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**PEDAGOGIE CONVERGENTE (CONVERGENT
PEDAGOGY): USING PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES TO
UNDERSTAND THE POTENTIAL OF EDUCATION REFORM
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS IN MALI**

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PENELOPE A. BENDER

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Ph.D.

degree in

**CURRICULUM, TEACHING,
AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

Christophe W. Wink

Major Professor's Signature

April 10, 2006

Date

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**PEDAGOGIE CONVERGENTE (CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY):
USING PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES TO UNDERSTAND
THE POTENTIAL OF EDUCATION REFORM IN PRIMARY SCHOOL
CLASSROOMS IN MALI**

VOLUME I

By

Penelope A. Bender

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Education

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2006

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ABSTRACT

PEDAGOGIE CONVERGENTE (CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY): USING PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES TO UNDERSTAND THE POTENTIAL OF EDUCATION REFORM IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS IN MALI

By

Penelope A. Bender

This study explores the perspectives of participants involved in the implementation of Mali's *pédagogie convergente* (convergent pedagogy) bilingual education program.

Convergent pedagogy consists of three changes in educational practice: use of students' first languages (L1) in the early primary grades with a gradual transition to the use of French (L2); changes in teacher practice; and the inclusion of local content. The program became national policy in 1999. In SY2005-06, Mali had almost 4,000 convergent pedagogy classrooms (out of a total of approximately 21,000 public and community school classrooms) (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, 2006).

This study used interviews and classroom observations to examine the perspectives of actors in the convergent pedagogy implementation network: graduates, parents, teachers, principals, and pedagogic advisors (teacher support personnel). Data were collected in three study schools: a French-only school, a convergent pedagogy-only school, and a school that used both methods. The focus on actors' perspectives illuminated reasons for partial success and obstacles to deeper implementation, including teachers' response to a changed classroom climate, where students were able to communicate their understandings and show enthusiasm for learning; the isolation of actors; and the impact of systemic challenges on actors' ability to implement the reform

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and perceptions of the reform's legitimacy.

The research findings argue that challenging reform can be implemented in difficult contexts with minimal teacher support, when reform design is sufficiently compelling. This should not be taken to mean that these implementation conditions were satisfactory; rather, that important reform may be possible even when systems lack capacity. When teachers began to use students' first language and changed student-teacher interaction patterns, the impact on student learning and classroom climate convinced them of the importance of the reform. Parents, who continued to be primarily concerned about French learning and related credentialing, were reassured by high exam pass rates, a deliberate feature of reform design. Changes in the national context have created parental interest in other outcomes such as learning and community development, creating further space for the introduction of the reform. Administrators also saw high pass rates as important and were willing to provide rhetorical support to the reform, although they took no action to deepen implementation.

Convergent pedagogy has survived because it has become an iterative, developmental reform. The designer's original vision of a multi-faceted and completely new approach to teaching has been transformed: the reform has become an approach that teachers can use immediately, with minimal preparation and no support, and then continue to learn as they continue to teach. The parameters of the reform are adapted by each teacher according to their level of skill and commitment. As such, it is a promising approach to the attainment of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

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LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Convergence

1.3 The research

1.3.1 Data

1.3.2 Results

1.4 Organization

1.5 Definitions

1.5.2 Definitions

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Research

2.2.1 General

2.2.2 Purpose

2.2.3 The

2.2.4 the

2.3 Study

2.3.1 Background

2.3.2 Selection

2.3.3 Literature

2.3.4 The

2.3.5 Study

2.3.6 The

2.3.7 The

2.3.8 Research

2.3.9 The

2.3.10

2.4 Limitations

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Conclusions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xiii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xvi
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION TO SUBJECT AND STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Convergent pedagogy	5
1.3 The research.....	8
1.3.1 Data collection sites.	10
1.3.2 Research questions.	11
1.4 Organization of the dissertation.....	11
1.5 Definition of key terms.....	13
1.5.2 Educational terms.....	14
CHAPTER 2	15
RESEARCH SETTING AND STUDY OVERVIEW.....	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Research setting.....	15
2.2.1 Geographic context.	15
2.2.2 Political history	16
2.2.3 The early education system and the origins of French-only schooling.....	17
2.2.4 The modern Malian education system	18
2.3 Study overview.....	34
2.3.1 Background research.	34
2.3.2 Selection of study schools.....	35
2.3.3 Linguistic context.....	37
2.3.4 The study schools: Local context.....	40
2.3.5 Student characteristics in the study school area.	42
2.3.6 The study schools: School context.....	43
2.3.7 The study schools: Issues affecting educational quality	56
2.3.8 Research questions	67
2.3.9 Methodology and data collection.	74
2.3.10 Data analysis	86
2.4 Limitations of the study.....	87
CHAPTER 3	90
LITERATURE REVIEW: REFORM IN CONTEXT	90
3.1 Introduction	90
3.2 Colonial schooling.....	92

3.3
3.4
3.4
3.4
3.5 D
3.5
3.5
3.5
3.5
3.6 L
3.6
3.6
3.6
3.7 R
social
3.7.1
3.7.2
3.8 C

CHAPTER
THEORE

4.1 Intr
4.2 The
4.2.1
4.2.2
4.2.3
4.2.4
4.3 The
4.3.1 F
4.3.2 M
4.4 Conc

CHAPTER
CONVERC

5.1 Introd
5.2 Con
5.3 Con
5.3.1
5.3.2
5.3.3
5.3.4
5.3.5
5.3.6
5.3.7
5.3.8

3.3 Real School: Legitimacy and equity	95
3.4 The challenges of convergent pedagogy	98
3.4.1 Language of instruction.....	98
3.4.2 Content.	103
3.4.3 Instructional methods.	106
3.5 Designing reform to increase acceptance	111
3.5.1 Early introduction of the colonial language.	111
3.5.2 Continuation of the French-only classroom.	112
3.5.3 Appeals to teacher professionalism.....	112
3.5.4 High stakes exams.....	112
3.6 Looking for answers: Education reform and the purposes of schooling	113
3.6.1 Social mobility in Mali.....	114
3.6.2 Escape.....	114
3.6.3 Social efficiency/economic development.....	115
3.7 Reform compromises, shifting circumstances, and changing paths to legitimacy and social mobility	117
3.7.1 Economic transition.....	117
3.7.2 Political transitions.....	118
3.8 Conclusions	119
 CHAPTER 4: CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY'S	124
THEORETICAL PREMISES AND IMPLEMENTATION REALITIES	124
4.1 Introduction	124
4.2 The theoretical premises of convergent pedagogy	124
4.2.1 Teaching methods.	126
4.2.2 Change in curriculum content.	127
4.2.3 Language of instruction (LOI).	128
4.2.4 Instructional design.	129
4.3 The realities of implementation.....	133
4.3.1 Evolving program objectives.	134
4.3.2 Meeting the objectives: implementation environment.	134
4.4 Conclusions	167
 CHAPTER 5	171
CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY GRADUATES' PERSPECTIVES.....	171
5.1 Introduction	171
5.2 Context.....	172
5.3 Convergent pedagogy graduates, their experiences, and their future plans	174
5.3.1 Family background.....	174
5.3.2 Early schooling: recollections of enrollment.	175
5.3.3 Convergent pedagogy: enrollment and preliminary understandings.....	177
5.3.4 Convergent pedagogy outcomes: school careers.	178
5.3.5 Convergent pedagogy experiences: classroom interaction.	181
5.3.6 Transitions to upper primary: results and experiences.....	181
5.3.7 Involvement in extracurricular activities.....	183
5.3.8 Union (AEEM) involvement.....	184

5.3.9
5.3.1
5.3.1
5.3.1
5.3.1
5.3.1
curric
5.4 Con

CHAPTE PARENT

6.1 Intr
6.2 Bac
6.3 Rati
6.3.1
6.3.2
6.3.3
6.3.4
6.3.5
6.3.6
6.4 Bey
6.5 Choi
6.6 The
6.7 The
6.7.1 C
6.7.2 S
6.7.3 C
6.7.4 C
6.7.5 L
6.8 Paren
6.8.1 T
6.8.2 C
6.9 Conc

CHAPTER TEACHER

7.1 Intro
7.2 The s
7.2.1 M
7.2.2 C
7.3 Pers
7.3.1 P
7.3.2 P
7.4 Teac
7.4.1
7.4.2

5.3.9 Future plans.	185
5.3.10 Escape or return?	186
5.3.11 Plans for their own children.	186
5.3.12 Current issues in schooling.	188
5.3.13 Commitment to community.	188
5.3.14 Opinions on convergent pedagogy: language of instruction, methods, and curriculum.	189
5.4 Conclusions: The future of convergent pedagogy	191
CHAPTER 6	193
PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER PERSPECTIVES	193
6.1 Introduction	193
6.2 Background: Essential understandings	194
6.3 Rationales for schooling: Decisions about enrollment	198
6.3.1 Hoping for escape.....	198
6.3.2 “Growing Up Modern” (Fuller, 1991).	201
6.3.3 Contributing to national development.....	201
6.3.4 Learning.	202
6.3.5 Gender issues.....	203
6.3.6 Changing expectations and purposes of schooling.	204
6.4 Beyond enrollment: Understandings of the substance of schooling.....	206
6.5 Choice?	209
6.6 The theoretical substance of schooling.....	212
6.7 The observed substance of schooling	219
6.7.1 Conclusions about language of instruction.	219
6.7.2 Student behavior.....	222
6.7.3 Conclusions about school quality.....	227
6.7.4 Conclusions about school management.	228
6.7.5 Links between school quality, school management, and democratization.	229
6.8 Parental involvement in schooling: demands and challenges	230
6.8.1 The financial and logistical demands of schooling.	230
6.8.2 Cultural demands of schooling.....	231
6.9 Conclusions	233
CHAPTER 7	236
TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES	236
7.1 Introduction	236
7.2 The study school teachers.....	239
7.2.1 Main study school.	239
7.2.2 Convergent pedagogy satellite school.....	244
7.3 Perspectives of convergent pedagogy teachers: understandings and beliefs.....	246
7.3.1 Perspectives on teaching in national languages.	246
7.3.2 Perspectives on convergent pedagogy methods.....	247
7.4 Teachers’ perceptions of convergent pedagogy outcomes	249
7.4.1 Student persistence.....	249
7.4.2 Student learning.....	250

7.4.3
7.4.4
7.4.5
7.5 The
7.5.1
7.5.2
7.5.3
7.5.4
7.5.5
7.6 The
7.6.1
7.6.2
7.7 Upp
7.7.1
7.7.2
7.7.3
7.7.4
7.8 Seco
7.9 Con

CHAPTER PERSPEC

8.1 Intro
8.2 Princ
8.2.1 T
8.2.2 P
8.3 Princ
theory of
8.3.1 k
8.4 Conv
8.4.1 V
8.4.2 L
8.4.3 A
8.4.4 C
8.4.5 S
8.4.6 S
8.4.7 S
8.4.8 S
8.4.9 T
8.5 Imp
8.5.1
8.5.2
8.5.3
8.5.4
8.5.5
8.6 The

7.4.3 Cultural outcomes.	253
7.4.4 The transition to upper primary.....	253
7.4.5 Post-graduation outcomes.	255
7.5 The demands that convergent pedagogy makes of teachers.....	259
7.5.1 Learning to teach convergent pedagogy.....	259
7.5.2 Learning to teach in another language.	261
7.5.3 Learning to use new methods.....	261
7.5.4 An expectation of teacher initiative.	264
7.5.5 Changed classroom climate.....	266
7.6 The future of convergent pedagogy: perspectives of current and future teachers.	269
7.6.1 Current teachers.....	269
7.6.2 Perspectives of French-only teachers: beliefs and knowledge.....	270
7.7 Upper primary teachers	274
7.7.1 Knowledge of the reform.	274
7.7.2 Responses to convergent pedagogy.....	276
7.7.3 Response to the reform: beliefs.....	277
7.7.4 Conclusions of upper primary teachers.....	283
7.8 Secondary teachers	284
7.9 Conclusions	286
CHAPTER 8	290
PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS AND PEDAGOGIC ADVISORS	290
8.1 Introduction	290
8.2 Principals' and pedagogic supervisors' backgrounds.....	291
8.2.1 The Malian principalship.	291
8.2.2 Pedagogic advisors.....	294
8.3 Principal/Pedagogic advisor knowledge of and response to the background and theory of convergent pedagogy	297
8.3.1 Knowledge.	297
8.4 Convergent pedagogy's implementation	298
8.4.1 Willingness to implement.....	298
8.4.2 Language of instruction.....	298
8.4.3 Methods.....	300
8.4.4 Opposition to the reform: The case of the teaching of reading.....	301
8.4.5 Student behavior.....	304
8.4.6 Student-teacher interaction.....	308
8.4.7 Student-student interaction.....	310
8.4.8 Student achievement.	310
8.4.9 Transition to upper primary.	312
8.5 Implementation challenges: the implementation context	314
8.5.1 Expansion.....	314
8.5.2 Double-shifting.....	315
8.5.3 Teacher hiring strategies.	315
8.5.4 Teacher education for convergent pedagogy teachers.	316
8.5.5 The demands that the reform places on teachers.....	317
8.6 The future of convergent pedagogy: graduates and program	319

8.6.1 Future of convergent pedagogy graduates.	319
8.6.2 The future of convergent pedagogy.	321
8.7 Conclusions: Designing reform to maximize administrative acceptance.....	324
CHAPTER 9	328
CROSS-ACTOR PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	
.....	328
9.1 Introduction	328
9.2 Rationales for enrollment	329
9.3 Knowledge of and reactions to the reform	330
9.3.1 Parents' knowledge of the reform.	330
9.3.2 Parents' response to the reform.	332
9.3.3 Teachers.	336
9.4 The allocation of power between home and school: student placement issues.....	338
9.4.1 Higher level administration.	338
9.4.2 Administrators: Pedagogic advisors.....	339
9.4.3 Administrators: Principals.....	340
9.4.4 Teachers.	340
9.5 Parents' perspectives on reform outcomes	341
9.5.1 Changing student/child behavior: administrators' perspectives on parents' expectations and experiences.	341
9.5.2 Administrators' perceptions of parents' perspectives on student learning and exam pass rates.	344
9.6 Major issues in implementation.....	345
9.6.1 Information and communication: Administrators' perceptions of parents' experiences.	345
9.6.2 Inadequate teacher preparation.....	349
9.6.3 The importance of time and scope.	349
9.8 Conclusions	350
9.8.1 Congruence?.....	350
9.8.2 Information and communication and actors' distance from schooling	355
9.8.3 Cross-actor consequences.	356
CHAPTER 10	358
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	
.....	358
10.1 Introduction	358
10.2 Key conclusions and implications	360
10.2.1 Glimmers of success: Learning about implementing complex reform in challenging contexts.....	361
10.2.2 Barriers to deep implementation of convergent pedagogy.....	370
10.2.3 The impact of systemic challenges.....	384
10.2.4 Conclusions.	387
10.3 Wider implications for reform	389
10.4 Wider Implications for Educational Research.....	393
10.4.1 Bilingual education and second language learning.	393

10.5 Direc

10.5.1 S

10.5.2 E

10.5.3 E

10.6 Con

APPENDIC

REFERENC

10.5 Directions for future research	406
10.5.1 School-level research.	406
10.5.2 Research on post-graduation outcomes.....	407
10.5.3 Research regarding parents and community members.....	408
10.6 Conclusions	408
APPENDICES	410
REFERENCES	444

Table 1.0
Study Sch

Table 2.0
Primary S

Table 2.1
Fourth gr

Table 2.2
Sixth gra

Table 2.3
Converge

Table 2.4
French-O

Table 2.5
Upper Pri

Table 2.6
Enrollmen

Table 2.7
Upper Pri

Table 2.8
Interview

Table 4.0
Language

Table 5.0
Backgrou

Table 5.1
Age and

Table A.
Mali Scie

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.0	
Study Schools and Classrooms	10
Table 2.0	
Primary School Enrollment, SY2003-04	21
Table 2.1	
Fourth grade scores	33
Table 2.2	
Sixth grade scores	33
Table 2.3	
Convergent Pedagogy Cycle.....	48
Table 2.4	
French-Only Cycle.....	48
Table 2.5	
Upper Primary Cycle	48
Table 2.6	
Enrollment at the Convergent Pedagogy Satellite School	54
Table 2.7	
Upper Primary Cycle	54
Table 2.8	
Interview Participation at the Convergent Pedagogy Satellite School	78
Table 4.0	
Language Use in Convergent Pedagogy Classrooms	129
Table 5.0	
Backgrounds of Convergent Pedagogy Graduates	175
Table 5.1	
Age and Academic Status of Graduates.....	179
Table A.1	
Mali Selected Development Indicators	411

Table B.
Convergence

Table B.
French-Or

Table E.1
Gross Enr

Table E.2
Repetition

Table E.3
Adult Lite

Table E.4
CPEPCEP

Table E.5
Exam Pass
Schools, S

Table E.6
Repetition
Schools, S

Table F.1
Feeder Sch

Table J. 1
Classroom

Table B. 1	
Convergent Pedagogy Exam.....	412
Table B. 2	
French-Only Exam.....	412
Table E.1	
Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), 1990-2003	416
Table E.2	
Repetition Rates, SY 1993-94 to SY2002-03 (between school years)	416
Table E.3	
Adult Literacy Rate	417
Table E.4	
CPEPCEF Pass Rates: Convergent Pedagogy and French-only Students	417
Table E.5	
Exam Pass Rates for the <i>Académie d'Education</i> (Regional Education Office) of the Study Schools, SY2001-02	417
Table E.6	
Repetition Rates for the <i>Académie d'Education</i> (Regional Education Office) of the Study Schools, SY2001-02	418
Table F.1	
Feeder Schools for the Main Study School.....	419
Table J. 1	
Classroom Observation Table.....	427

MAPS OF

LANGUAGES

STUDY OF

EXAMPLES

MINISTERS

THE MAJORITY

LIST OF FIGURES

MAPS OF AFRICA AND MALI	413
LANGUAGE MAP	420
STUDY SCHOOL LOCATIONS.....	421
EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK.....	428
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	441
THE MALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	443

ACCT

ADDA

AE

AEEM

APE

BREDA

CAP

CFEPCEF

CGS

CLAVEL

CIDA

DEF

DNAFL

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACCT	<i>Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique</i> (Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency)
ADEA	<i>Association pour le Développement de l'Education en Afrique</i> (Association for the Development of Education in Africa)
AE	<i>Académie de l'Education</i> (Regional Education Office, post-1999)
AEEM	<i>Association des Elèves et Etudiants du Mali</i> (Malian Students' Union)
APE	<i>Association des Parents d'Elèves</i> (Parents' Association)
BREDA	<i>Bureau Régional de l'UNESCO pour l'Education en Afrique</i> (UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa)
CAP	<i>Centre d'Animation Pédagogique</i> (Teacher Support Center)
CFEPCEF	<i>Certificat de Fin d'Etudes du Premier Cycle d'Enseignement Fondamental</i> (Sixth grade graduation exam)
CGS	<i>Comité de Gestion Scolaire</i> (School Management Committee)
CIAYER	<i>Centre International Audio-visuel d'Etudes et de Recherches</i> (International Audio-Visual Research and Study Center)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DEF	<i>Diplôme d'Etudes Fondamentales</i> (Ninth grade diploma)
DNAFLA	<i>Direction Nationale de l'Alphabétisation Fonctionnelle et de la Linguistique Appliquée</i> (National Office of Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics)

DNEF

DRE

DSE

EFA

ENSup

GER

GoM

GTZ

ICB

IPN

MDG

MEB

MEN

NEF

NER

NGO

DNEF	<i>Direction Nationale de l'Enseignement Fondamental</i> (National Office of Basic Education)
DRE	<i>Direction Régionale de l'Education</i> (Regional Education Office, pre-1999)
DSE	<i>Deutsche Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung</i> (German Foundation for International Development)
EFA	Education For All
ENS ^{Sup}	<i>Ecole Normale Supérieure</i> (Higher Level Teacher Education Institution)
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GoM	Government of Mali
GTZ	<i>Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit</i> (German Technical Assistance)
ICB	International Competitive Bidding
IPN	<i>Institut Pédagogique National</i> (National Pedagogic Institute)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEB	<i>Ministère de l'Education de Base</i> (Ministry of Basic Education)
MEN	<i>Ministère de l'Education Nationale</i> (Ministry of Education)
NEF	<i>Nouvelle Ecole Fondamentale</i> (New Primary School)
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

OCEAN

P

PA

PRODEC

TEC

USD

UIS

UNESCO

UNICEF

UNTM

UPE

USAID

OCED	<i>Organisation Canadien pour l'Education au Service du Développement</i> (Canadian Organization for Education for Development)
P	Principal (<i>Directeur d'école</i>)
PA	Pedagogic Advisor (<i>Conseiller pédagogique</i>)
PRODEC	<i>Programme Décennal pour le Développement de l'Education</i> (Ten year Education Development Program)
TEC	<i>Techniques d'Expression et de Communication</i> (Techniques for Expression and Communication)
USD	United States Dollars
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTM	<i>Union national des travailleurs maliens</i> (National Union of Malian Workers)
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO SUBJECT AND STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The idea that access to primary education for all children should be a global priority developed in the mid-twentieth century, based on two starkly different arguments. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that ‘everyone has the right to education and education shall be free and compulsory’ (Article 26). This was the origin of the rights-based movement. The Declaration of Human Rights inspired the drafting and ratification of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1989. This immediately preceded the 1990 Jomtien World Education Conference, which launched the modern push for Education For All (EFA).

