the unequal distribution of teachers in relation to which alternative forms of state community support have been observed.

In view of the above, community participation in the education sector appears to be a mechanism for adjusting to the realities on the ground (context of economic recession and disengagement of the State linked to SAPs, shortage of teachers needed due to the recruitment freeze, etc.) to the implications of the Education For All policy (need to recruit teachers, need to build school infrastructure, need to support the State, etc.). However, it has led to an even more absent and indifferent state as we move further away from urban centers. In these environments, the presence of the State was felt through the presence of teachers-civil servants, representatives of the State. But the emergence of community teachers, which is a dynamic of community participation, has led to the disengagement of many civil servant teachers who, although present in schools, are being replaced in their classes. Everything functions as if the breach of trust between the State and its agents (due to the loss of jobs and the recruitment freeze) as well as the policy of the "ultra-minimal State" has generated the ultra-minimal service on the part of its agents as if to express a feeling of distrust and anger towards the State. These agents, in this case, permanent state agents teachers (or civil servant teachers), especially those holding fifth-grade classes, take advantage of the emergence of intermediate satellite categories to defection and tacitly institute the assistance system in schools, thereby causing their implicit disengagement. To hide their mistrust and disaffection with the profession, they trained their community teachers themselves and then entrusted them with their classes.

If we take Parakou and go through the schools in the city of Parakou, you will see that not all school principals are alone in their classrooms. They all have alternates. At the same time, in villages, people are forced to twin classes or assign classes to community teachers. In the city, we see that people are six years from retirement and have substitutes while in the interior of the country, they are forced to put together the third and fourth grades; the fifth and fifth grades; and the sixth and fifth grades. These are situations that end up convincing the authority that there is no shortage of teachers because if there were, we would not see that there are too many people, doing nothing while community teachers do the work for them. (Interview on 3/2/2018 with a former school district head and Departmental Director of Nursery and Primary Education in Parakou).

Non-state agents and non-literate citizens, on the other hand, live between loss of trust and mistrust, hope and disillusionment, as shown in the following extract:

Like us, we stayed without going to school, and given the circumstances in which we live, we feel bad, we condemn our parents and we told ourselves that we are in the dark. It is not good to give birth to children who will live our situation, that is to say, live in the dark. That is why we created the school. And we looked for a teacher we pay for ourselves. (...) Last year, we thought that the education authorities would come to visit the school. But they didn't arrive. Again this year, through their words, we hope they will come. At least according to what they told us, they will come one day. (Interview with a group of parents in Mouffin, Banikoara commune).

Sometimes the failure of the State to respect its commitments leads social actors to pinpoint another attribute: that of an insolvent and unreliable State.

"Don't let the state owe you, because you won't get it, when we deal with the state, settle your accounts right away." How many times have we been promised a school here? (Chat with a group of parents in Mouffin, Banikoara).

The result of speeches is an insolvent state operating in duplicity: the state that says one thing and does another or the state that promises and does not respect its commitments or a state that claims to be strong, but is not and is assisted by its citizens, even non-literate ones. In addition, citizens feel that there is too much permissiveness, which reflects the image of a state that creates and maintains disorder. This idea contrasts with Pierre Bourdieu's definition of the State "as a principle of orthodoxy, that is, a hidden principle that can only be grasped in manifestations of public order, understood both as physical order, as the opposite of disorder, anarchy, civil war, for example. A hidden principle that can be grasped in the manifestations of public order in both the physical and symbolic sense (Bourdieu *et al.*, 2012). One could deduce from this contrast a nuance between the "idea of the State" in the sense of what it should be or what it is supposed to be or do or in terms of what is said about the State, and the "real State" (Tama, 2012; 2014), in terms of what is really seen in the daily functioning of the State when it is tested by reality.

This situation makes it possible to understand teachers' behavior when they give their best by being in the private sector or by being paid by the communities and the bare minimum in the public sector or once they are covered by the State budget. The same idea emerges in the words of an inspector, former head of school district, former head of the Integrated Teacher Training College and former departmental head of nursery and primary education when he states:

Where I do not agree with these community teachers, when they were paid by the community at the base, i.e. the PTA offices, they were more diligent at work and sometimes at the end of the month, we could not pay them all their dues. We gave a part in cash, a part in kind. Now that President Yayi Boni has come and is trying to motivate them by saying that they will now perceive from perception, we no longer find the same enthusiasm and motivation. As soon as they were taken into account by the national budget, it became clear that the enthusiasm had decreased and it was from there that the problems began. At the time they were paid by the community and even underpaid, they were more assiduous. Now that they no longer depend on the parents of students, we have noticed one regret, they are no longer diligent at work. The mess has begun (Interview of 3 /02/ 2018 with a former C/CS, former D/Eni, and former DDEMP Borgou-Alibori).

The State and its public service also appear like a waste bin or container and a nest for lazy people: When they enter it, everyone grows wings. Goodbye to a job well done. Let us take the case of someone who was in the private sector who received less, but who nevertheless gave the best of himself. As soon as they enter the group they say goodbye to assiduity and attendance. Those teachers become the first big lazy persons after a few months, proven absenteeism. (…) With communities, the local or community teachers or service providers know that their contracts could be terminated at any time. (Interview with a school principal in Djougou).