In the 1960s, international investment in education was further justified by the development of human capital theory. Researchers (see Becker, 1964 and Schultz, 1961) linked increases in human capital to economic development. They then argued that investment in education, particularly primary education, had the highest rate of return of any public investment (Psacharopoulos, 1989 and 1994; Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985; World Bank, 1995). These studies were followed by more targeted research that specified many of the ways by which increasing the amount of education in a population influences economic growth and population well-being. These include increases in agricultural productivity and improvements in maternal and child health (Berry, 1980; Cochrane, 1982; Eisemon, 1988; King and Hill, 1993; Summers, 1994; World Bank, 1995; World Bank, 2001; World Bank 2002b).

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These two arguments, rights-based and human capital, resulted in a rhetorical and, to a lesser degree, financial priority sector status for education that still exists in 2006. The ambitious goals of the World Education Forum in 2000 and the Millennium Summit later that year, followed by the launching of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in 2002, demonstrated again that universal primary education (UPE) is promoted as an international priority.

As a result of efforts to reach these international goals and targets, and countries' own development goals, enrollment rates in primary education in most developing countries have grown rapidly, especially since 1990. As populations have also grown quickly, increased enrollment rates represent a huge increase in the number of students enrolled. The gross enrollment rate (GER)¹ in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 51 in 1970 to 73 in 1990 to 95 in 2002 (UIS, 2005). In Mali, the GER was 23 in 1970, 25 in 1990, and 58 in 2002 (*ibid*).² The number of students in Malian primary schools increased from 203,700 in 1973 (World Bank, 1973) to 1,396,791 in 2004 (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005).

In sub-Saharan Africa, however, despite enrollment increases, development indicators continue to lag far behind those in other regions (see Appendix A). One reason for this could be a long-term lack of effectiveness in increasing the number of children completing primary school and thus gaining the skills and behaviors that are linked to the development changes described above. As reported in World Bank (2003), the

¹ The gross enrollment rate (GER) for primary education is defined as the number of students, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the age group for primary education. The net enrollment rate (NER) is defined as the number of students in the age group for primary education expressed as a percentage of the population in the age group for primary education (World Bank, EdStats, 2005).

² It should be noted that estimates of Mali's enrollment rates vary markedly between data sources. Some of this is due to the exclusion or inclusion of particular kinds of schools, and some of it is due to errors in data collection and analysis.

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percentage of children completing primary school increased only slightly in the 1990s, and African children had the lowest completion rates in the world. Although international donors spent approximately 7.2 billion USD on education in sub-Saharan Africa between 1999 and 2003 (FTI Secretariat, 2005), they were unable to increase primary completion rates in Africa to more than 50% of students. As educational achievement is correlated with educational persistence (World Bank, 2003a) and increases in literacy/numeracy skills and years of schooling have been linked to increases in productivity and income (Jolliffe, 1998; Rosenwieg, 1995, cited in UNESCO, 2005), the inability of systems to retain and educate students results in a drag on economic growth (see also Hanushek and Kimco [2000], as cited in UNESCO [2004] for their findings that labor force quality, as measured by science and mathematics scores, has a strong impact on economic growth). Levine et al (2001) also found links between educational quality and effective health behaviors.

In the “francophone” countries of West and Central Africa,³ the substance of schooling has remained largely stagnant since the immediate post-colonial reforms. A wave of reforms in the 1970s, aimed at making schooling more relevant to students’ lives by including instruction in agriculture and other local revenue-producing activities in the curriculum, generally met with failure (Sinclair, 1980). Since that time, reforms have emphasized access to schooling (community school movements in Chad, Mali, Senegal, Benin, and other countries; girls’ education initiatives across the region; and more recent efforts to enroll children with disabilities), but have only tinkered at the margins of policy in the area of educational quality (Heneveld and Craig, 1996).

³ Defined here as the former French colonies of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon (categorized as “francophone” here although two of twelve provinces are “anglophone”), Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

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In these countries, the curricular and instructional focus of schooling as enacted in classrooms remains the teaching of French, with an emphasis on language instruction across the curriculum (practicum and dissertation data; World Bank mission observations). Most students continue to be schooled in a language that they do not speak or understand and that is not spoken by their communities. They are taught by poorly-prepared teachers who use copying, memorization, and recall as their primary teaching techniques. In many of the countries, curricula have been, or are in the process of being, reorganized to reflect imported trends such as “outcomes-based education” or “education by objectives,” but have retained most of their irrelevance to students’ community contexts. This low level of quality and lack of relevance have contributed to the region’s high dropout and repetition rates and bear significant responsibility for the very low levels of student learning.⁴ In Mali, data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), cited in USAID, 2005, showed that only 43% of boys and 28% of girls remain in school until the end of the primary cycle. Of those, only 23% of boys and 10% of girls were able to read by the end of primary school (sixth grade).

The story of Malian education over the past thirty years is a poignant example of the state of education in the region: the expansion of a system focused more on form than on function and more on maintaining appearances than on increasing substance (World Bank, forthcoming a). In 1973:

instruction [in Mali] is theoretical and divided into the French-only long list of unintegrated subjects. This curriculum . . . using a medium unfamiliar to the

⁴ None of these countries have national student assessment systems, but persistent high rates of adult illiteracy, combined with very high student repetition and dropout rates and poor results on a variety of intermittent evaluations, result in a picture of overwhelming student failure.

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majority of rural students, is largely responsible for the poor internal efficiency of the system. (World Bank, p. 38)

Observation of classroom teaching in Mali and other countries in the region from 1994 to 2005 (World Bank mission data) show the continued existence and tragic impact of this schooling model: second graders attempting to draw letters in their notebooks as they copy from the board; sixth grade students who cannot read; and ninth graders who cannot participate in a conversation in French, their language of instruction during eight years of schooling (personal experience; dissertation data collection; World Bank, forthcoming a). In Mali, curriculum reform is proceeding very slowly, and about 75% of students continue to attend classes taught in a language they do not understand (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005).

In the 1980s, in response to low levels of student learning and high levels of student dropout, Malian educators began to develop a reform that had the potential to change the parameters of schooling. *Pédagogie convergente* (convergent pedagogy) uses students' first languages as languages of instruction and requires changes in teaching methods and curriculum. It was carefully designed to avoid any suggestion of "relevance" and past failures. Instead, it is promoted as a way to improve the learning of French and increase students' pass rates on the high stakes lower primary graduation exam (see Appendix B for more information about this exam).

1.2 Convergent pedagogy

Convergent pedagogy calls for initial instruction in students' first (Malian) languages, followed by the gradual introduction of French and then concurrent teaching

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in both languages throughout the six year lower primary cycle. For readers unfamiliar with the West and Central African context, it should be noted that this change in language of instruction is a radical one. Mali is the only country in the region with a policy calling for the national expansion of an existing program that uses students' first languages as languages of instruction (LOI).

Although the countries in the region became independent in the 1960s, all have continued to use French as the sole language of instruction for the vast majority of students, with the exception of Guinea until 1984.⁵ This is a continuation of the French colonial policy of allowing teaching only in French. According to the colonial literature, "French is the only language that can bring the natives towards civilization" (1922) and "teaching must be carried out exclusively in the French language. Indigenous idioms (*sic*) are forbidden" (1938) (both cited in Essiben, 1980, p. 222).

Since Independence, there have been small scale attempts to use national languages throughout the region. Limited national language programs, often run by missionaries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have started in most countries, including Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal, and many of them have existed for decades. However, none of them has been awarded status beyond that of experimental programs, and none of them calls for the changes in teaching methods and curriculum of convergent pedagogy.

Convergent pedagogy teaching is based on a broad definition of constructivism (Wambach, 2001), and calls for the extensive use of group work, the continual participation of all students in differentiated instruction, the early development of student

⁵ Under President Sekou Touré, Guinea used national languages as languages of instruction. When his regime ended in 1984, the country's education system reverted to French-only.

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writing, the use of whole language/global methods in reading instruction, and the integration of local content and lived community experience in the curriculum. The program started in two classrooms in 1987, using Bamanankan as the national language of instruction. In 2005, approximately 25% of Malian students were enrolled in convergent pedagogy, in eleven national languages (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2006).

The convergent pedagogy reform is complex, demanding, and problematic. It requires all involved to change their perspectives on language of instruction, the nature of student-teacher relationships, and instructional practice. To implement convergent pedagogy, teachers must completely change their teaching, and support personnel must redefine good instructional practice.

Despite less than optimal implementation, in classrooms where convergent pedagogy has been implemented, even partially, it has significantly reduced dropout and repetition rates and greatly increased student pass rates on the lower primary school graduation exam,⁶ thus increasing the number of children with access to upper primary education (see Appendix B). The impact of the reform has been particularly important for rural and semi-rural children and girls, as program expansion has mainly taken place outside urban areas, and girls participate more actively in classes using convergent pedagogy methods (World Bank, forthcoming a; dissertation data).

Despite the program's successes, it is struggling to gain acceptability. Parents across the socioeconomic spectrum and education sector personnel wonder if convergent

⁶ These pass rates should not necessarily be seen as evidence of better student learning outcomes, as there have been allegations of cheating. However, the allegations have been made about French-only exam pass rates as well, and convergent pedagogy students have consistently had higher exam pass rates, by a considerable margin (see Appendix E).

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pedagogy is “Real School” (Metz, 1990) and thus warrants the investment and can deliver the credentials that have hitherto been the only rationale for diverting child labor from farming, child care, and other household work (practicum data, 2000). Teachers and supervisors wonder if the methods really work and how the education system will maintain its legitimacy if low status African languages are used as languages of instruction. This dissertation explores these issues from the perspectives of actors who live with the substance and consequences of the reform.

1.3 The research

Existing literature shows that education systems in West Africa have low enrollment rates, high repetition and dropout rates, and, as far as can be determined from scarce and poor quality data, very low levels of student achievement (UNDP, 2005; UNESCO, 2005; USAID, 2005; World Bank, 1991, forthcoming a and b). After over one hundred years of education in French, the adult literacy rate in Mali was 19% in 2003, up from 18.8% in 1990 (UNDP, 2005).

Literature also shows that students who are educated in languages they do not understand do not perform as well as students who are educated in languages they do understand, at least during the early and mid-primary grades (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Dutcher, 1997; Patrinos and Velez, 1996; Thomas and Collier, 1997; Walter, 2004). Findings in these two areas, although often contested (see Rossel and Baker, 1996, cited in Cummins, 1998) and ignored (see World Bank, forthcoming a and the history of development projects in the region for examples), are consistent and well-known. This dissertation does not take the path of attempting to prove them yet again.

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Rather, this study explores how the convergent pedagogy reform, part of which addresses the highly contested area of language of instruction, was experienced by teachers, students, parents, and supervisors as it was enacted in their daily lives. Such a focus provides a new and hitherto unexplored window on the impact of reform design and the critical paths of reform implementation. This leads to insights regarding necessary conditions and actions for more effective implementation in the country, the region, and elsewhere. This is particularly important for countries with education systems that are experiencing difficulty implementing their core educational programs and even more difficulty implementing reform.

The dissertation first discusses the theoretical bases of convergent pedagogy and then explores experiences of graduates who attended school during the early, more intense phase of implementation. Next, it explores later implementation of the reform, from the perspectives of parents, community members, teachers, principals, and pedagogic advisors responsible for teacher supervision. The study shows (a) the potential impact of the reform; (b) the difficulty of this kind of reform; (c) the ways in which reform design factors have motivated teachers and other sector personnel to implement the reform, even in a context of minimal support; (d) the ways in which even very limited implementation has produced significant change in students' lives; and (e) the importance of this kind of change for the achievement of UPE.

In addition, the dissertation examines the ways in which the changing purposes of schooling, combined with adroit reform design, have allowed the reform to survive and grow, despite its radical character and the fragility of the education system within which it is implemented. The study concludes with a discussion of implications for reform

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elsewhere and suggestions for further research.

1.3.1 Data collection sites. Data collection was conducted in and around one “main” study school and two supplementary “satellite” schools, as well as in one high school. The main study school housed three programs: a convergent pedagogy lower primary cycle (grades 1-6); a French-only lower primary cycle with a convergent pedagogy first grade at the time of data collection; and an upper primary cycle (grades 7-9), which was French-only, as are all Malian upper primary cycles.

The convergent pedagogy satellite school had a convergent pedagogy lower primary cycle and an upper primary cycle. The French-only satellite school contained one French-only lower primary cycle and was used for initial observations of second grade, as the French-only second grade at the main study school did not open until the middle of the data collection period. For sampling information, see Chapter 2. See below for a table of data collection sites:

Table 1.0
Study Schools and Classrooms

Study Schools	Study Classrooms			
	<i>Second grade</i>	<i>Fourth grade</i>	<i>Sixth grade</i>	<i>Upper Primary</i>
Main Study School	French-only	French-only	French-only	French-only
	Convergent pedagogy	Convergent pedagogy	Convergent pedagogy	
Convergent Pedagogy Satellite School	Convergent pedagogy	Convergent pedagogy	Convergent pedagogy	French-only
French-only satellite school	French-only			
High school	Grades 9-12, teacher interviews only			

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Data collection focused on the second, fourth, and sixth grades and was conducted through interviews, classroom and school observation, and document and literature review.

1.3.2 Research questions. Research questions evolved throughout the study, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. They focused on the implementation perspectives of the actors listed in section 1.3. The primary research question was: How do school-level actors, including parents, perceive and react to the theoretical bases and implementation realities of convergent pedagogy? Secondary questions addressed the specificities of each group of actors, asking convergent pedagogy graduates about their schooling and extracurricular activities; parents about reasons for their children's enrollment, knowledge of schooling, reactions to convergent pedagogy, and the impact of schooling on children's out-of-school behavior; and school principals, pedagogic advisors, and teachers about their knowledge of and response to the reform.

1.4 Organization of the dissertation

Following this introductory chapter, the dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter 2: Research context and study overview. This chapter has two sections. The first consists of a description of the research setting: Mali's geographic context and development, the country's political history, and the development of the Malian education sector from the pre-colonial era to the present, including the introduction of convergent pedagogy. The second section provides an overview of the study, including the selection and characteristics of the study schools, the linguistic context, research design and questions, data collection methodology, data analysis procedures, and the

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Chapter 3: Literature review. This chapter consists of a review of literature relevant to the study, including (a) the legacy of colonialism, (b) the story of reform in the region, (c) the substance of the convergent pedagogy reform, and (d) the evolving purposes of schooling.

Chapter 4: Convergent pedagogy in theory and practice. This chapter provides an in-depth description of the convergent pedagogy reform that will be explored in the remainder of the dissertation. It describes the theoretical premises of the reform, reviews its evolving objectives, and discusses implementation at the time of data collection, including examples from classroom observations of convergent pedagogy practice; changes in repetition, dropout, and exam pass rates; and the results of a number of examinations of student learning.

Chapter 5: Early implementation: perspectives of convergent pedagogy graduates. This chapter is the first of a series of four exploring the perspectives of actors involved in the implementation of convergent pedagogy. Following a short introduction to the series, this chapter examines the implementation of convergent pedagogy during the program's initial phase from the perspectives of some of the first graduates.

Chapter 6: Parents' perspectives. This chapter examines the perspectives of parents of French-only and convergent pedagogy students in grades 2, 4, and 6 at the main study school and the convergent pedagogy satellite school.

Chapter 7: Teachers' perspectives. This chapter examines the perspectives of French-only and convergent pedagogy teachers in grades 2, 4, and 6 at the main study school and grades 2, 5, and 6 at the convergent pedagogy satellite school.

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Chapter 8: Principals' /pedagogic supervisors' perspectives. This chapter examines the perspectives of principals at the main study school and convergent pedagogy satellite school, and the pedagogic supervisors responsible for teacher support and supervision at the main study school and French-only satellite school.

Chapter 9: Cross-actor perspectives and implications for implementation. This chapter examines teachers' and administrators' (principals and pedagogic advisors) perceptions of parents' and each others' perspectives on key issues in education related to convergent pedagogy.

Chapter 10: Conclusions, implications, and directions for future research. The final chapter discusses key themes from the preceding chapters and their implications for implementation and wider implications for reform in the region; and proposes directions for future research.

A number of appendices appear at the end of the study, followed by references.

1.5 Definition of key terms

For the purposes of this study, terms are defined as follows:

1.5.1 Language terms

1.5.1.1 Students' first language (L1): the primary language that the child speaks at home (home language) before entering school. This may be the first language of the mother (maternal language), of the father (paternal language), of other family members, or of the wider community, depending on the cultural context (see Tourneux and Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994).

1.5.1.2 Students' second language (L2): the second language that the child learns.

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This is often defined as a language of wider communication (LWC), which in turn is almost always defined as a European language. For many Malian children, Bamanankan may be their L2, but in convergent pedagogy, French is used as students' L2.

1.5.1.3 Colonial language: the language used by the regime that colonized the particular country. Mali's colonial language is French.

1.5.1.4 Official language(s): the language(s) designated by the country as its official language(s). Mali's official language is French.

1.5.1.5. National language(s): the language(s) spoken by citizens of the country. According to the Ethnologue (2005), Mali has fifty living languages. Of those, French, Bamanankan, Bomu, Tieyaxo Bozo, Toro So Dogon, Maasina Fulfulde, Hasanya Arabic, Mamara Senoufo, Kita Maninkakan, Soninke, Koyraboro Senni Songhay, Syenara Senoufo, Tamasheq, and Xaasongaxango are the officially recognized national languages (*ibid.*). For ease of writing and reading, this dissertation uses national language to describe the initial language of instruction used in convergent pedagogy. In most cases, but not all, this will be students' first language, or a language closely related to their first language.

1.5.2 Educational terms

1.5.2.1 Convergent pedagogy: translation of the French *pédagogie convergente*.

1.5.2.2 French-only classes/schools/cycles: Classes/schools/cycles using French as the only language of instruction. In French, classes of this type are usually referred to as *classes classiques* or *classes traditionnelles*. In English, they are sometimes referred to as traditional classes.