These different perceptions contrast with the different conceptions of State, which refer, on the one hand, to the nature of the State as an instrument in charge of regulating the society or as an instrument of oppression and, on the other hand, to its main function, namely the monopoly of legitimate violence. One of the specific features of the State is the specialization of the actors (Montoussé & Renouard, 2006). Indeed, along with the political professionals, "the State recruits in a sustainable way agent who must perform a function on the basis of recognized competence" (Montoussé & Renouard, 2017). This specialization leads to typical jobs that abide by the norms of employment disrupted by the mainstreaming of precarious intermediate satellite status in the teaching profession. The recruitment of teachers in the satellite category, which emerged with the participation of the grassroots community, has contributed to breaking the increase in salaries based on the criteria of seniority in the job, social protection and social recognition. This is how precariousness instead of stability, erosion of prestige instead of social recognition and social cohesion have been introduced in the educational system, leading to persiflages at the level of populations when it comes to discussing teachers.

The result is a trivialization of the teaching profession as this can eventually be performed by anyone, including craftsmen, on the one hand, and the casualization of teaching profession with the main attribute of precariousness and instability. All these cause the public service to faile to contribute to delivering its expected objective with the authorization of the community hypothetical and ephemeral, on the other hand. This makes even more expressive the duplicity and non-compliance with the commitments noted in the functioning of the State and which have resulted from the perceptions constructed by the communities. A form of duplicity on the part of the State can be observed, for example, when the State invites the re-professionalization of the teaching profession and still tolerates untrained personnel, giving the impression of a concerted deprofessionalization or of the authorization by the State of a deprofessionalization from below, which deprofessionalization has introduced precariousness or satellite categories as a prerequisite to the teaching function. The result is the same: the state says one thing and does something else. The State recruits civil servants, but then reduces them, the State trains professionals, but encourages them to recruit at a lower cost to reduce expenses, the State is strong but also fragile and needs the support of communities, etc. Such perceptions of the state are not very reassuring for communities.

The different perceptions or meanings of the state that arise both from the discourses of citizens (agents or not of the state) contrast with the idea of the state contained in the spontaneous sociology of the state that is expressed in what is sometimes called the science of administration, that is, the discourse that agents produce about the state, a true ideology of the public service and the public good (Bourdieu *et al.,* 2012). These perceptions in relation to the idea of the State contrast well with those of the State tested by international, national and sectoral contexts and policies and reforms. The different perceptions that grassroots communities have of the state derive not only from the illusion maintained by the discourses produced by state agents about the state, but also from the state's relationship with its citizens or populations. Another idea that emerges from the State's relationship with the people is that if community participation through the partnership approach is a solution in the implementation of the various SAPs and EFA policy in order to oxygenate the breathless State, it has contributed to the loss of its prestige, especially in relation to some of its sovereign functions and the partial loss of its monopoly of coercion over citizens, etc.

4 Conclusion

If a "spontaneous sociology of the State" (Bourdieu *et al.,* 2012), has the disadvantage of reducing the scope of discourses production on the State, this work has made it possible to "break down hierarchies of credibility" Van Campenhoudt & Charlier, 2014), with regard to discourses on the State, by also seeking discourses produced by citizens who are not literate and not agents of the State. The result of this work is that while the spaces and actors for the production of discourse or the construction of the State image are varied, this image is strongly influenced by unsuspected factors such as international policies and the dynamics they generate in their implementation at the national level. It could, therefore, be concluded that the implementation of international policies designed far from the realities on the ground (context of economic recession and State disengagement, lack of resources in relation to the implications of the various international policies or reforms) and the international or local adjustment initiatives noted could induce emerging effects at the national level, as regards the meaning and perceptions of the State.

Therefore, the different socio-political and economic contexts, as well as their changes and the adjustment mechanisms or solutions proposed in the form of international reforms or policies, should be considered as elements to be taken on board without analyzing the construction of the meaning and perceptions of the State. The meaning and perceptions that actors have of it are not only based on its ideal meaning, practices and functioning, but also on the international policies that influence its functioning and its relations with its citizens. As a result, the perceptions and real meaning of the State are not built on the "idea of the State" contained in the State, but on its real relations with its citizens; these relations derive from the real implementation of these international policies at the national and local levels. The State, far from being this harmonious universe referring to the monopoly of legitimate violence or coercion to ensure order, peace, security, social protection, social recognition, also appears from the point of view of the representations and perceptions of the actors at the base, especially the illiterate and non-State agents, as disharmony, disorder, producers of precariousness, social insecurity, etc. If the first sense of the State is the "idea of the State" or the ideal dimension of the State, transmitted by ideological socialization, the second is the "reality of the State" as experienced by social actors. It identifies the representations and perceptions of grassroots actors who, in specific contexts, have had relations with the State. These reports have made it possible to deconstruct the meaning and idea of the State conveyed by ideologies in order to reveal a State constantly divided between "Stateisation" and "de-Statetisation" (due to national and international institutions, as well as local initiatives) and "de-Statetisation" and "re-statetisation" (due to national, local and international initiatives).

Such ambivalent perceptions of the state resulting from the implementation of an approach linked to an international education policy could create a dilemma for the state insofar as, as a result of the partnership approach, communities have authority over the teachers they recruit while the state loses authority over both them and their agents. The State may hesitate to adopt these policies, which give it international recognition and legitimacy, while at the national and local levels, its prestige and authority are being eroded by communities. As a result, what the State loses as a result of its adherence to approaches involving communities or populations in general in the management of key sectors such as education and health, is at the same time what they delight it. Divided between the moral obligation to adhere to international policies and then reduce its dimensions and prerogatives, and the need to preserve its regalian images and roles, the State is moving forward in its dilemma.

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