CHAPTER

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH SETTING AND STUDY OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two main sections. The first describes the research setting: Mali's geographic context, level of economic development, political history, and the development of the education sector from the pre-colonial era to the present, including the convergent pedagogy reform. The second section provides an overview of the study, describing the study schools, linguistic context, research questions, data collection process, and the limitations of the study.

2.2 Research setting

2.2.1 Geographic context. Mali is a landlocked country located in West Africa (see map in Appendix C). The country includes savannah, Sahelian, and Saharan zones. The population is concentrated in the southeastern, more tropical regions where agriculture is most productive. The country's population is about 12.7 million (UNDP, 2005) and 48% is under age 15 (*ibid.*).

Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2005, it ranked 174th of 177 countries on the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (*ibid.*). Gross national income (GNI) per capita was \$371 in 2003 (World Bank, 2005). Ninety percent of the population subsist on less than \$2 per day (World Bank, 2005). There are large disparities in income between regions. Using national definitions, 64% of the population was poor in 1998, ranging from 30% in urban areas to 76% in

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rural areas (World Bank, 2005). In 2002, infant mortality was 122 deaths per 1,000 live births and life expectancy was 41 years (UNESCO, 2005). The population subsists on agriculture, livestock, and fishing. For additional development indicators, see Appendix A.

2.2.2 Political history. Mali was colonized by the French in the nineteenth century. It was administered as part of the French West Africa Federation and used as a labor source for coastal colonies. By the 1950s, with the end of the colonial era approaching, the French began to encourage Malian political leaders to form a union with Senegal. The Malians were less interested than the Senegalese in maintaining ties with France after Independence and the Mali Federation dissolved in 1960. Subsequent disagreements with Senegal over transportation and communication caused additional tensions. The French sided with Senegal, and so, facing increasing economic pressure, the Malian government sought help from the Soviet Union. By 1961, loans and other forms of aid began to arrive. Mali instituted state socialism and became a one-party state. The regime grew increasingly dictatorial and, in 1968, the army took power in a *coup d'état* (Bingen, Robinson, and Statz, 2000).

During the twenty years of military rule that followed, corruption and political oppression worsened. When the Soviet Union collapsed, aid declined, and the government was no longer able to pay civil service salaries. In early 1991, demonstrations against the government began, followed by strikes and riots. The movement was led by the Malian students' union (*Association des élèves et étudiants de Mali*, AEEM) and the Malian Workers' Union (*Union nationale des travailleurs maliens*, UNTM), aided by the Malian Human Rights Association (*Association des maliens pour*

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les droits de l'homme, AMDH). The regime collapsed in March 1991. Later that month, General Amani Toumani Touré seized power through a *coup d'état* and then held elections. In 1992, Alpha Oumar Konaré, a former teacher, took office as the first democratically elected president of Mali.

The years 1991 to 1994 were shaped by strong social protest led by the *AEEM* and rebellion by the Touareg ethnic group in the north. *AEEM* leaders demanded increases in student scholarships and organized violent strikes that closed the school system for months at a time. The 1994 school year was annulled, and all students had to repeat the year.

In 1997, President Konaré was elected to a second five-year term. From 1997 to 2002, Malian political life was characterized by slow administrative decentralization, the participation of the opposition in elections, and the decreasing but still considerable influence of the *AEEM* and teachers' unions. Irregular payment of stipends and scholarships and deteriorating teaching conditions and dormitories, due in part to rapidly increasing enrollment in higher education (from 13,847 in 1998 to more than 37,000 in 2003), contributed to ongoing student unrest (World Bank, 2005b).

In 2002, Mali elected its first president from the opposition (Amani Toumani Touré, now a civilian). His term will expire in 2007.

2.2.3 The early education system and the origins of French-only schooling. Prior to colonialism, formal schooling in Mali consisted of primarily religious instruction conducted in Arabic. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Djenné and Timbuktu were centers of higher education in the Muslim world. Apart from these elite centers, religious instruction, largely consisting of memorization of the Koran, was the only form

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of organized education. Induction into the routines and demands of family and community life was done through “cultural routines for children’s development” (Lancy, 1996), informal apprenticeships, and ritual initiation societies (Trefault, 1999).

With the advent of colonization, Islamic education was discouraged (Tourneux and Iyébi-Mandjek, 1994). The French established a small system of public schools, designed to train limited numbers of low-level civil servants. In 1922, the enrollment rate in French-controlled West and Central Africa was estimated at 0.4% (Touré, 1976). French colonialism was considered a “*mission civilatrice*” by the colonizers, and the acquisition of “French-ness” and literacy in French were key parts of the colonial schooling experience. Textbooks from the period illustrate the tenor of classrooms: “I go to school My teacher is a white man. He is my master. I am his student. I like him and obey him” (Second Booklet of a Black School Boy). In *Moulai Speaks French*: “Moulai . . . comes to school to learn to speak French. He always speaks French—at school, in the playing fields, in the streets, in the shops” (both cited in Kelly, 1986).

2.2.4 The modern Malian education system

2.2.4.1 Early education reform. Efforts to reform schooling in Mali and other countries in the region began towards the end of the colonial period and continued during the early years of independence. These attempts were largely unsuccessful. Most reforms were intended to make schooling more relevant to rural life, inserting agriculture and other locally familiar revenue-generating activities in the primary school curriculum (Sinclair, 1980). In the colonial era, these changes were seen by nationalist movements as attempts to reduce the amount and quality of schooling provided by colonial authorities. In the post-independence period, parents, and communities felt relevant

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programs put their children's opportunities for ascension to the civil service at risk (see also Foster, 1965 and Chapters 3 and 6).

As the public school system did not teach children what they needed to know for lives in the subsistence economy, its only function was to provide access to the civil service and consequent escape from rural life. There were very few employment opportunities in the non-agricultural, non-public sectors of the economy. Parents' desire that their children enter the cash economy to raise funds for taxes and purchase newly available imported goods made it important that schooling retain its formalistic, credential-focused design. Education reforms of this period were abandoned by the end of the 1970s (Sinclair, 1980).

Throughout the 1980s, education reforms in Mali focused on increasing budget allocations to the sector and reallocating expenditures within the sector, as well as controlling enrollment in higher education and other structural policy changes (World Bank, forthcoming a). In the early 1990s, those reforms continued as the government changed. In the mid-1990s, two policy reform programs that, in part, focused on the substance of schooling began: *La nouvelle école fondamentale* (the NEF), which aimed to reform the primary education sub-cycle, and the *Programme décennal de l'éducation* (PRODEC), which planned to reform the entire education sector, from pre-primary to tertiary education. The NEF was eventually abandoned in favor of wider sector reform (see World Bank, forthcoming a), and the PRODEC was voted into law in 1999. It included many reforms related to primary education, including the expansion of convergent pedagogy.

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2.2.4.2 Current educational context. The defining characteristics of the colonial school system remain in place in 2006. One hundred and fifty years after the beginnings of French colonialism, about 75% of Malian students are taught in French from day one of grade one although almost no students speak French when they enter the system (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). School subjects are French-only “western/northern” school subjects: language, mathematics, science, and history. Textbooks have been “Africanized,” meaning that characters’ names have been changed from Victor and Marie to Amadou and Fatimata (for the most part), and stories take place in Dakar and Abidjan instead of Paris and Lille, but there is little local content (Hutchison, 1994; personal collection). Classroom practice seems to have been frozen in the colonial period, with teacher talk dominant and learning defined as memorization and recall (for additional information about French-only teaching methods, see Chapters 4 and 7).

Although school enrollment has increased rapidly over the past decade, it continues to be limited by the lack of availability of schools and classrooms, the collection of school fees, and the selective examination system, which begins to remove students from school in the early primary grades (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, 1983 and 2001; UNICEF and World Bank, forthcoming). The UNESCO Institute of Statistics estimated Mali’s GER as 58% in 2002-03, up from 27% in 1990 (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005), but the country’s NER was only 44% in 2002 (UIS), despite the country’s formal participation in global EFA efforts.

2.2.4.3 The modern education system. The secular primary and secondary Malian school system consists of a limited number of preschools; a basic education cycle divided

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into the lower primary grades (1-6) (*premier cycle*) and upper primary grades (7-9) (*second cycle*); and a secondary education cycle (grades 9-12) (*lycée*). The two primary cycles together are known as *enseignement fondamental*. The exam at the end of the lower primary cycle is called the *Certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle d'enseignement fondamental* (CFEPCEF, usually abbreviated to CEP for the former *Certificat d'études premiers*),⁷ the exam at the end of the upper primary cycle is the *Diplôme d'études fondamentales* (DEF), and the exam at the end of high school is the *Baccalauréat* (Bac). Passing scores on each of these exams is required for access to the next level of schooling.

School enrollment is divided between public schools, private schools, community schools, and madrassas as follows:

Table 2.0
Primary School Enrollment, SY2003-04

	Schools	Classrooms	Teachers ⁸	Students	Percentage of students by type of school	Student-teacher ratio
Public	3,348	12,820	13,252	911,176	65%	69
Private	513	2,738	2,678	118,087	8%	44
Community	2,557	5,711	5,706	227,334	16%	40
Madrassa	852	3,269	3,010	140,194	10%	47
TOTAL/average	7,270	24,538	24,646	1,396,791		57

(Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2005)

Instruction in most private schools is in French. Some also teach English and other foreign languages. There is at least one private school that uses national languages as languages of instruction and convergent pedagogy methodology (*Institut de*

⁷ This exam was established in France in 1874 and abolished in 1989, but continues throughout "francophone" West Africa.

⁸ "Teachers" here refers to the number of classroom teachers and not teachers assigned to administrative or other duties.

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l'éducation populaire, IEP). Community schools use a variety of instructional approaches, including convergent pedagogy, other types of national language teaching, and variations on the French-only public school curriculum. Madrassas are Islamic schools that cover the public school curriculum, mostly in Arabic, with some French, for primary and secondary age students. For more information on madrassas and other forms of Islamic education in Mali, see Sanankoua et al. (1991).

Grade repetition in Malian schools is extremely frequent. About 13% of students repeat first grade, 29% repeat fifth grade, and 28% repeat sixth grade (SY 2002-03/2003-04, *ibid.*). Data on completion rates provided by the Ministry of Education (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, MEN) are unclear, since the relatively high completion rates seem inconsistent with very high rates of repetition and dropout. World Bank and MEN data differ sharply in this area. The MEN shows that of 1,000 girls who entered first grade in 2003, 801 survived in the system until sixth grade. For boys, 874 of 1,000 continued to sixth grade. In 1991, however, a World Bank study showed that only one of twenty school-aged children was likely to complete the lower primary cycle (1 of 4 enrolled and 1 of 5 enrolled graduated). It is unlikely that quality has greatly increased since then (see World Bank, forthcoming a), but many factors could have contributed to an increase in school persistence, including easier access to schooling, the reduction of school fees, an increase in urbanization, and government attempts to administratively reduce repetition rates.⁹

It is difficult to measure educational quality in Mali, as there are no centralized data available on teacher-led but centrally-mandated monthly and trimestrial classroom-

⁹ This is done through limiting the number of students repeating a grade, usually to 15%, regardless of students' grades. Thus, in one of the data collection sites, students with grades slightly above 3/20 were promoted to the next grade.

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level assessments. The country's only student testing system is the series of high stakes, end-of-cycle exams. Mali has not participated in any international comparisons of student learning, and the most recent national test, conducted in 2005 (CEPEC), was methodologically questionable (Barrier, personal communication, 2005). Using primarily items developed for testing in other countries in the region and earlier used in Mali to evaluate the impact of contract teachers on student outcomes, the CEPEC study showed very low levels of learning for third and fifth graders, with scores of around 50/100 for third graders and lower for fifth graders. There was no comparison of these scores with international norms.

Despite the lack of reliable data, with high repetition and dropout rates, low exam pass rates, low levels of inputs, and high student poverty rates (with associated poor health and nutrition indicators), it is probable that quality is very low. In the study schools, that hypothesis was verified during a test administered to fourth and sixth graders (see Chapter 4). Another small scale but more geographically diverse evaluation was administered during a World Bank study, also with very poor results (World Bank, forthcoming a).

In addition, at the school level, interviewed pedagogic supervisors, school principals, and parents complained about the negative effects on quality of overcrowded classrooms, undertrained teachers, and the dearth of textbooks and other materials (see Chapters 4, 6, 7, and 8). The principal of the upper primary cycle at the main study school observed that fewer than half of his ninth graders could read their textbooks. He attributed the massive failure of the previous year's seventh grade class to students' inability to read. Among other indicators of low educational quality gathered during data

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collection, in the prior year, 57 students passed the sixth grade and 88 would be required to repeat the year, regardless of the government's attempts to restrict the repetition rate to 15%. In the ninth grade, 33 students of 87 passed the exam determining their eligibility for high school (all data from the main study school).

2.2.4.4 Effects of poverty on education. In the study schools, parents were required to pay 1,000 FCFA (about two United States dollars) to enroll their children in first grade¹⁰ and the same amount for the school cooperative.¹¹ Notebooks and supplies were purchased by parents, although an international non-governmental organization (NGO), Plan International, provided some materials at the beginning of the school year. For poorer parents and parents with more than one child in school, these requirements represented a significant cost. High dropout rates (8% in 2000 during a time of economic crisis versus 3.5% in 2004) (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2004; World Bank, 2002), illustrate the difficulties that parents, especially the poorest, have in financing education. Early signs of academic failure (poor results, repeating a grade) are often sufficient to cause parents to withdraw their children from school (World Bank, 2002) (see UNICEF and World Bank, forthcoming, for further discussion of user fees).

2.2.4.5 Impact of international donors. International donors have been active in Mali since the 1970s. Initially, the World Bank funded programs in non-formal education; primary education programs that focused on increasing the relevance of the curriculum to rural life, primarily through the inclusion of agricultural education; and small programs in other sub-sectors (World Bank, 1973). In the late 1970s and early

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1980s, the focus changed to expanding the formal education system, as it did in countries around the world (see Chapter 3; Sinclair, 1980).

In the 1980s, the World Bank and the IMF emphasized the reallocation of resources to the education sector and the reallocation of resources within the sector to the primary education sub-sector (World Bank, forthcoming a). Between the change in government in 1991 and the data collection period, Mali saw an influx of donors. Multilaterals, bi-laterals, and non-governmental organizations, both national and international, are now heavily involved in policy development and sector financing.

Most of the large scale financing has focused on construction and “increasing institutional capacity,” with smaller amounts going to teacher professional development, textbook development and purchase, and other inputs related to educational quality. Convergent pedagogy, after receiving only minimal amounts of funding from its inception in 1987 until 2000, benefited from a large amount of World Bank funding from 2000 to 2003. Most recently, donors have begun financing teacher salaries, hoping to accelerate system expansion and stabilize community schools. The education system, long dependent on donor assistance to fund its capital expenditures, is now becoming dependent on donor assistance to fund its current expenditures (World Bank, forthcoming a).

2.2.5 Convergent pedagogy

2.2.5.1 The path to convergent pedagogy. In 1962, following Independence and with a strong political desire to reduce ties to France, a team of Malian linguists working at the National Directorate for Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics (*Direction nationale de l'alphabétisation fonctionnelle et de la linguistique appliquée*, DNAFLA)

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began to research eleven Malian languages. Their initial goal was to produce basic reference books (dictionaries, orthographies, and translation dictionaries) for each language.

In 1965, based on the themes of an international post-colonial conference¹² and the failure of adult and adolescent literacy programs in French, Mali decided to begin literacy programs in national languages (*Ministère de l'Education de Base*, 1998). In 1968, Mali was chosen as a pilot country for the Global Experimental Program in Literacy (*Programme mondial d'alphabétisation*, PEMA) and opened 1,500 literacy centers, mostly in Bamanankan (thirty were in Peul). From 1965 to 1978, Malian educators, supported by a variety of donors, developed and ran literacy programs in major national languages, with thousands of classes around the country (Belloncle and Diabeté, 1993).

In 1978, a national conference was called to develop a reform program for the formal education system. Based on the success of national language literacy programs and the high dropout rates and low levels of learning in the primary school system, the country decided to experiment with the use of national languages in the six lower primary grades. In 1979, four classes in Bamanankan opened in Ségou in central Mali. By 1984, there were approximately eighty experimental schools with four hundred classes, teaching in Bamanankan, Peul, and Tamasheq. Most of these classes were in rural villages that had either refused to host public schools operating in French for cultural, religious, and/or political reasons (Ouane, 2004), or were relatively remote and had not previously had access to public schooling. Students were taught primarily in their first language during the first three grades. Oral French was introduced in the middle of

¹² The World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, held in Tehran.

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second grade and written French was introduced in third grade. Starting in fourth grade, French was the only language of instruction.

Reaching conclusions about children's learning, promotion, and dropout rates in these schools is difficult because there is little data. Diagne et al. (1999) reported that studies of these schools found that dropout rates were lower in experimental schools than in French-only schools. The only data presented comes from a 1985 study, which found that 46% of students in a group of experimental schools progressed to sixth grade without repeating a grade, whereas only 7% of a control group (students in French-only schools) progressed to sixth grade without repeating. Another study (*Ministère de l'Éducation de Base*, 1998) states that: "evaluations conducted in 1985 ¹³ demonstrated that students in national language classes performed better than students in French-only classes" (p. 11). In 1988, another evaluation found that students in the experimental program apparently "had better results." However, the dictation exercise was reported to have produced "catastrophic" results for both groups (Calvert, 1988).

Evaluations of teaching practice in the first generation of experimental schools uncovered difficulties, notably in the use of French-only teaching strategies. The use of these approaches meant that students' competencies in their first language (L1) were not taken into account in the design of curricula, classroom instruction, or teaching and learning materials (Wambach, 2001). Students progressed through the translated French-only curriculum much more quickly in their first language than they had in French, and teachers were obliged to develop supplementary materials. Many of the lesser-used languages still did not have basic reference documents. In addition, materials were insufficient in quantity. Teachers received no support to help them learn to teach, or even

¹³ These may have been the same evaluation reported by Diagne et al in 1999.

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to write, in national languages. As a result, dropout rates remained high; students' literacy and math achievement remained low; and students had difficulty transitioning to French by the end of primary school, when they had to take the high stakes lower primary school graduation exam (*Ministère de l'Education de Base*, 1998).

In the mid-1980s, Malian educators started to revise the national language program. In 1984, a group attended a training course sponsored by the Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency (*Agence de coopération culturelle et technique*, ACCT). During this course, they met Michel Wambach, a professor at the *Centre international audio-visuel d'études et de recherches* (CIAVER), a Belgian institution. At that time, he was working with the Belgian and French governments to develop a method of teaching second languages in the primary grades.

The Malian team was interested in his approach, which called for the development of literacy in students' first language before they transitioned to a second language, and the attainment of oral proficiency in both languages prior to beginning instruction in written literacy. Wambach agreed to work with the Malians, and together they developed Mali's convergent pedagogy program (*Ministère de l'Education de Base*, 1998).

2.2.5.2 Program development. The initial phase of the program was designed as action-research and conducted by a team of Malian and Belgian educators from 1986 to 1993 (Wambach, 2001). The first activity was a seminar in Ségou, attended by Wambach, teachers, inspectors, and Malian researchers from the National Pedagogic Institute (*Institut pédagogique national*, IPN), DNAFLA, the National Office of Primary Education (*Direction nationale de l'enseignement fondamental*, DNEF), and the Regional

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Education Office (*Direction régionale de l'éducation*, DRE). Seminar activities included visits to classrooms in experimental schools, textbook analysis, and discussions of classroom and resource issues with teachers and administrators. Later that year, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Basic Education (*Ministère de l'Education de Base*, MEB), regional inspectors, and a group of primary school teachers to discuss the possibility of using convergent pedagogy in Malian classrooms. The meeting concluded with a decision to open the first convergent pedagogy classrooms at the beginning of the 1987-88 school year.

2.2.5.2 The first classrooms. Three planning and training sessions, two in Belgium and one in Ségou, were held to prepare teachers and administrators to open the first classes. They decided that: (a) the first classes would be limited to approximately 35 students; (b) there would not be any grade repetition during the first three years of schooling; (c) educational materials would be based on children's everyday lives and environment; (d) classrooms would contain library, message box, arts and crafts, cooking, and science areas; (e) class memory texts would be created by students and displayed in classrooms; (f) teachers would use wooden "television" boxes to show dialogues; and (g) every classroom would plant a garden as a long-term project.

Participants also decided that students would be given formative evaluations at the end of each of the first five years of schooling and that a summative evaluation would be conducted at the end of sixth grade, in addition to the national exam. Teaching and learning materials were to be prepared by a team of teachers, pedagogical advisors, illustrators from the Ségou DRE, and linguists from DNAFLA.

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In 1987, the first two convergent pedagogy classrooms opened in Ségou. Each was taught by a team of two teachers who came from the research and training division of the Ségou DRE. The classes were held in the Group One and Group Three schools, which had housed the previous experimental program.

2.2.5.2 Initial expansion and evaluation. From 1988 to 1992, two additional first grade classes opened every year. At the same time, training sessions (professional development for teachers and research/materials development for other members of the team) were held in Bamako, Ségou, and Belgium. Each year, three additional seminars were held in either Ségou or Bamako. One was held at the beginning of the year to analyze test results and other findings from the previous school year in preparation for the new year, one was held during the first half of the school year to discuss progress to date, and one was held in March or April to prepare evaluations for the end of the school year. By 1992, there were twelve classes, thirty trained teachers, and many other linguists and pedagogic specialists involved in the program. All of them contributed to the effort to train teachers, develop materials, evaluate student learning, and continue research in applied linguistics. This research was primarily in national languages but also in French, in keeping with the linguistic goals of the program.

Unfortunately, Mali's political troubles intervened, and schools were frequently closed in 1990, 1991, and 1992. By the end of the 1992-93 school year, sixth grade students had only covered a third of the material planned for the six year primary cycle. Nonetheless, the team decided to conduct the evaluation, as students were moving to the upper primary cycle. Ninety-five percent of students passed the Bamanankan section of the test and 50% passed the French section. Of the latter, 91% passed the oral part of the

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French section. In addition, the research team found that student behavior was profoundly different in convergent pedagogy classrooms. Students were seen as creative, communicative with their peers and teachers, able to work independently, and self-confident.

These students went on to take the exam given to all public school students at the end of sixth grade. Seventy-three percent of them passed and continued to the upper primary cycle. The 73% consisted of 51 students, 71% of the entering 1987 first grade cohort. They had all progressed to sixth grade without repeating a grade. In comparison, only 46% of students in experimental schools beginning first grade did not repeat prior to sixth grade and 22% of the first grade cohort passed the exam. In French-only classes, 7% of students arrived in sixth grade without repeating, and 4% of the initial first grade cohort passed the exam (this section and previous sections are drawn from Wambach, 2001).

The evaluation was followed by a series of seminars for trainers of trainers, which lasted from 1994 to 1997, during which the convergent pedagogy classes continued to operate. By this time, the program was financed by a range of donors: ACCT, OCED (*Organisation canadien pour l'éducation au service du développement*), BREDA (*Bureau régional de l'UNESCO pour l'éducation en Afrique*), DSE (*Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung*), and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). These donors did not contribute large amounts, so the program operated on a very constrained budget.

2.2.5.5 From experimental program to national policy. Convergent pedagogy gradually expanded from 1994 to 2000, with minimal donor and national financial

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support. In 1994, 67 classrooms were functioning in Bamanankan, Peul, and Songhoy. In 1995, classrooms opened in Soninké, Tamasheq, and Dogon. In 1998, Syenara (Sénoufo) and Bomu (Bobo) instruction began. Mamara (Myanka) and Bozo classrooms opened in 2000, and Khassonko classrooms opened in 2001 (ADEA, 2003).

The number of classroom using convergent pedagogy expanded slowly during the 1990s. In 1999, a long-term education policy development process concluded with the ratification of an education law (PRODEC) by the National Parliament, which included a decision to expand the program to all lower primary classes. World Bank funding for the program became available in 2000.

Prior to the start of the World Bank program, only 300 classrooms were using convergent pedagogy. By school year 2002-03, about 2,056 public school classrooms in about 1,256 public schools were convergent pedagogy classrooms. An additional 800 community schools were using the model. The program enrolled about 12% of Malian public school students in 2003 (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003). Sixty-seven percent of the classes used Bamanankan, 15% used Songhay, 5% used Peul, and smaller numbers used the other eight convergent pedagogy languages (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003).

2.2.5.6 Recent evaluations. The National Pedagogic Institute (*Institut pédagogique national*, IPN) conducted a series of student learning evaluations in 1998 and 1999 in French and mathematics. All three evaluations found that convergent pedagogy students had better learning outcomes than French-only students (cited in ADEA, 2003). In 2003, the IPN conducted another evaluation and found that convergent pedagogy fifth graders achieved higher scores in mathematics than French-only students

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and that the two groups had similar scores in French than French-only students (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003).

In addition, as part of data collection, I administered a test to fourth and sixth graders. Results were as follows:

Table 2.1
Fourth grade scores

Area	French-only class (n=61)	Convergent pedagogy class (n=79)
Computation	55%	40%
Word problem	7%	18%
Overall math	25%	27%
Reading/writing	7%	17%
Overall score	14%	22%

Table 2.2
Sixth grade scores

Area	French-only class (n=72)	Convergent pedagogy class (n=40)
Computation	78%	68%
Word problem	5%	29% (46% for similar problem given in Bamanankan)
Overall math	34%	44%
Reading/writing	21%	28%
Overall score	28%	36%

Although convergent pedagogy students had generally higher scores, test items (see Appendix C) were considerably below grade level. The test seemed to show only that convergent pedagogy students perform less poorly than French-only students in most areas.

Important for the school persistence and completion rates discussed in Chapter 1, in every year for which data is available, except 1995, convergent pedagogy students

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graduated from lower primary school at a higher rate than French-only students, and had lower repetition and dropout rates (ADEA, 2003; *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003, see also Appendix E for additional repetition, dropout, and pass rate information).

2.3 Study overview

The following section of this chapter consists of a description of background research, the site selection process and the study schools, the evolution of my research questions and interests, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process.

2.3.1 Background research. Initial research for this study was conducted in Bamako and in and around the cities of Ségou, in south-central Mali, and Koulikoro, in southern Mali. Most of these sites were visited during the course of pre-dissertation practicum research in July 2000. Earlier observations were made during World Bank mission travel in the mid-1990s.

Exploratory research focused on parental, teacher, and pedagogic supervisor experiences with convergent pedagogy, and their perceptions of student behavioral outcomes and projections of students' future student civic engagement. Convergent pedagogy graduates were interviewed to explore their impressions of the ways in which their school attendance and the type of school they attended have influenced their adult lives.

In addition, current students were asked to describe their classrooms, teachers, programs, and aspirations for the future. It was through this research that I decided to focus my dissertation on an examination of the student behavior that many teachers and some parents labeled *éveillé* (see below).

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2.3.2 Selection of study schools

2.3.2.1 Choice of sites. The main study school was chosen during my practicum research for the following reasons: (a) it was cited by the MEN as having a well-implemented convergent pedagogy program; (b) parents and teachers thought the program was running well (classes could not be observed as school was not in session); (c) the school contained French-only and convergent pedagogy classes in grades 1-6;¹⁴ (d) the school principal was willing to randomly assign incoming first graders to convergent pedagogy and French-only classes; and (e) the village was large and located on a major road not far from the capital and thus was expected to have a relatively high level of administrative and technical support.

The grade levels to be included in the study were also determined during my practicum. I planned to explore reform implementation over the course of the primary cycle to see how methods changed as the LOI changed and also as students approached the graduation exam. Prior observation of Malian classrooms and a review of the convergent pedagogy literature showed that convergent pedagogy calls for the introduction of French in second grade (Wambach, 2001). In fourth grade, the amount of instructional time in French increases dramatically. Sixth grade students are preparing to take the graduation exam and are thus taught primarily in French (observation data). At the time of my proposal defense, I was planning to focus on student-related phenomena related to program implementation and reasoned that it would be more useful to begin with second graders, who had been exposed to the program for one academic year, than

¹⁴By the data collection year, the French-only cycle had been selected for conversion into a convergent pedagogy school and the first grade was a convergent pedagogy class.

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with first graders. By the time I arrived in the field, both first grades were convergent pedagogy classes, so there was no possibility of comparative research at this level.

The convergent pedagogy satellite school was chosen while I was in the field for supplemental data collection. It was chosen as an attempt to find a good example of convergent pedagogy implementation, after discovering that this was not the case at the main study school. The school's pass rate on the *Certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle d'enseignement fondamental* (CFEPCEF) was 100% in the year prior to data collection (although the students who took the exam were graduates of the experimental method; convergent pedagogy students would take the exam at the end of the data collection year), and it had a near 100% NER. The school was more rural and served a population that was poorer and had fewer children of civil servants than the main study school.

The French-only satellite school was also chosen while I was in the field, because the second grade at the main study school did not open until November, midway through the data collection process. It was close to the main study school, served students with similar characteristics (although fewer students came from civil service households), and had a similar teacher mix.

2.3.2.2 Typical schools in the region. Data to determine the school-age population of the study schools' catchment area are not available, so it is impossible to determine if enrollment rates for the main study school and the French-only satellite school were average for the sub-region. At close to 100%, the enrollment rate of the convergent pedagogy satellite school was much higher than average. This seemed to reflect community commitment to a school that the community had financed (interview

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data, see Chapter 6), good relationships between the school and the community, and high exam pass rates (see Chapter 8).¹⁵

Based on my experience in this region of Mali, the size and number of classrooms, teachers, and students in the study schools seemed typical for their type, i.e., (a) a relatively large school near the main road in a large village; (b) a tiny rural school in a moderately remote setting; and (c) a smaller school in a smaller village on the main road. Student characteristics were likely comparable to those of similar schools in the area. The mix of community-paid, contractual, and civil service teachers was also typical, with each school having primarily civil service teachers, followed by contractuels, and one community-paid teacher each (see *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2005). School construction was good to excellent, with all concrete classrooms, tin roofs, and most buildings in good condition.

Given the large number of communities in Mali without schools, it was unsurprising that catchment areas included several communities, and students walked up to seven kilometers each way to get to school. The main study school received students from six communities other than the one in which it was located (see Appendix F for a list of feeder communities/schools and their distance from the main study school).

2.3.3 Linguistic context. Mali has fifty living languages and fourteen officially recognized national languages (Ethnologue, 2005). Eleven of these official languages were being used in convergent pedagogy classes at the time of data collection (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003). Of these languages, Bamanankan has 2.7 million

¹⁵ It should be recalled here that there were allegations of malfeasance in the administration of this exam during the year prior to data collection. There were similar allegations at the main study school, for the French-only cycle. Exam pass rates as a motivating factor should be viewed separately from exam pass rates as an indication of student learning.

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speakers as a first language, and the Ethnologue states that 80% of the Malian population speaks it to some degree. Bamanankan and French were the languages of instruction used in the convergent pedagogy classes where data for this study was collected.

Bamanankan belongs to the Mandé language family (Tillinghast and Liebrecht, 1996).¹⁶ Kita Maninkakan, the language spoken by most of the population of the study sites (see below), particularly at the convergent pedagogy satellite school, belongs to the same language family, although linguists differ on whether it is best situated in the same branch (Sullivan, 2004). Kita Maninkakan has approximately 600,000 first language speakers (Ethnologue, 2005). Languages in the Mandé family are spoken across West Africa, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal, (Sullivan, 2004) (see Appendix G for a language map of Mali).

The Ethnologue (2005) states that Kita Maninkakan speakers have a 64% intelligibility of Bamanankan, and Sullivan (2004) characterizes the degree of inter-language intelligibility as “high” and aided by frequent bilingualism. He notes, however, that those in remote villages who do not travel to larger towns may have far less knowledge of Bamanankan.

As Bamanankan is used as a *lingua franca* throughout Mali and the study sites were close to a major road and the capital city, it is likely that most adults in the study sites had some knowledge of the language. This was probably less true for children entering school and may have complicated their learning. Even if children do understand some Bamanankan, and there are many similarities between Bamanankan and Kita Maninkakan (see Sullivan, 2004; Tillinghast and Liebrecht, 1996), Cummins (1979)

¹⁶ For a comprehensive description of this language family, including alternative names and classifications, see Sullivan, 2004.

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distinguishes between the level of language required for conversational fluency and the level required for advanced studies. Based on survey findings, Tillinghast and Liebrecht (1996) recommended that a separate literature be developed for Kita Maninkakan, although the speakers they surveyed were not opposed to materials in Bamanankan, with 36% saying that “Bamanankan and Maninkakan are the same” (p. 22) and another 7% having no preference between the two languages.

The Malian government, in a 1999 sociolinguistic study and related policy decision, decided to group the Maninkakan languages with Bamanankan and Khassonké and use Bamanankan as the language of instruction for students in those groups (Diarra and Haidara, 1999). The government based this decision on a finding that the languages “have an almost complete degree of inter-intelligibility” (p. 22), and decided to group them under the name Bamanankan “as it is much better known in Mali than Maninkakan” (p. 22).

Despite differences between the languages, Maninkakan is clearly much closer to Bamanankan than to French, and the use of Bamanankan in instruction should provide linguistic advantages to students who would otherwise be educated in French. Further research is needed to determine the impact of Bamanankan instruction on the short and long-term learning outcomes of Kita Maninkakan-speaking students and related difficulties for teachers (see also Sullivan, 2004, for suggestions of related research topics). The latter topic was raised by a high school teacher during data collection: “The orthographies vary frequently, they don’t agree on the meaning, the writing of words. A Malinké who has to teach Bamanankan, it’s a problem.”

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2.3.3.1 Literacy in Bamanankan and Maninkakan. Bamanankan and other Mandé languages were first written in the late 1940s, when Souleyman Kanté invented n'ko, a writing system used at the time for many Mandé languages. Angered by colonial attitudes towards African culture, he wrote a large number of complex scientific and cultural texts in n'ko, aiming to provide information to readers in their first language (N'Ko Institute, 2005). The Roman alphabet began to be used to write Bamanankan slightly later and has now eclipsed the use of n'ko in the region. Both Bamanankan and Maninkakan have some written texts, but there are many more texts available in Bamanankan. Both languages are used in radio broadcasts, but, again, Bamanankan is more widely used. Newspapers, health information, and agricultural extension materials, as well as Christian and Islamic texts, exist to a greater degree in Bamanankan. It should be noted that printed text of any kind, except the Koran, was rarely seen in homes or public areas, other than schools, during data collection.

2.3.4 The study schools: Local context

2.3.4.1 Main study school. The population of the village was approximately 4,500 at the time of data collection (data from local census and discussion with officials). It was growing rapidly, as preparations were being made to pave the road to the capital.¹⁷ Lodging and restaurants were being built for the road workers and in anticipation of greatly increased traffic, providing jobs and a market for locally grown food.

During the data collection period, only the main road was suitable for vehicular traffic, although some vehicles and many motorcycles used narrow walking paths during the dry season. Most residents lived along the main road, in walled family compounds.

¹⁷ Tensions in Côte d'Ivoire and the resulting periodic closures of roads and ports had made improving the road and thus linking the Malian capital of Bamako with the port city of Conakry, Guinea a priority.

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Houses inside the compounds were generally made of mud, although some were built with concrete. Most roofs were made of straw, but those of wealthier households were made from tin sheets. Sanitation facilities consisted of hand dug, generally unsheltered latrines. Water came from wells and hand pumps and was untreated. There were several larger concrete structures in the village, including some houses, the school buildings, two health clinics, and an administrative building. These were all one story structures. None was built by community residents.

Almost all village households were Muslim. Most families were polygamous and large. All interviewed residents spoke Bamanankan (Bambara) or Kita Maninkakan (Malinké),¹⁸ although occasionally as second languages. Most families were Bambara or Malinké. There were a few members of other ethnic groups, primarily Peul (traditionally cattle raisers) and Bozo (traditionally fisherpeople), who often live in Bambara/Malinké villages (see Appendix G). The different ethnic groups have lived peacefully with each other for decades, apart from occasional land use conflicts between farmers and pastoralists (practicum data).

Land around the village was excellent farmland. Millet, cotton, corn, and bean fields stretched behind the houses for several miles. In addition, the main study school's village was a center of mango production. Cows, goats, sheep, and chickens provided protein and income for most families. As the village was close to Bamako and the road passable in all but the wettest weather, there was considerable travel and trade with the capital. The combination of a farm-to-market road, good farmland with adequate water, and proximity to the capital made this village relatively wealthy.

¹⁸ Although Bamanankan and Maninkakan are the technical terms for these languages, they were generally referred to as Bambara and Malinké by study participants.

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2.3.4.2 Convergent pedagogy satellite school. This school was more remote than the main study school, located at the end of a sand track, about seven miles off the main road. The road was impassable during parts of the rainy season and rough during the rest of the year. The population of the village was about 1,300 during the data collection period, according to village leaders. The village was so small that it had no market, and commercial trucks transported residents to markets in other villages twice a week. The population was primarily Malinké. Agricultural activities were similar to those described above. There were no public buildings other than the school and a small, non-functioning health clinic. There was a communally owned grain grinding mill, which was broken during most of the data collection period.

2.3.4.3 French-only satellite school. As I did not spend much time in this school (see below), this description is limited. This school was also located on the main road, in a small village with a population of about 700 (school principal). It also drew students from nearby smaller villages. Agricultural activities were similar to those at the main study school. The village had no public buildings other than the primary school and a small health clinic. Housing was organized similarly to that in the village of the main study school. I conducted only three observations of the second grade class here, due to the fact that the French-only second grade class at the primary research site was temporarily suspended due to a teacher shortage during the data collection period. Observations were discontinued due to ethical concerns (see below) and when the second grade class at the main study school reopened.

2.3.5 Student characteristics in the study school area. Most students were the children of subsistence farmers. A few had parents in the civil service, primarily

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teachers, health workers, and police officers. Most of these personnel lived in the village of the main study school. Most families spoke Bamanankan or Kita Maninkakan at home; very few children were exposed to French before beginning school. I did not collect data on preschool attendance, but there were no secular preschools in the villages. Most students had attended or were concurrently attending Koranic school. Many students were malnourished and frequently absent for illness (observation data only). School principals excused students who were sick, but there was little public health care available. When students went to the health clinic, they were given notes to excuse their absences, but no medical care (interview and observation data).

Most parents had not completed the lower primary cycle (interview data; also the average years of schooling completed by Malian adults in 2003 was 0.9) (UNESCO, 2005). Nonetheless, students planned to be doctors, lawyers, customs officers, and politicians. Girls and boys had significant domestic responsibilities, in the home and in the fields, although girls and boys agreed that girls had more to do outside of school. Many felt this kept them from devoting as much time to studying as they would like, especially during the harvest period (October to December) (practicum data).

2.3.6 The study schools: School context

2.3.6.1. Introduction. The study schools are part of a school system that struggles to provide educational access and where student outcomes are extremely poor (see the first part of this chapter). Malian schools suffer from overcrowded, dilapidated classrooms; teacher shortages; and insufficient textbooks and other instructional materials (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, forthcoming a and b). Although there are national norms for classroom construction, communities, and non-governmental

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organizations (NGO) do not always respect them, as they call for expensive concrete construction and more complicated building techniques than those commonly used by communities. School walls are very expensive and thus not currently part of the national school building model, causing concerns about student safety. School maintenance is infrequent. Toilet facilities (latrines), water points, and electricity are rare and, when they exist, are generally either closed to student use or in very poor condition (observation information, 1996-2005).

Teacher shortages plague the rapidly expanding system, particularly in rural areas. Pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for fiscal rationalization in the early 1990s caused the government to close teacher education institutions (World Bank, forthcoming a). Although most of them reopened in the early 1990s and twelve are currently operating, their capacity is insufficient to meet demand.

Mali began the “contractualization” of its teaching force in the mid-1990s, to reduce salary costs. The government now hires two kinds of contractual teachers: (a) those with short-term pre-service teacher education (45 to 90 days, although courses have been as short as 15 days) and (b) those with long-term pre-service teacher education. The government is not currently hiring civil service teachers. In addition, communities hire teachers directly, to address teacher shortages in public schools and to fill community school classrooms. All of these types of teachers were present in the study schools, as were civil service teachers.

As another strategy to address teacher shortages and salary costs, the country began using “double-shift” and “double-division” teaching in the 1990s. In double-shift classes, students are divided into two groups, and a single teacher teaches one group in

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the morning and the other in the afternoon. In double-division classes, more common in urban areas, there are two teachers for the two groups. Students in both types of classes receive significantly less instruction than students in single-shift classes (see below). Double-shifting is less common in the upper primary grades, particularly sixth, as many students have left school by then.

These organization and hiring strategies have not ended teacher shortages. Student: teacher ratios vary considerably around the country, but averaged 69 in public schools in SY2003-04 (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). In the main study school, there were 256 fourth graders in one class (double-shift) in 2005 (World Bank mission data, 2005).

Textbook development, purchase, and distribution have been problematic in the region for decades. Although donors have financed 9.7 million textbooks for Mali since 2000, and official textbook-student ratios are high (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005), in actual practice, few students have math or French books (dissertation data, World Bank, forthcoming a). A World Bank supervision mission in January 2004 found that textbook: student ratios in core subjects varied from 1:2 to 1:10 (World Bank, 2004). Shortages are more acute for convergent pedagogy textbooks, including the French textbook *Rencontres*. Delays of several years for manuscript development, printing, and distribution are common (*ibid.*).

The sections below describe conditions in the study schools, which, it should be recalled, are all located on or close to a major road, not far from the capital city.

2.3.6.2 Main study school This school was located on the main road, an international trucking route. Trucks and other vehicles produced dust in the dry season

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and mud in the rainy season. The earthen road was in the process of being paved during the data collection period, so trees and brush were being cleared from the roadside and heavy machinery was moving up and down the road. This created clouds of dust and significant noise during school hours; classrooms were often so noisy that it was difficult to hear teachers and students. Windows had no glass or screens.

Student safety was an issue, as there were no walls or other barriers between the school and the road, and students walked on the road (no sidewalks or pedestrian crossings) to get to school and return home. As the school did not have electricity, windows and doors were left open during class hours for light and ventilation. The only light in the classrooms was natural light. In the rainy season it was often difficult to see the chalkboard, text on the walls, and textbooks being shown to classes by teachers (observation data).

The principal of the upper primary school talked about the conditions of the school when he arrived in 1991: “There were no doors, there were no desks for the teachers, there weren’t any teachers’ chairs In the morning, when you came to school, the kids had to start the day by sweeping out cow manure the cows spent the night in the classrooms.” In 1991, Plan International began to renovate the existing nine classrooms and two storerooms. Once they were renovated, enrollment began to soar: “it had become pretty the kids started to come in huge numbers” (principal of upper primary cycle). In 1996, Plan built nine new classrooms and two principals’ offices and equipped them with standard school equipment. At this point, the school was divided into two lower primary cycles, with a separate principal for each.

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2.3.6.2.1 School organization. The school consisted of two lower primary cycles, one French-only and one convergent pedagogy, and an upper primary cycle. The classrooms were built in blocks, which were set in an open (the sides were not attached) rectangle around a courtyard. The long sides of the rectangle held classrooms for the two lower primary cycles, one on each side. One of the short sides also held primary classrooms and the other housed the three classrooms of the upper primary cycle.

Classrooms were approximately 7.6 by 9.8 yards in size. They were built of concrete with tin roofs. They each contained four windows, two overlooking the courtyard and two overlooking the area behind the classroom. Two walls were windowless. Classrooms were mostly unshaded, and interior temperatures were extremely high during the afternoons and all day during the hot season, when exterior daytime temperatures averaged above 90 degrees.

The two primary school principals had offices attached to the lower primary school classrooms. The upper primary principal, who also served as the principal of the school complex, had a detached office next to the lower secondary classrooms. The two cycles were considered separate establishments, even though they shared a courtyard and administrative reporting. Each school had its own principal. Teachers were assigned to a particular principal, with no inter-cycle teacher exchange allowed, even when one cycle had extra teachers and one had to close classes due to teacher shortages.

Three old classrooms, which were no longer used, were adjacent to the convergent pedagogy classrooms. Although an unused classroom was designated as the school library, it contained only old student exercise books and was not available for student or teacher use. There was a set of latrines on one side of the school but they were

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too dirty for students to use. Instead, young students relieved themselves in the courtyard, older male students used an area behind the latrines, and older girls used latrines at neighboring houses. There was no functioning water source at the school.

2.3.6.2.2 Enrollment. The following tables show the enrollment of students by grade at the main study school during the data collection period.

Table 2.3
Convergent Pedagogy Cycle

1 st grade	2 nd grade	3 rd grade	4 th grade	5 th grade	6 th grade*	
					F-O	CP
76	129	140	152	116	64	43

*The sixth grade had a convergent pedagogy class of non-repeaters and a French-only class to accommodate repeaters from previous years. (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2004)

Table 2.4
French-Only Cycle

1 st grade	2 nd grade	3 rd grade	4 th grade	5 th grade	6 th grade*	
					#1	#2
96	116	108	120	156	86	86

*This cycle had two sixth grade classes. (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2004)

Table 2.5
Upper Primary Cycle

7 th grade	8 th grade	9 th grade
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2.3.6.2.3 Staffing. When data collection and the 2002-03 school year began, the school had one principal for each cycle, four teachers for the French-only cycle (one community-paid, one contractual paid by the government), five teachers for the convergent pedagogy cycle (one contractual paid by the government), and five teachers for the upper primary cycle. Both of the lower primary cycle principals also taught. At the end of the data collection process, two additional teachers had arrived at the French-only cycle and the principal had stopped teaching. The convergent pedagogy principal had not received any additional teachers and so continued teaching.

2.3.6.2.4 Student recruitment. The parents' association (*Association des parents d'élèves*, APE) was charged with recruiting first graders at each of the schools. School principals handled enrollment paperwork for transfer students, who were numerous with changes in civil service postings, the number of nearby villages with incomplete lower primary cycles,¹⁹ and the ever-increasing number of community residents, related to the promised paving of the road. During the data collection period, principals placed non-transfer students semi-randomly in first grade classes.²⁰ Transfer students were placed according to their backgrounds. As the French-only cycle converts to convergent pedagogy, incoming transfers will be required to enroll in convergent pedagogy.

2.3.6.2.5 Class organization. During the data collection period, one primary school cycle used the French-only program in grades two to six, with French as the sole language of instruction. First grade in this cycle and the entirety of the other cycle used convergent pedagogy, with Bamanankan and French as the languages of instruction.

¹⁹ Many schools in smaller villages contained grades 1 to 3 only, with students obliged to transfer if they wished to continue. These schools also often only recruited students every 2 to 3 years, depending on the villages' ability to finance teachers, and thus sent a large percentage of over-age students to larger schools.

²⁰ Few parents ever requested a specific placement, and there were varying reports as to whether their requests were honored (see Chapters 6, 7, and 8).

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Schools become convergent pedagogy schools gradually (see Chapter 4), and the 2002-03 school year was the first in which this school had a sixth grade convergent pedagogy class.

Convergent pedagogy teachers advanced through the grades with their students, with the exception of the fourth and sixth grades. The principal had originally been the teacher of the class that was in sixth grade, but felt that his administrative duties would keep him from giving students the time they would need to prepare for the graduation exam. He switched classes with the fourth grade teacher.

All classes except sixth grade were taught on a double-shift basis, which began at this school in 1994 to relieve overcrowding. When class size reached ninety students, classes were evenly divided into two cohorts.²¹ The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle was vehemently opposed to double shift teaching, saying: “that’s why the students’ levels are zero. You can’t work all morning and all afternoon, the teachers are too tired, the classes are too crowded.” Teachers were paid bonuses for teaching double-shift classes, but felt that the amount of the bonuses did not sufficiently compensate them for the additional workload. The principal of the French-only cycle was more favorable towards double-shift teaching, citing its potential for increasing access (interview data).

Teacher shortages were ongoing at the school. Principals moved teachers throughout the data collection period as new teachers arrived and transferred teachers departed. The second grade in the French-only cycle did not open until November (see below for more information on this and other issues that affected educational quality).

²¹ In one case, however, it took the principal more than two months to divide the students and the teacher was required to teach the entire class at the same time until this occurred.

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2.3.6.2.6 Relationships with other organizations/partners. Plan International funded classroom construction, provided notebooks and pens, and organized professional development courses for teachers during school vacations. Other international donors and organizations also sporadically organized professional development courses.

In addition, the school received contributions from other sources. The area surrounding the school was often visited by tourists interested in rock climbing; some of them made monetary donations to the school. Others returned home and then mailed boxes of school supplies, toys, and games. These were addressed to principals, and they made decisions about allocations between schools and staff.

2.3.6.2.7 Post-primary instruction. Graduates of the upper primary cycle who were financially able to attend an academic high school did so in a neighboring village, approximately 15 kilometers away, or in Bamako. Children who were interested in vocational or technical programs were usually sent to Bamako, where they boarded with relatives or family friends, returning home during vacations. For secondary graduates, the main campus of the University of Mali is in Bamako, although there are post-secondary institutions in other regions.

2.3.6.2.8 The school within the system. The school was supervised by a Teacher Support Center (*Centre d'animation pédagogique*, CAP), which was in turn linked to a Regional Education Office (*Académie d'Enseignement*, AE), one of sixteen in Mali. The principal was based in Bamako, as the government had not yet provided space in its official location. During the data collection period, the AE director had ten staff out of a projected number of 70. The director had never visited any of the study sites.

School oversight was ostensibly provided by the CAP, located about 40 miles

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away. *Conseillers pédagogiques* (pedagogical advisors, PA) were located at the CAP. Their school visits were very infrequent, less than one per teacher per year. The upper primary principal acted as the “resident” PA for fifty surrounding schools, adding to his already considerable duties. He was not provided with any transportation, release time, or funds.

2.3.6.3 Convergent pedagogy satellite school. This school was much more isolated than the main study school, but had the same problems of courtyard noise and lack of lighting during the rainy season. The state of the road meant that it was difficult for pedagogic advisors, administrative staff, and traveling teachers to visit or return to the school as expected and equipment and materials were not easily distributed. Several times during the data collection period, I witnessed materials for the school being left at the main study school for pickup by the satellite school principal and APE.

2.3.6.3.1 School history and development. The school first opened in 1986, after about a hundred years of village refusal,²² because the villagers had not wanted to “have anything to do with the whites” (village elders). According to the principal, “the people here didn’t want a [public] school! They didn’t like schools!”²³

Prior to the opening of the public school, some children attended school in a neighboring village. They had to travel even farther for the upper primary cycle. Eventually, parents decided they would open a school for themselves, and a local APE coordinator assisted them. The parents spent “a lot of money” (principal) on school construction, with some help from the government, for a school that was first an

²² According to village elders, the village was very old and had been established well before the arrival of the French in that location in the late 1800s.

²³ The village did have Koranic schools and madrassas, as well as traditional craftspeople, healers, and “sorcerers” (a term used by villagers) who taught apprentices.

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experimental school (see section 2.2.5.1 for an explanation of this program) and then a convergent pedagogy school. Funds for school construction and the payment of some of the teachers were raised through a community cotton field and a tax on married couples. According to the principal, that was one reason that enrollment was so high: “Me, they say, I would not accept to give money so that my kid stays home.”

2.3.6.3.2 School organization. The school was the village’s only public education institution. It was located on the outskirts of the village, across a seasonal stream from village residences and at the end of the track that led to the main road. It consisted of one block of six lower primary school classrooms, one block of upper primary classrooms, and a separate building for the school principal (there was only one principal for both cycles). There was no library or other common space.

Classrooms were the same size as those described above for the main study school. Ventilation was better, as ceilings were higher and windows were larger. Also, the school’s location on the edge of the village resulted in more air circulation. There was little shade, however, and the tin roofs and concrete construction resulted in very hot classrooms.

2.3.6.3.3 Student recruitment. Students were recruited by the APE. This village was noteworthy for apparently having an enrollment rate of 100%. The principal and village leaders stated that this was the case, and I never saw a child of school age out of school during school hours, other than first graders (see below). This is extremely rare in Mali, with a net enrollment rate estimated at under 44% (UIS, 2005). The principal said: “Here the parents just send all their kids. All of the kids. All of the kids come to school.”

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2.3.6.3.4. *Enrollment.* The following tables show enrollment at this school:

Table 2.6
Enrollment at the Convergent Pedagogy Satellite School

1 st grade	2 nd grade	3 rd grade	4 th grade	5 th grade	6 th grade
61*	63	73	47	77	54

*This class had not started at the end of the data collection period, so the enrollment figure could not be verified. Data from *Ministère de L'Education Nationale*, 2004.

Table 2.7
Upper Primary Cycle

7 th grade	8 th grade	9 th grade
30	51	41

2.3.6.3.5 *Staffing.* The school had five teachers (including the principal) for the lower primary cycle and four teachers for the upper primary cycle. The first grade teacher had not arrived by December, although the regional director assured me that his staff had verified that he had. The fourth grade teacher was absent for about four weeks of the data collection period. All teachers were civil service teachers, with the exception of the second grade teacher, who was a community-paid contractual teacher.

2.3.6.3.6 *Class organization.* The only double-shift class at this school was the third grade. The high number of students was a result of a teacher shortage during the preceding year. There was no third grade teacher and so children who had finished the second grade the year before did not attend school and both classes of second grade graduates were in third grade during the data collection period. No classes opened until mid to late October, and the fourth grade class was closed until November, as the teacher was ill.

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2.3.6.3.7 Relationships with other organizations/partners. Plan International built and then renovated the school's lower primary classrooms. This school did not receive materials from sources other than the MEN and the community. Teachers participated in professional development courses organized by international donors and organizations.

2.3.6.3.8. Post-primary instruction. Following graduation from the upper primary cycle, students followed the same paths as those in the main study school, described in section 2.3.6.2.7.

2.3.6.3.9. The school within the system. This school was a fairly well-constructed and well-equipped school for such a rural location. It was covered by a different AE, one that was closer to the school. I never encountered a pedagogic advisor at the school during the data collection period.

2.3.6.4. French-only satellite school. This school consisted of a French-only lower primary cycle. I chose it because I was focusing on grades two, four, and six, and the French-only second grade in the main study school was not open, as there was no teacher. It was located along the main road, slightly closer to the capital than the main study school. I observed the second grade class at this school three times and then the second grade class at the main study school opened.

2.3.6.4.1 Student recruitment. I did not discuss this aspect of school organization with the APE or the principal, but recruitment was likely handled by the APE. With only one cycle, it would have involved only completing paperwork and collecting fees.

2.3.6.4.2 Enrollment. I did not collect data on official school enrollment, as I only briefly observed second grade classes. Second grade attendance during observations

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averaged 40 students.

2.3.6.4.3 Staffing. The second grade teacher was a community-paid teacher who had participated in forty-five days of training.

2.3.6.4.4 Class organization. Classes at this school were single shift only.

2.3.6.4.5 Relationships with other organizations/partners. This school did not receive materials from sources other than the MEN and the community.

2.3.6.4.6 Post-primary instruction. Sixth grade graduates generally attended the upper primary cycle at the main study school. Others left for Bamako. Following ninth grade graduation, students left for the neighboring high school or Bamako.

2.3.6.4.7 The school within the system. This school was a typically-sized rural but not remote school. It had the same inspection and pedagogic advisor system as the main study school and was part of the same AE.

2.3.7 The study schools: Issues affecting educational quality. As discussed in Chapter 1 and above, the Malian education system provides schooling to about half of all Malian children of school age. Quality is extremely low: most students do not have textbooks in their core subjects, are taught by teachers who are inadequately prepared, and are schooled in a language they do not understand (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, forthcoming a). In addition to these issues, there are others that directly affected school quality at the study schools during the data collection period. Some of these are systemic, and others are more specific to the study schools. The section that follows is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of factors affecting educational quality in Mali and the region; rather, it highlights issues that were particularly important at the study schools (for more information on the state of the

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Malian education system during this period, see *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003; World Bank, 2000, forthcoming a and b). These issues fall into three broad and overlapping categories: (a) lack of instructional time; (b) issues related to the substance of schooling; and (c) teacher-student interaction.

2.3.7.1 Lack of instructional time.

2.3.7.1.1 Official school calendar. Students in Mali spend much less time in school than students in more developed countries (Kim, 1999). Malian students are officially in school for 888 hours (single shift classrooms) or 645 hours (double shift classrooms) per year, whereas the average for developed countries is 1000 to 1100 hours (*ibid*).²⁴ The calendar for SY2002-03 had not been distributed by December 2002, but principals and teachers were certain that it would resemble that of the previous year. School was to open on September 30 and close on June 29. There were two scheduled two week breaks, one in late January and one in mid-April. The long school holiday was scheduled for June 29 to September 29. Other holidays included the end of Ramadan, a holiday for the Army, Christmas, New Year's Day, a holiday for the African Union, May Day, Tabaski, Maloud, and Martyr's Day.

2.3.7.1.2 Unofficial school calendar. Classes at the study schools did not start until days, weeks, or months after the official school opening date, and they closed days or weeks prior to official vacation periods. Although official holidays were supposed to result in one day of school closure, they frequently extended to two or more days. First, it was customary to add a day to the holiday if the holiday fell on a Tuesday or Thursday. Second, major holidays such as the end of Ramadan resulted in additional days off.

²⁴The curriculum and exams for double-shift students are the same for those of single shift students, despite their reduced instructional time.

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During the data collection period, the Ramadan holiday resulted in four days of school closure. Exams, testing, and grading also consumed weeks of official instructional time (observation data).

2.3.7.1.3 Lack of teachers. There was a continual teacher shortage in the study schools. According to the director of the AE, the region including the main study school and the French-only satellite school needed an additional 278 teachers to fill empty classrooms and replace community-paid teachers in the lower primary cycle. She was told by the MEN that she would receive a total of 148 for the lower and upper primary cycles combined (interview data). The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school reported that he and one other teacher taught all six primary grades when the school opened. When the school added an upper primary cycle, the lower primary teachers taught all of the classes. The second and fourth grade teachers taught history and geography and the others covered language, math, and science.

Parents' Associations (*Associations des parents d'élèves*, APE) and other community organizations attempted to hire and pay teachers as needed, but it was difficult for them to do so in a timely fashion, as the administration did not provide any data on teacher posting until well after the start of the school year. It was also difficult financially. As civil service teachers are more numerous in urban areas, rural schools bear a disproportionate share of the teacher financing burden. In the year preceding the data collection year, the APE at the main study school had hired four teachers (of 13 in the lower primary cycles). The APE at the convergent pedagogy satellite school recruited one teacher. The payment of teacher salaries was difficult, as the village was poor and already struggling to pay enrollment fees (interview data).

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2.3.7.1.4 Teacher posting and transfers. Teachers were posted without regard for the location of their families and, often, their first language, even for convergent pedagogy teachers. The convergent pedagogy second grade teacher at the main study school had requested posting to a specific site due to family constraints, but his request was not honored. He later applied for a transfer and left in the middle of the school year. His class was closed for several weeks until his replacement arrived. At one point, in response to an indication that the school would receive an additional teacher, the principal recused himself from teaching and closed the fourth grade for the interim. Due to delays in the administrative posting of teachers and a loosely monitored system for teacher arrival, teachers commonly arrived weeks or months after the opening of school or after the teachers they were replacing had departed.

2.3.7.1.5 Teacher absence. Teachers were frequently absent. Most absences were for personal reasons. Some were for official business such as carrying correspondence and attending union meetings, and some were due to medical reasons. The fourth grade teacher at the convergent pedagogy satellite school missed almost four weeks of school due to illness. There was no system of substitute teachers.

Teachers were absent at the beginning and end of holidays, on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings, and for social occasions such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms, among other reasons. The students of absent teachers often came to school and played in their classrooms, but were rarely supervised or given schoolwork to do. The convergent pedagogy cycle of the main study school was an exception: the principal made a point of moving back and forth between classes, giving seatwork to each, in addition to doing his administrative work.

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As an example, one day early in December, during my observations at the convergent pedagogy satellite school, I did a census of teachers. The first grade had not yet opened; the third grade teacher was in the capital; the fourth grade teacher had just returned after a four week absence; the sixth grade teacher/school principal was in another town; two of the upper primary teachers were in another town; and a third was spending all of his class time that day calculating grades. On the same day, I did a census of teachers at the main study school. In the convergent pedagogy cycle, the first and second grade teachers were away. In the French-only cycle, one of the sixth grade teachers was away, one told me that “we’re not doing much this afternoon,” and one was planning to spend the entire afternoon testing students and calculating grades.

2.3.7.1.6 Teacher lateness. Double-shift morning classes at the main study school were scheduled from 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM for first and second grades, to 11:45 AM for third and fourth graders and to 12:00 PM for fifth and sixth graders. In the afternoon, all students were supposed to be in school from 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM. During the hot season, classes were to start at 7:45 AM and end fifteen minutes earlier, and start again at 2:00 PM. The data collection period did not occur during the hot season.

Most teachers were late every day at the main study school. As I was generally not at the satellite schools at the beginning of the school day or just after lunch, I did not observe teacher arrivals at these schools. On one day that I collected specific data on teacher arrival at the main study school, I found the following:

1:30 PM (official school opening time): no teachers present

1:53 PM: second grade French-only class begins

2:01 PM: fourth grade convergent pedagogy (principal’s class) begins

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2:09 PM: fourth grade French-only teacher arrives

2:15 PM: third grade French-only teacher arrives

2:19 PM: fifth grade French-only teacher begins

2:20 PM: first grade French-only teacher arrives

2:26 PM: first grade convergent pedagogy teacher begins class

2:27 PM: sixth grade French-only teacher arrives (class doesn't start until 3:00, not double-shift)

2:28 PM: sixth grade convergent pedagogy teacher arrives

2:38 PM: third grade convergent pedagogy teacher arrives

3:00 PM: no other teachers have arrived when I leave to observe classes

One month earlier, the principal of the French-only lower primary cycle at the main study school had given the teachers a lecture about the importance of starting on time, but there was no administrative action taken when teachers were late.

Teachers provided a variety of reasons for their tardiness. One reported that teachers were late because it was too difficult for them to go home, eat lunch, and return to school in the allocated time. On another occasion, I interviewed a teacher during lunch. As the time approached for class to start, I moved to complete the interview, but he told me that he did not have to be there until 2:00. When I told him that class was supposed to start at 1:30, he said he didn't think that was correct and then recalled that it was. Other teachers told me that they needed a longer lunch break "to avoid mental problems" and that "this is a human environment that requires logical hours."

2.3.7.1.7 Improper use of student time. Teachers and principals used students to provide domestic and agricultural labor for their households during and in addition to

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class time. Female students were responsible for the bulk of this work, hauling water, and wood, preparing harvested food for consumption, and working in the fields. The second grade convergent pedagogy teacher required his second grade girl students to carry his water, telling me “I’m not married, so I don’t have anyone to do it for me.” Male students also worked in the fields. Classes were cancelled so students could work. In the French-only satellite school, the principal reportedly hired students out to villagers, using the payments as unofficial salary supplements for himself and his teachers. At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, I found the following example on the board:

Hier, les garçons de la 5me année sont partis faire la récolte de M. x (the teacher).

Yesterday, the fifth grade boys harvested the crops of Mr. x.

On three occasions during the data collection period, I observed the cancellation of classes in order to give girl students time to clean the school and courtyard in anticipation of administrative visits. No administrators actually arrived after any of these sessions, but classes were cancelled for the entire morning (boys milled around in the courtyard and played while girls swept and cleaned).

2.3.7.1.8 Student lateness. Many students were consistently late. One principal told me that it was because many student live far from school. Most arrived before their teachers.

2.3.7.1.9 Other instructional time issues. Instructional time in class was also reduced by inefficient class organization and social and administrative interruptions. Students spent much of their time copying, waiting for other students to copy, watching while other students were called on, waiting for their work to be viewed by the teacher,

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waiting for the teacher to stop talking with visitors, and watching other students be punished. Teachers received visits from colleagues (for personal discussions), family members, community members, occasionally school principals (for personal and professional discussions), and tea sellers. In most classes, actual involvement in instruction was limited to a fraction of the time that students were in class. In one observed “testing” session, each of about sixty students was called individually to the board to read the same sentence.

2.3.7.2 Issues related to the substance of teaching.

2.3.7.2.1 Teachers without pre-service teacher preparation. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school told me that he usually had at least one teacher on his staff without professional preparation. In some cases, these teachers had attended the convergent pedagogy professional development program and in some cases they had not. During the data collection period, the second grade teacher had only finished eighth grade. The first level of convergent pedagogy training was his only teacher preparation. Three years later, he attended a two month long pre-service program. At the main study school, three of the teachers had only attended very short term teacher preparation courses.

2.3.7.2.2 Professional development for teachers. In the Malian education system, Wednesday afternoons are reserved for professional development in non-double-shift classes, and students are dismissed. Some of these classes also have Thursday afternoons off (observation data and World Bank, forthcoming a). None of the schools involved in the study scheduled afternoon sessions during the data collection period, even though

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they all had at least one class (sixth grade) that was not double-shift (the convergent pedagogy satellite school only had one class that was double-shift).

Other than convergent pedagogy “conversion” training (see Chapter 4), the only professional development opportunities at the main study school for as long as the teachers could recall had been one-time courses. Topics for those courses, selected by donors and the ministry, included the teaching of reading, the teaching of large groups, teaching by objectives, student evaluation, lesson preparation, and teaching double-shift classes. Teachers who taught at the school when the training was provided participated. Others had no opportunities to take the courses or even to review materials, as few were provided. As professional interaction between teachers was rare (see Chapter 7), teachers who had not attended training courses generally did not have any knowledge of the content. There was no follow-up support for teachers after the courses.

2.3.7.2.3 Materials. Teachers had very few textbooks or other materials. For example, in the fourth grade, according to the teacher, the history curriculum was supposed to cover local history and geography. The teacher had no books or other documents and was told that she needed to develop the course content herself with help from other teachers and village residents. She was new to teaching and to the school. She had a total of six copies of the reading textbook and one copy each of the math and science books. In the convergent pedagogy classes, paper for classroom posters did not arrive until November. The supply that was delivered was sufficient only for a few weeks. Teachers were told to buy their own markers. The fifth and sixth grade classes had a sufficient number of books in national languages, but very few copies of the French

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text *Rencontres*. In grades 1 to 4, there was only one copy of the national language text per class.

2.3.7.2.4 Teacher-administrator pedagogic interaction. Principals were minimally involved in pedagogical support. External personnel visited schools only rarely. Principals were required to review and approve teachers' lesson plans, but initialed the plans without reading them.

2.3.7.2.5 Conversion to convergent pedagogy. The number of convergent pedagogy classrooms increased through the "conversion" of French-only classes to convergent pedagogy classes. Decisions about which classes to convert were based on administrative criteria. Teachers had no input into the conversion of their classes. They were notified that they would teach convergent pedagogy during the following academic year and should report for training as scheduled. Some principals were included and some were not, seemingly randomly. Training did not include practice teaching, and teachers returned to their sites without any of the materials required to teach a convergent pedagogy class (see Chapters 4 and 7 for more information).

2.3.7.2.6 Class size. Large class sizes made it very difficult for teachers to respond to individual students. Every grade at the main study school had between 75 and 160 students, with the exception of the sixth grades (due to significant dropout in the earlier grades).

2.3.7.2.7 Expectations for student achievement. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school reported that he considered teachers' work adequate if 60% of the class was promoted. That repetition rate of 40% was far higher than the official 15% rate.

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2.3.7.2.8 Girls' education. Girls' enrollment and persistence still ranked far behind that of boys (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2005; USAID, 2002; World Bank forthcoming b). At the study schools, I observed continual and pervasive gender discrimination. Girls swept the classrooms and hauled teachers' wood and water. They were called on far less frequently in class (this was more of an issue in French-only classes, as convergent pedagogy's group work requirements resulted in more student participation) and given less time to respond. They were belittled by teachers and other students. They were told to hurry, told to watch boys find the right answer when they had been mistaken, and ridiculed for mistakes. Two examples:

(a) teacher requests that a girl answer the question

calls on girl, she makes a mistake

class and teacher laugh (fourth grade French-only)

(b) teacher calls on

boy/boy/girl//boy/boy/girl/girl/boy/girl/boy/boy/boy/boy/boy/boy/girl/boy/

boy/boy (sixth grade French-only)

2.3.7.2.9 Classroom discipline. Corporal punishment was observed frequently.

When I asked about this at the convergent pedagogy satellite school, I was told that students are hit because "students . . . are too difficult and they're not timid. They're not timid because they can express themselves in their own language." The principal was aware that corporal punishment was not allowed in either type of class, but was particularly frowned upon in convergent pedagogy classes. At the main study school, the principal of the French-only cycle told me that both primary cycles use corporal

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punishment. He thought that it was necessary, because “advice doesn’t work. They have to be scared.” He told me that parents approve of it as well, because it helps them discipline their children at home, a perspective also found by Wells (*ibid*). One of the fourth grade teachers beat students routinely for incorrect answers and also called them names like “stupid” and “idiot.” There was no reaction from the school administration.

2.3.8 Research questions

2.3.8.1 Original research interests. I began to work in Mali for the World Bank in 1996. At this time, I observed convergent pedagogy classrooms and was impressed by the level of student participation and apparently improved student learning, compared with other classrooms I had seen in Mali and other countries in the region (Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, and Guinea). I had developed an interest in national language instruction during my Master’s program, and convergent pedagogy’s combined reform of changes in language, curriculum, and methods was very intriguing. Being particularly interested in the impact of education on social and political development, convergent pedagogy’s emphasis on changed student-student and student-teacher interaction seemed promising.

Prior to pre-dissertation research, my extensive knowledge of the country’s previous reform efforts included participation and brief co-leadership of the World Bank team developing a sector project in the mid-1990s and the leadership of a case study team that examined the impact of World Bank assistance to the sector between 1990 and 2005. The case study work, which included a trip to Mali (I also traveled to Mali many times during my previous World Bank work) and was completed in 2005, enriched my

understanding of historical events, donor involvement in the system, and the continuing evolution of convergent pedagogy implementation.

When I entered Michigan State's doctoral program in 1998, I planned to focus my research on convergent pedagogy outcomes, especially those related to the behavior of students when they transitioned from school to independent community and family lives. I was interested in the ways in which students' convergent pedagogy experiences influenced their participation in community affairs.

Following coursework, exploratory research, and discussions with my committee, I formulated the following questions for my research practicum: (a) do students in convergent pedagogy and French-only classrooms differ in their perceptions of their role in classroom life?; and (b) do students in convergent pedagogy and French-only programs differ in their involvement in community life?

2.3.8.2 Practicum results. During my practicum research in 2000, it became clear that these questions would be problematic as dissertation questions. First, it was very challenging to interview convergent pedagogy students. Language and cultural barriers, magnified by the young age of the students, made it impossible to ask all but the most direct questions. I developed several data collection protocols, including drawing, guided group activities, and small group discussions, but the data were not rich enough to answer the first question. Second, I found that the pool of convergent pedagogy graduates who had transitioned to independent community and family life was very limited. There were two reasons for this. First, the program had begun with a small number of students and expanded slowly, so the pool of graduates was small. Second, most graduates were still in the school system. Their high rates of academic success meant that most of them had

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continued to high school and beyond (see Chapter 5 for additional discussion about graduates). When I returned to the United States, my committee and I discussed ways to explore my fundamental interests within the above constraints, and I began to develop my dissertation questions.

2.3.8.3 Development of dissertation questions. Following analysis of my practicum data in the fall and winter of 2000, I developed research questions for my dissertation that would focus on convergent pedagogy's development of a particular kind of behavior, "being *éveillé*," that was often mentioned by teachers and school principals, and that I thought could have an impact on later transitions to community and family life. This behavior reportedly included (a) increased student curiosity, (b) changed student-teacher interaction, and (c) behavior that conformed more to cultural norms than that of students educated in French-only schools.

Eveillé is a French word translated as "alert, sharp, bright" by Collins and Robert (1992), but colloquially used as "awakened," which Collins and Robert give as the translation for the nominative form, *éveil*. In Bamanankan, the first language of almost all those interviewed for the initial research, *éveillé* is the French term for the Bamanankan expression *kouunkolo kéné*, which translates more precisely into English as "proactive, intelligent, and energetic" (personal communication, 2002, as Bamanankan dictionaries are limited). In reading literature on community and national development and democratization (see Gutmann, 1987; Hahn, 1998; Haste and Torney-Purta, 1992; IEA, 1971; Ponder and Button, 1975), these characteristics seemed similar to those noted as potentially important for the development of students' views of political participation.

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Studies by these authors and others examined connections between classroom climate and the development of political interest, efficacy, and confidence among students. In more open climates, such as that found in convergent pedagogy classrooms, these attributes were stronger. A review of research found:

in classrooms with a more authoritative or closed climate, in which there was little chance for students to participate . . . in classroom discussions, students tended not to develop the positive feelings of political interest, efficacy, and confidence to the level that students in open climates did. (Schubert and Israel, unpublished)

Although young students are unlikely to have developed political interests, efficacy, self-confidence, and participation norms develop from the opening days of school.

My practicum research (2000) indicated that these behaviors were expressed by the terms *éveillé/kouunkolo kéné*, and consequently my original dissertation research questions were as follows:

- How do parents, teachers, and community members define *éveillé/kouunkolo kéné*?
- Is *éveillé/kouunkolo kéné* behavior developed in convergent pedagogy classes? What seems to encourage or inhibit it?
- Is *éveillé/kouunkolo kéné* behavior developed in French-only classes? What seems to encourage or inhibit it?
- What kinds of tension/dissonance and/or congruence do parents and community members see between the characteristics of students' *éveillé* behavior and cultural norms?

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- What impact, if any, do convergent pedagogy graduates, parents, teachers, and community members think that being *éveillé/kounkolo kéné* does and/or will have on their or on their children's/students' out-of-school lives?

2.3.8.4 Issues relating to original research questions. As I began my dissertation fieldwork in the fall of 2002, it became clear that the state of the education system and reform implementation were such that I would be unable to answer my original questions. The reform was not sufficiently implemented to allow conclusions about its impact on current students, nor about its potential impact on their out-of-school lives. Factors affecting educational quality in all classrooms affected the implementation of the reform to an even greater extent, as teachers were more experienced with the French-only program and required less support in its implementation. Teachers of French-only classes without textbooks had been educated in those classes themselves, and most of them had taught using that method for many years. Teachers of convergent pedagogy classes without textbooks or other resources were entirely dependent on their twenty day training course, which did not include practice teaching. Although convergent pedagogy teachers consistently used national languages, changes in teaching methods and curriculum content, which are equally important parts of the reform, were much less visible. There were moments in convergent pedagogy classes that seemed like “convergent pedagogy moments,” but it was impossible to find a fully-functioning class, let alone a fully-functioning class of each type for comparative purposes.

I was unable to determine this during my practicum research for three reasons. First, the timing of my practicum made it impossible for me to observe schools in session

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and thus fully understand the low level of functionality of the education system and the implementation of the reform. Second, teachers and school principals changed between the completion of my practicum and the start of dissertation data collection. What may have been a higher-functioning program during my practicum may have been reduced in quality by the time I began dissertation data collection. Third, Mali's political context changed and high level political support for the reform diminished between July 2000 and September 2002, with consequent reductions in available funding and personnel (World Bank, forthcoming a).

As a result, in discussions with my committee, we decided that I would move towards a case study approach that would explore the theoretical foundations and implementation of the reform from the perspectives of a variety of actors: convergent pedagogy graduates, parents, teachers, and pedagogical advisors/principals. In this way, I hoped to provide a constructive, new, and provocative set of avenues for reflection on participants' views of schooling and reform.

2.3.8.5 Final research questions. Consequently, my research questions were focused on understanding the perspectives of the actors cited above in the areas of theoretical and practical responses to the reforms. Questions were developed according to actors' roles in implementation. Sub-questions emerged during data collection. I also collected classroom observation data to provide readers with descriptions of the program as implemented and illustrate the processes and challenges described by actors. As interviews used many open-ended questions, some themes highlighted in the data chapters were not originally part of the data collection framework.

2.3.8.5.1 Primary research question: How do school-level actors in the education system perceive and react to the theoretical premises and implementation realities of convergent pedagogy?

2.3.8.5.2 Secondary research questions:

Convergent pedagogy graduates (data collected during practicum research):

- What were your schooling experiences like in lower primary school and as you continued through the education system?
- How involved were you in extracurricular activities, and why?
- What are your plans for the future, including your own children's schooling?

Parents and other community members:

- Why are your children enrolled in school?
- What is your knowledge of schooling?
- Did you have a role in program choice?
- What are your reactions to convergent pedagogy?
- What demands does convergent pedagogy make of you?
- How does schooling influence your children's out of school life, and do different programs produce different outcomes?

Teachers:

- What knowledge do you have of convergent pedagogy?
- How do you respond to the reform?
- What demands does the reform make of you?
- What support do you get to implement the reform?

- How do you perceive the outcomes of the reform?

Pedagogic advisors/school principals:

- What knowledge do you have of convergent pedagogy?
- How do you respond to the reform?
- What demands does the reform make of you?
- What support do you get to implement the reform?
- How do you perceive the outcomes of the reform?

In periodic discussions with my committee during the data analysis and writing stages, we further discussed and refined analytical foci.

2.3.9 Methodology and data collection. This study was conducted using ethnographic and case study methods. I used the results of my practicum research and my knowledge of the country and education system gained through World Bank work to determine research sites and design data collection methods. Contacts and knowledge gained through previous work were invaluable in facilitating my access to schools and discussions at the national level.

To explore the research questions, I worked in the three study schools described in section 2.3.2. Data collection began in late September 2002 and continued through mid-December of the same year. I collected data three to four days a week during this period and used the other days for transcription and preliminary analysis, as well as meetings with central-level personnel and administrative tasks. I collected data through: (a) classroom and school observations; (b) interviews with convergent pedagogy graduates, parents and other community members, teachers, and pedagogic

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advisors/school principals; (c) student testing; and (d) review of documents and statistical information.

2.3.9.1 Interviews. Interview questions were developed based on pre-dissertation research, literature review, and early classroom observations. Interview participants included: (a) teachers of second, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade convergent pedagogy and French-only lower primary classes; upper primary teachers; and high school teachers; (b) parents of students in second, fourth, and sixth grade classes; (c) in the case of the convergent pedagogy satellite school, non-parent community members; (d) all pedagogic advisors responsible for the main study school and satellite schools and the principals of the main study school (3) and convergent pedagogy satellite school (1); and (e) graduates of an early convergent pedagogy class (interviews conducted and data analyzed during practicum research).

When translation was required, it was conducted by a representative of Plan International (main study school) and a principal and a village council member (convergent pedagogy satellite school). Lists of interview questions are in Appendix I. Additional information on the selection of interviewees is provided in the following sections.

2.3.9.1.1 Teachers. At the main study school, second, fourth, and sixth grade teachers were interviewed from both cycles, as well as the upper primary teachers. At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, second, fifth, and sixth grade teachers were interviewed, as were upper primary teachers. The fifth grade teacher was added in this case because the fourth grade teacher was absent for much of the data collection period and the fifth grade teacher substitute taught during several observations of the fourth

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grade. The second grade teacher at the French-only satellite school was not interviewed, as observations were discontinued early. Lower primary teachers were interviewed individually, sometimes more than once, and upper primary teachers were interviewed in groups at each school. At a nearby high school, I held a discussion group with twelve teachers.

2.3.9.1.2 Parents/community members. Interview questions for parents were pre-tested with four parents: two of children in French-only classes and two of children in convergent pedagogy classes. Questions and interview protocols were then revised to make them more conducive to discussion about the main topics of the study.

Parents at the main study school were interviewed in groups of two to four, and parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school were interviewed in groups of thirty or more. The interview sample at the main study school was constructed by randomly selecting four children per class, two boys and two girls, and asking their parents to come for interviews. If parents did not respond to two invitations, another child was randomly selected and her/his parents were invited to be interviewed. In total, twenty-five parents were interviewed. In two instances, both parents came (second and fourth grade French-only pedagogy). In nineteen cases, only fathers came, and in two, only mothers. One class (a convergent pedagogy class with many children from distant villages) had only three children represented, as no fourth parent came after multiple invitations. At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, an open invitation was issued to all parents.

A group interview format was used to reduce participant anxiety and encourage discussion between parents. However, given the cultural dynamics, it was sometimes difficult to determine the number of parents who agreed or disagreed with particular

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statements, as group members would often agree non-verbally (especially in the large groups at the satellite school) or say that they had nothing to add to previous statements. Women were more likely than men to let group leaders report what they felt were common perspectives; younger men were less likely to actively participate.

At the main study school, interviews lasted approximately one hour and were held with the help of an interpreter, as most parents spoke Kita Maninkakan, a language related to Bamanankan (see section 2.3.3) that was not always intelligible to me as an intermediate-level Bamanankan learner. The interpreter was the local representative of Plan International. He was well known to parents and able to communicate well in Kita Maninkakan and French. To the best of my knowledge, parents believed he would hold their responses in confidence, and I had no intimations of exchanges between the interpreter and school personnel about the content of the interviews. Interviews were held adjacent to the school.

At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, interview time was limited. This was due to the school's remoteness and to its six week delay in opening (for grades 2 to 6; grade 1 still had not opened in December). Four interview sessions were conducted: single-sex groups of parents, a group of female community members and leaders, and a group of male community members and leaders. There was some overlap between the parent and the community member groups. All parents were parents of convergent pedagogy students, unless they had immigrated from other villages and/or had children in French-only schools there. It should be noted that almost all community members were also parents, but their children may have been younger or older than primary school age.

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Interviews lasted about one hour, with interviews of community members lasting slightly longer. These interviews were conducted with the help of interpreters, again due to my difficulties in understanding Kita Maninkakan. Interview participation at the satellite school was as follows:

Table 2.8
Interview Participation at the Convergent Pedagogy Satellite School

Mothers	Fathers	Female Community Members/Village Leaders	Male Community Members/Village Leaders
32	45	55	34

Parent interviews were conducted at the school. Interviews of female community members/village leaders and male community members/village leaders were conducted at customary gathering places in the village.

2.3.9.1.2.1 Notes on Malian families and gender and linguistic issue. A few notes on Malian families and the selection of interviewees: Mali's total fertility rate (the number of children delivered by an average woman) is seven (World Bank, 2005c). In the region of the study schools, almost all families are Muslim. Muslim men may marry up to four wives at a time. Non-Muslim men may also be polygamous. As divorce, death in childbirth, and other early deaths are not uncommon, men often have more than four wives during their reproductive years. Children older than toddlers customarily stay with their fathers when their parents divorce or their mothers die, and young children who leave with their mothers are usually returned to their fathers when they reach school age. As a result, these patriarchal families are often very large and contain many school-aged children.

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Thus, almost all parents had multiple children in school, as well as children who had previously attended. Interviewed parents were selected because they were parents of a specific child in a specific grade, but most had other children in primary school (some in the same French-only/convergent pedagogy cycle, some in the other, and some in Koranic school). Others had children in secondary school and many had adult children as well. In the satellite school, all children were in convergent pedagogy classes, but interviews revealed that parents were still influenced by cultural and historic understandings of French-only schooling. Thus, parents could not be easily classified as “French-only parents” or “convergent pedagogy parents,” and their responses did not show patterns based on these characteristics, with the exception of more openness towards the use of national languages as languages of instruction among parents of convergent pedagogy students.

More men were interviewed than women, as women in these communities were restricted in their non-family, non-productive activities. This influenced responses, as men are traditionally much less involved in their children’s lives, especially the lives of girl children and those of boys of lower primary school age. Fathers’ views are critical, however, as they make almost all decisions about enrollment and withdrawal (practicum data, 2002).

Male pronouns are used throughout the study for teachers, school principals, and pedagogic advisors, as there were so few female participants in these groups that the use of female pronouns would make them immediately identifiable.

As discussed in section 2.3.3, it should also be noted that the study schools were located in the Mandé area of the country (Mandé is a language group that includes

languages spoken by the Bambara, Malinké, and Soninké peoples). This may have influenced parental views, as about 80% of all adult Malians speak Bamanankan (Ethnologue, 2005), and Bamanankan and Maninkakan have some degree of co-intelligibility. Bamanankan-speaking children have more communicative and migration options in their first language than children from minority ethnic groups. Finally, although Bamanankan is the technical term for the language spoken by the Bambara, many people call the language Bambara and that term is used when quoting from interviews. Many study participants who actually spoke Kita Maninkakan also called their language Bambara.

2.3.9.1.3 School principals and pedagogic advisors. The three principals of the main study school (French-only and convergent pedagogy lower primary cycles and upper primary cycle) and the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school (lower and upper primary cycles) were interviewed, as were the four pedagogic advisors based in the sub-regional office responsible for school supervision. The principal of the traditional satellite school was not interviewed, as data collection at his school was terminated early due to ethical concerns.

Interviews were conducted in principals' and pedagogic advisors' offices. Interviews were held in French. Principals were interviewed two to three times, depending on their availability for any specific interview session. Pedagogic advisors were interviewed once. Interviews lasted a total of one to three hours each.

The principals of the convergent pedagogy and French-only lower primary cycle at the main study school and convergent pedagogy satellite school were also teachers of focus classes (fourth grade at the main study school and sixth grade at the satellite

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school). The classes of the convergent pedagogy principals were observed in order to examine their implementation of convergent pedagogy. The principal of the French-only lower primary cycle did not allow me to observe his teaching, saying that he was only teaching the class until another teacher was recruited. He taught for the first two months of the school year.

2.3.9.1.4 Convergent pedagogy graduates. Data for this chapter was collected and analyzed during my practicum research. That research was mainly conducted in and around Ségou, the site of the earliest convergent pedagogy classes and thus, since the program expanded very slowly during the 1980s, the home of most program graduates.

Interviewees were selected based on their first grade entry year and then on their response to an interview invitation. Seventeen graduates were interviewed, six of whom were young women. Those interviewed entered first grade in 1988, the second year of convergent pedagogy implementation. They attended primary school in Ségou, a large and historic city about 145 miles north of Bamako. As convergent pedagogy began in Ségou and expanded very slowly until 2000, the oldest program graduates are from its schools. This particular group was chosen because their primary school teacher still worked in the area and maintained a class list with contact information for many of the graduates.

All who responded rapidly were interviewed, so participation was linked to their proximity to their former school and their former teacher's knowledge of their whereabouts. Most of those who had moved to more rural areas, other cities, or other countries were not represented. However, as the interviews were held during the long

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school vacation, I was able to interview some graduates who were pursuing their studies elsewhere.

Graduates were interviewed individually, for twenty to forty-five minutes. All interviews were conducted by me, in French, without translation assistance, as all graduates were sufficiently fluent. Interviews took place in a principal's office at the central primary school in Ségou and focused on: (a) classroom experiences; (b) the transition from being a convergent pedagogy student in the lower primary cycle to being a convergent pedagogy graduate in a French-only class in the upper primary cycle; (c) students' involvement in extracurricular activities; and (d) graduates' plans for the future, including their ambitions for their children's schooling.

2.3.9.2 School and classroom observations. I began interviews prior to the beginning of the school year and used the information gathered to develop a framework for school and classroom observations. This framework focused my observations and permitted the development of my research questions and, later, the development of an analytic framework for understanding the data. Information gathered through the framework was expanded by contextual field notes. School observations consisted of field notes taken during principal-teacher meetings, school meetings, and observations of the school environment. These notes were reviewed and discussed with participants for their reactions and accuracy.

I observed second, fourth, and sixth grade French-only and convergent pedagogy classrooms from the first day of school for the particular grade I was observing through December 15. The actual amount of time I could observe was limited by delays in school/grade opening, unexpected school closures, and unexpected teacher absences and

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transfers. Another constraint was the poor condition of the road and security conditions that required that travel occur in daylight. A table showing the number of classroom observations by school, grade, and program is in Appendix J.

Some observations were video and audio-taped, and initial recordings were reviewed during the data collection process to modify the focus of future observations. I was a silent observer, sitting in the back of the classroom and attempting not to interfere with classroom processes. After initial curiosity, renewed when I began to record sessions, students ignored me, most of the time. Several times, during the observation period, teachers requested my participation in grading, questioning students and performing other classroom tasks and I agreed to minimize disruption. At other times, I declined requests for more extensive involvement.

I also observed non-classroom school events, such as meetings between teachers or a set of teachers and principals, teacher arrival and departure times, school openings and closings, and the work of other peripheral personnel such as the local director of Plan International.

2.3.9.2.1 Class composition. In choosing my main study site, I looked for a school that contained convergent pedagogy and French-only classrooms at the same location, in order to maximize similarities between children in the two programs. At this site, principals and Parents' Association (*Association des parents d'élèves*, APE) leadership assured me that children were randomly assigned to classrooms, using a system of placing the names in two stacks, boys and girls, and alternately selecting from each stack for each classrooms.

However, the second grade convergent pedagogy teacher reported that parents who enrolled their children early in the process were more likely to be able to enroll them in French-only classes:

Because in [the French-only school], if the numbers are reached, they send the children to [the convergent pedagogy school]. There's a quota. It's seventy per class. If here there are forty and there are seventy, they send the rest here.²⁵

This may be linked to family socioeconomic status (families of higher status might enroll their children earlier), but further research is needed to explore this issue. Other teachers and some parents reported that civil service parents were less likely to want their children in convergent pedagogy, but, again, evidence is insufficient. However, this should be considered when examining evaluation data.

2.3.9.3 Collection of artifacts. I collected and reviewed classroom artifacts such as student work, for all of the studied classrooms, although teachers differed in their willingness to share them. Examples of student work can be found in Appendix K.

2.3.9.4 Student testing. I administered reading and mathematic tests to fourth and sixth graders at the main study school. I tested students in the middle of December, as late in the data collection period as possible, so that they would have the maximum amount of recent schooling and also be as accustomed to my presence as possible. I decided not to test second graders because their handwriting was often illegible and very few of them were able to read at all. In addition, second graders in French-only classes could not yet speak enough French to be tested in French, and second graders in convergent pedagogy were just learning to write Bamanankan and didn't speak French at all.

²⁵ These class sizes were almost always exceeded.

I initially administered a pre-test to determine an appropriate level for the test and optimal methods of administration. Teachers and school principals were unhappy with the pre-test; they thought it was far too easy and that I was underestimating their students. Unfortunately, the students could not answer the questions. For the final test, I reduced the difficulty of the problems, giving fourth graders what the teachers called first grade work and giving sixth graders what they called fourth grade work (see Appendix D for the test questions). Again, teachers and school principals were unhappy; again, the students did very badly but not as badly (see above for the results).

In administering the test, I attempted to simulate the conditions under which students generally take tests. However, I observed the monthly tests that teachers gave at the end of October and November for ideas and noticed that there was rampant cheating. That experience and the administration of the pre-test exposed many cheating strategies and allowed me, I believe, to keep it to a minimum during the actual test. Crowding made monitoring difficult, however, and the French-only sixth grade class had many more students than the convergent pedagogy sixth grade, so there was an increased “cheating effect.”

I was also concerned that students’ lack of exposure to printed text would affect their ability to decipher the tests. To avoid this, I had teachers copy test questions onto chalkboards, using the style they used for lessons and their own tests. I also had teachers give the test instructions, which we practiced during the pre-test and prior to the actual test. Teachers habitually read tests for students, emphasizing and defining key words, so that student “reading” could consist of recitation of teacher-read text. For the test I gave, teachers read instructions but not the actual passages. Students used familiar paper that I

provided from a store adjacent to the school. The tests for French-only students were in French, and the tests for convergent pedagogy students were in French and Bamanankan.

2.3.9.5 Review of documents and statistical information. Throughout the planning and execution of the study, I reviewed documents from international donors and the Malian ministries of education. I also reviewed pertinent statistical databases, including those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank.

2.3.10 Data analysis

2.3.10.1 During the data collection period. During data collection, I continuously reviewed data to identify initial patterns, categories, and themes. I shared some data informally with participants, to the extent possible given confidentiality constraints and participants' professional responsibilities, for triangulation and member checking. In particular, I drew on the expertise of several national level technical personnel for help with strategies for additional data collection and the interpretation of some data. I also discussed issues with Michel Wambach, the founder of convergent pedagogy. The process of data transcription and translation began while I was in the field.

2.3.10.2 Following the data collection period.

2.3.10.2.1 Transcription and translation. All interview data (written and audio-taped) were transcribed and translated. All classroom observation data were transcribed. Video information was reviewed and coded, and a summary tape was produced with examples of convergent pedagogy and French-only teaching, as well as images of the

school environment. For assistance with the translation of some difficult Bamanankan passages, I was assisted by a Malian graduate student.

2.3.10.2.2 Coding and analysis. All transcribed data were coded and analyzed using the Microsoft Word and the NVivo software programs. Data was coded into larger themes and then into sub-themes, which were structured in data trees. As I wrote sections using the data, I created additional sub-codes, which were cross-referenced by theme.

2.3.10.2.3 Analytic memos. Immediately upon my return to the United States, I began writing a series of analytic memos that reported and analyzed data collection methods and explored emerging themes in the data. These memos were shared with committee members as the basis for discussion of directions for the dissertation. Parts of some memos are included in the dissertation chapters.

2.3.10.3 Issues of language. Data were collected in Bamanankan, Kita Maninkakan, French, and English. I translated data as necessary, occasionally seeking help from colleagues who speak Bamanankan as their first language. In translating from the French, my extensive background in working in education in “francophone” Africa permitted me to understand local colloquialisms and sector-specific technical terms and improved the accuracy of translation.

2.4 Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations that should be considered when reviewing this study. First, it was designed to examine a convergent pedagogy program that was

perceived as successful by staff of the Ministry of Education, so it may not be representative of reform implementation in Mali as a whole.

Second, the sample size was small, and the context was not representative of the country as a whole. Mali is a highly diverse country: diverse in geography, ethnicity, degree of urbanization, and socioeconomic status of the population. The functioning of the school system and its ability to implement the complex convergent pedagogy reform vary greatly between regions and depend to different degrees on these contextual factors.

Third, the study was conducted by one observer, with a particular background as a participant in several years of Mali's education reform efforts under the aegis of the World Bank. Other observers with different backgrounds may have different perspectives. My particular characteristics, as non-African, female, and French-speaking (with a limited ability to converse in Bamanankan), may have influenced actors' responses. While being female diminished my status, being non-African and French-speaking increased it, and may have made actors, particularly lower-status parents and teachers, less likely to contradict what they felt would be the perspective of the administration.

Last, although I have spent considerable time in West and Central Africa over the past fifteen years, the study setting was complex and culturally different from my previous experiences. Cultural norms of participation influenced the responses of all participants. In the analysis of parent and community member interview data, I made every effort to indicate when views seemed widely shared and when they were representative of smaller numbers of parents, but cultural conditions and the group

interview format made absolute accuracy in this area impossible. This was particularly true for the satellite school, where participants were interviewed in large groups.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: REFORM IN CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

After 150 years of French-only schooling, student achievement in West Africa is among the lowest in the world. Regardless, attempts at education reform have focused more on the expansion of the existing system than on changing its substance. The region's colonial history, the political elite, and global pressures have worked together to maintain a form of schooling that has been remarkably resistant to change. Across the region, almost all students are still taught in a language they do not understand, teacher preparation still uses the rote memorization methods that teachers later use to teach their classes, and curricular change has been minimal.

In Mali, as in neighboring countries, despite grade repetition rates of almost 20% per year and failure rates of close to 40% on the sixth grade graduation exam (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005), French-only schooling remains the dominant instructional modality. Although convergent pedagogy students repeat grades far less frequently, are much more likely to remain in school until sixth grade, and much more likely to pass the sixth grade graduation exam (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003), the current Malian government and international donors seem prepared to ignore the reform until it disappears (see *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, forthcoming b). Personnel changes and a lack of financing following rapid expansion (during a brief period of World Bank support) have now produced a version of

the reform so dilute that its effects on student achievement have been diminished (CEPEC, 2005; observation data, March 2005).

Convergent pedagogy is a complex reform being implemented in an under-studied environment. Literature from the United States discusses the challenges of reform, including the ‘tenacity of the grammar of schooling’ (Tyack and Cuban, 1995); the existence of disparate interest groups unwilling to come together and support reform (Cusick, 1992); the ability of schools to absorb reform without changing their core practices (Cusick, 1992; Meyer and Rowan, 1983); and the complexity and uncertainty of teaching (Cohen, 1988; Cuban, 1984; Floden and Buchmann, 1993). All of these elements are present in the Malian educational environment, in addition to challenges inherent to that context: the colonial legacy, the fragility of the education system, the influence of a multitude of international actors, and the complexity of the cultural environment.

In addition, convergent pedagogy is a multi-faceted reform, requiring change in language of instruction, teaching methods, and curriculum content. Although numerous American and international studies have examined language of instruction issues (among others, see Cummins, 1978, 1983 and 1986; Dutcher, 1997; Trudell, 2004; Patrinos and Velez, 1996; Klaus et al, 2005; Thomas and Collier, 1997; Walter, 2004 and 2005), convergent pedagogy is the only relatively large-scale reform of its type in the former French colonies of West and Central Africa. In part because its expansion is recent, it has not been extensively studied. The studies that do exist (ADEA, 2003; Canvin, 2003; Carlson, 2004; Doumbia, 2000; Haidara, 1999; Haidara, undated; Trefault, 1999) concentrate on the system-level implementation of the reform (ADEA, Trefault) or on the

perspectives of single groups of actors within or across schools (Carlson; Canvin; Haidara). Planned and ongoing studies of language of instruction-only reform in Cameroon (Summer Institute of Linguistics) and Senegal (World Bank), respectively, look primarily at student achievement.

This dissertation explores the implementation of convergent pedagogy within the wider context of Mali's education system. It does so from the perspectives of school level actors, including graduates, parents, teachers, and principals/pedagogic advisors. It is significantly different from the studies mentioned above, as it explores the perspectives of a range of actors and the conflicts within and across those actors' perspectives. These perspectives are then linked to larger arguments about the purposes of schooling and the development of theory about reform design and implementation. In order to provide context for these discussions, this chapter examines the areas of: (a) the legacy of colonialism; (b) the strength of Real School (Metz, 1990); (c) the substance of the convergent pedagogy reform; and (d) the evolving purposes of schooling.

3.2 Colonial schooling

When the French colonial regime began to open schools in West Africa in the nineteenth century, they coexisted with three other kinds of education: (a) scaffolded apprenticeship, through which children were prepared for their adult roles in community life (see Lave and Wenger, 1991; Muskin, 1997); (b) Koranic schooling, begun during the Islamic transition in the thirteenth century; and (c) a series of indigenous cultural routines established for children's development (Lancy, 1996; Moore, 2003) and intended

to transmit culture and production methods intact from one generation to the next (Gay and Cole, 1967; Scott, 1976).

Colonial education authorities had very different goals: to train the small number of low level clerks needed by the administration and to further France's "*mission civilatrice*:" colonialism as cultural missionary work (Essiben, 1980). The French saw their colonialism in Africa as a gift (Hardy, 1917; Treffgarne, 1975), as did some observers (Mumford and Orde-Brown, 1935): the provision of French culture and civilization to the "savages" (Corevin, 1973).

An essential part of this gift was the transmission of the French language (*ibid.*). The colonial government's language policy dated to 1538, when the government forbade the use of languages other than French for official purposes within the territory of France (Essiben, 1980). This law was reinforced in 1922, when the French government issued a policy statement for its African schools, requiring them to use French as the only language of instruction, as it was the only language that could 'bring the natives towards civilization' (*ibid.*). In 1938, the French government proclaimed: "Teaching must be carried out exclusively in the French language. Indigenous idioms (*sic*) are forbidden" (Presidential Decree, 1938), and that policy remained in place until Independence. Portraits of African languages as dialects, as inappropriate for the teaching of science, and of not having 'enough words' can be seen in the literature beginning in the nineteenth century (see Bourgui, 1979; Cornevin, 1973; Dumestre, 1994; Touré, 1976 for examples).

The use of French as the language of instruction carried a cultural message separating children from their families and communities, devaluing African identity, and

promoting French identity as superior (Kelly, 1986). According to Koné (1995, cited in Hutchison, 1997):

So far in Africa, we have failed to educate our people The most serious problem resides in our inability to communicate to our brother, sister, daughter or niece, son or nephew, the farmers, the herders, the fishermen, among others, what we have learned in school. If you happen to be educated and if you are African, ask yourself: How much of what I have learned can I translate in an understandable way to the people who speak my mother tongue?

The education system “formed a discrete cultural enclave where French men detached the sons of indigenous elites from African society” (Kelly, 1986, p. 172; see also Carlson, 2004; DeVries, 1998; Gérard, 1997; Serpell, 1993). Literacy in the colonial language through colonial mores was not transferable to the non-school setting, so there could be no spontaneous spread of language, skills, or information. It was a subtractive literacy, which devalued, to the point of denying the existence of, the languages, activities, and culture of the non-school environment. Generations of African children, from the early days of colonization until Independence, recited “*Nos ancêtres les Gaulois*” (our ancestors the Gauls) at the start of history lessons, which were lessons of French history. The effects of this long term denial of African languages and identity linger in participants’ beliefs about the value of the French-only schooling model (Canvin, 2003; Carlson, 2004).

3.3 Real School: Legitimacy and equity

In the face of overwhelming student failure and financial dependence on international donors, why do countries in the region insist on maintaining its expensive

parameters (most obviously, concrete classrooms, imported textbooks, civil service teachers, and centralized administration)?²⁶ Tyack and Cuban, in their review of school reform in the United States (1995), describe the reform-inhibiting tensions caused by pressure to maintain the legitimacy of schooling as an institution. In response, school systems attempt to retain congruence with the public's image of "real schooling." Similarly, one of the principal reasons for the Malian maintenance of this schooling mode is the pursuit of legitimacy by parents, school systems, and governments. Another is governments' desire to appear as though they are pursuing equity.

Lancy's (1996) recollection of schooling in Liberia describes classrooms throughout the region:

how much time and energy is taken up with ritualized activity. Everyone considers these trappings, including the uniforms, an essential, if not *the* essential attribute of school For an observer, it is painful to watch. There are so many distractions and the language barrier precludes explanation, so everything is done by rote . . . but no one acts as if there is anything wrong with what is going on.

(1996, pp. 191-192)

Metz (1990), examining this phenomena in the United States, names it Real School. She defines Real School as school that adheres to a script that is seen by those enacting it as representing genuine schooling, even though it does not respond to the needs of students. Metz offers an example from the United States: "children celebrated when the substitute teacher gave them grade-level books, which they embraced but never worked in. They

²⁶ Although contract teachers became an important part of the educational landscape in the region in the 1990s, they are considered a temporary, emergency measure. The Malian government recently doubled their salaries and took other measures to make them more like civil service teachers (World Bank, forthcoming a).

wanted the books so they could ‘not-do’ them” (1989, p. 88). Similarly, education system personnel in Chad and a study school principal in Mali would not sanction the use of reading textbooks out of grade order, even though students could not read the books intended for the grade in which they were officially enrolled. The Real School script does not include using books marked FIRST GRADE when children are in second grade (World Bank mission, 1996; dissertation data, 2002).

Another reason for the persistence of Real School is the importance of perceived equity (Foster, 1965). The use of the pseudo-meritocratic Real School approach satisfies wealthy parents, poor parents, and the elite. Rural parents know that their children are already at a disadvantage and are thus unwilling to consider anything that diverges from the Real School script, for fear that their children’s chances will suffer (see Sinclair, 1980; Trudell, 2005; see also Delpit, 1995 for similarities with the United States). Wealthy parents thus are able to transmit their status to their children. Even though these children are also learning little in school, they are relatively well-placed to succeed on the exam. Selection through an apparently meritocratic process, high stakes exams, puts the blame for failure on students, not the system. This reduces governmental responsibility, which is particularly important for fragile regimes, as has been the case in Mali since the late 1960s.

The image of “real schooling” spread across the United States during the Common School era and has spread between countries since then. The broad characteristics of mass public schooling (age-graded classrooms, teachers as the providers of knowledge, and the subjects of the curriculum) look remarkably similar across developed countries. These countries have exported its essence through

colonialism and international aid. Meyer et al argue that educational ideals belong to a global culture of “modern” schooling, which flows across national boundaries (Meyer, Kamens and Benavot, 1992, cited in Anderson-Levitt and Alimasi, 2000), and Ramirez and Boli (1987) argue that countries adopt cultural ideals of “modern” schooling as part of the process of defining themselves as modern nation-states. Ginsburg et al’s contrasting argument that countries adopt Western ideas under pressure from more dominant countries and from international organizations like the IMF and the World Bank (Ginsburg, Cooper, Rahhu and Zegarra, 1991; see also Samoff, 1993) does not detract from the consensus that schooling across countries looks similar. Rounds of conferences, study tours and donor visits, and the technical assistance and conditionalities of international aid, show countries what others are doing and encourage them to copy reforms that seem like norms of dominant practice at any given time (Anderson-Levitt and Alimasi, 2000). Although former colonies tend to emphasize different parts of their education systems, based on the priorities of their former colonizers (see Cummings, 2003), the broad parameters of schooling look similar across countries.

In addition to the desire for internationally validated education systems, African governments have a broader need for symbols of their legitimacy. Unable to provide basic public services without external aid (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; see World Bank, forthcoming a, for a discussion of the Malian education sector’s donor dependence), Real Schools are one marker of Real Governments of Real Countries. Even though national revenue may be insufficient to finance basic public services (World Bank, 2003b) and policy may be dictated by international donors (Ginsberg et al, 1991; Samoff, 1993), schools that look like Real Schools are markers of sovereignty, against all odds.

3.4 The challenges of convergent pedagogy

As shown above, convergent pedagogy has struggled to compete with the vision of Real School, as has all post-colonial reform. The substance of convergent pedagogy makes its implementation even more difficult, as it is essentially three reforms in one, calling for change in language of instruction, teaching methods, and curriculum content. This section will discuss particular challenges in each of those areas.

3.4.1 Language of instruction.

3.4.1.1 Technical issues. Technical issues related to language policy have been thoroughly discussed in the developed and developing country literature, although few studies have been conducted in the former French colonies of West Africa, due to the paucity of programs (the studies that exist are primarily small scale program evaluations). In the United States, Thomas and Collier (1997) conducted a large-scale study on the impact of language programs on students' short and long term academic success. They examined academic outcomes for children in six kinds of programs being used to educate children entering school speaking languages other than English (students classified as Limited English Proficient). Their research found that students in programs where all instruction was conducted in English had the lowest test scores. As discussed in Walter (2004), the most important predictor of students' long-term school success was the "inclusion of cognitively complex on-grade academic instruction through the student's first language for as long as possible (at least through grade 5 or 6) and cognitively complex on-grade-level academic instruction through the second language (English) for part of the school day" (p. 7). Programs that failed to include substantial amounts of

instruction in the first languages of language minority children resulted in low levels of academic achievement for 80 to 90% of participants (cited in Walter, 2004).

Other studies, particularly Cummins' work (1978, 1981, 1983, and 1998, among others) have examined the impact of first language instruction for second language learners and found that attention to the acquisition of literacy in students' first languages and students' continued study in those languages positively affected their achievement in the second language. Dutcher (1997) conducted a review of research on the importance of first language instruction that refuted a number of popular myths about language of instruction, particularly that (a) children have learned their first language by the time they start school; (b) children learn second languages more easily than adults; (c) students learn second languages more easily through increased exposure, even at the expense of time spent in their first language; and (d) children have learned a language once they can speak it.

Most relevant to developing countries and the agencies that finance their education systems, Walter (2004) examined Thomas and Collier's data and found that the choice of language of instruction and the method by which language is taught have significant implications for the development of countries' human capital. The provision of education in students' first languages is linked to countries' levels of literacy and development. Countries using long-term transitional programs are likely to produce significantly higher numbers of high and mid-level professionals than countries that educate students solely through a foreign language. In addition, Walter found a very close relationship between the use of students' first languages and school enrollment and persistence. Data in Mali for persistence are similar—the pre-sixth grade drop out rate

for convergent pedagogy students was 1.6% in 2003, versus 5.7% for students in French-only classrooms (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003).

3.4.1.2 Political issues. Political factors continue to trump technical ones when countries make decisions about language policy. Although West African countries became officially independent between 1958 and 1961, the new leaders were the products of the colonial education system and came to power with French support. There can be no doubt that the French have played an instrumental role in keeping French the language of instruction in their former colonies. From the policy declarations cited earlier to French insistence on dominating the educational publishing industry (including a ban on the import of printing presses to the former colonies which lasted until 1990) (Hutchison, undated), French language policy has been consistent and tightly followed (Bourgieu, 1979; Hutchison, 1998). In 1964, President Pompidou said: "Of all the countries, France is the one which holds most deeply to the exportation of its language and culture. This characteristic is truly specific to us" (*ibid*). All of the former colonies continue to use French for administrative and educational functions:

Nothing or almost nothing has changed since the installation of the French at the end of the 19th century In 1993 as in 1893, French is the unique idiom of the State, and other languages do not, so to speak, exist at all (Dumestre, 1993).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the position of the French government began to change, as a number of French academics and technicians promoted the idea that it was impossible to hope that conducting primary education in French in African schools could be productive in either a political or a technical sense (Hutchison, unpublished). This marked the advent of programs designed to smooth the transition of students to French though the

use of African languages in the early grades of primary school. Even the French Ministry of External Affairs proclaimed that “to recognize the right of the people of the *francophonie* to give their languages and creoles (sic) their social and historical chance is not incompatible with a vigorous and efficient policy promoting the use of French” (1983). A number of small scale programs using national languages began at this time in Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Cameroon, among other countries.

However, these programs never graduated from their experimental status. In some cases, “experimental” programs have continued for decades without further recognition. As described in Chapter 1 and further discussed below, all countries in West and Central Africa, with the exception of Guinea, have continuously used French as the sole language of instruction in the vast majority of their classrooms. In addition, through the 1990s, France continued to fund fourteen agencies in Africa mandated to promote the use of French (Hutchison, 1997). Some of this was in order to protect French economic interests: in the mid-1980s, the French Ministry of External Affairs remarked “The Maghreb and black Africa (sic) receive almost 25% of our total [textbook] exports and this is the world region where the increases have been the strongest for the past twenty years In these markets, France has a monopoly that covers 90% of sales” (1984). Some of it was for political and cultural reasons, as described above.

The continued instructional use of colonial languages that students do not speak or understand is also due to incoherencies between the policies of international institutions and the projects that they finance. The World Bank, the United Nations, the International Labor Organization, and the Organization of American States have all called for the use of national languages in education (World Bank, 1995 and forthcoming

a). However, funding and policy support remain uneven, largely dependent on the views of technical personnel, and subject to change as personnel change (see World Bank, forthcoming a), and even internal coordination is not guaranteed. Policy and program design are “loosely coupled” (Meyers and Rowan, 1983) and even internal programs are not always coordinated (personal experience). The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) recently called for the use of students’ first language in all primary education programs (ADEA, 2005), but it remains to be seen whether this policy declaration will lead to policy changes.

Other reasons for the continuation of colonial-language immersion programs are: policy-makers’ concerns about ethnic competition (Walter, 2004); the costs of producing materials in a range of languages (see Patrinos and Velez, 1996; Vawada and Patrinos, 1998); the special problems of children of transferable civil servants (who comprise a large part of the elite) (Diarra and Haidara, 1999); views about the importance of the role of official languages in nation-building (Walter, 2004); children in multi-lingual environments (Diarra and Haidara, 1999); and the problems of teacher and materials shortages (Walter, 2004).

Many of these financial and technical difficulties are addressed in the literature cited above. The additional costs of producing materials in multiple national languages have been shown to be more than offset by cost gains due to reduced repetition and dropout and increased short- and long-term student achievement.

Opposition to the use of students’ first languages as languages of instruction continues to be primarily a political issue. In the language of instruction debates, as said by a linguist working for the Organization of African Unity:

The history of language policies doesn't show many examples of policy decisions being conditioned and influenced by the results of experiments, as they might have been reported in case studies. Language imposition and replacement of a language by another have been the consequences of conquests and revolutions. (Mateene, 1996)

3.4.2 Content. In addition to the maintenance of colonial languages of instruction, African education systems have been slow to change the content of schooling. Following immediate post-colonial changes, such as including national history and not only French history in curricula, curriculum reform has been slow and difficult to implement (Samoff, 1993 and World Bank, forthcoming a). Dewey observed education in the 1930s United States, "[T]he traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and outside" (1938, p. 18), and the World Bank described Malian education in 1973: "The instruction is theoretical and divided into the French-only long list of unintegrated subjects. This curriculum . . . using a medium unfamiliar to the majority of rural students, is largely responsible for the poor internal efficiency of the system" (World Bank, 1973, p. 38). These are apt descriptions of curriculum in most West Africa classrooms in 2006. School inspectors from colonial regimes would be comfortable in twenty-first century classrooms, and, if anything, might complain that the quality of education has decreased in the post-colonial era with the expansion of the system (Grindal, 1972).

3.4.2.1 "Relevance." Post-Independence, countries attempted a number of content-related education reforms. In addition to those designed to "Africanize" curricula and increase access (see *Ministère de l'Education de Base*, 1962; Sinclair, 1980), these

reforms were generally described as ways to increase “relevance”; to reflect the present and assumed future lives of rural students in the curriculum. Julius Nyerere’s *Education for Self-Reliance* (1967) is the best known relevance manifesto. In addition to guiding Tanzania’s education reform, it inspired many other programs. Proposed reforms were concentrated around agricultural and vocational education and also aimed to improve students’ opinions of rural life, lower the costs of schooling (in this period of emphasis on expansion), and develop character traits “conducive to social stability and worker productivity” (Sinclair, 1980, p. 81; see also Samoff, 1993).

Sinclair (1980) reviewed attempts to increase relevance around the world and discovered almost unremitting failure. Examining programs developed during the colonial era and in the early years of independence, he did not find lasting successes during either period. In the colonial era, “relevant” programs were resented by nationalist movements as attempts to reduce the amount, quality, and status of schooling being provided to colonial subjects. In the British African colonies, attempts by the Phelps-Stokes Commission to develop “adapted” educational programs were also rejected by parents (Gifford and Weiskel, 1971; Stroud, 2002, cited in Trudell, 2005).

In the post-independence period, parents and communities felt that relevant schooling diminished children’s opportunities to change their social status. In Sinclair’s description of a program set in Burkina Faso, French colonial personnel attempted to increase access to schooling in rural areas by shortening the length of the school cycle and restricting content to basic literacy and numeracy (in French) and agricultural training. The program was extremely unpopular. The Burkinabe government attempted to continue it after independence, due to the country’s resource constraints and desire to

expand educational access, but was forced to close it ten years later.

Other programs reviewed by Sinclair generally failed for a variety of related reasons: parental concerns that the addition of agricultural and vocational skills to the curriculum would reduce the already limited amount of time available for academics and thus diminish their children's chance for success on high stakes exams; the lack of community involvement in program design; expectations that communities would provide funding and labor; conflict and change in educational policy; a lack of training and support for teachers; overly ambitious objectives; and a lack of connection between curriculum reform and labor market reality. Sinclair also found considerable trepidation about the introduction of new, untested agriculture practices in areas dependent on subsistence agriculture. Attempts to change long-term, community-sanctioned subsistence practices were seen as too risky by communities.

Most of these programs were abandoned by the end of the 1970s. With the exception of some structural reforms, such as those oriented towards "education by objectives," which have been semi-implemented across the region through French technical assistance (see World Bank, forthcoming a for a description of curriculum reform in Mali), there have been no major changes to curriculum content in the region.²⁷ Textbook-based approaches to reform have been tried, most notably through the production of regional mathematics textbooks by the *Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation des pays ayant le français en partage* (CONFEMEN) in the 1990s, but the absence of books in most classrooms and very limited teacher education have reduced

²⁷ Some community school programs have attempted to incorporate more national language instruction and local curriculum content, but they are under pressure to develop programs that will allow students access to the formal school system. Also, due to a termination of USAID funding and demand from parents, some of them are being converted to public schools.

their impact.

3.4.3 Instructional methods. Instructional methods in the region have changed little since the colonial era. Teacher-centered, “chalk and talk” approaches based on rote memorization and recitation characterize French-only classrooms. Teacher-student relationships are hierarchical and authoritarian, and there is no collaboration between students. Student outcomes are significantly improved by participation in more interactive classrooms (Walter, 2005; World Bank, 1991), but the creation of these classrooms has proven impossible in most countries in the region.

One set of reasons for the maintenance of colonial-style instruction is linked to similarities between the four types of education, described above, that coexist in the region: French-only schooling; Koranic schooling; apprenticeship; and cultural routines. Moore (2003) studied the parental and community teaching of folktales and legends, in northern Cameroon, and her findings may be applicable to other countries of the region. As described by Moore, teaching (provided by licensed teachers, parents, religious leaders, or community members, depending on the context) is similar across Koranic, traditional (in this case, the learning of folktales), and French-only schooling. Teachers provide content to students, who are expected to memorize and repeat it. Moore calls this “guided repetition,” defined as:

a social practice for teaching and learning that involves modeling by the expert and imitation of the model by a novice, followed by rehearsal and performance by the novice. The [teacher] expert supervises the novice at each stage and may provide assistance, evaluation, and/or correction as the novice attempts to master the new skill. (p. 272)

Despite the characteristics of French-only schooling that separate it from village and family life, there are a number of congruent elements between all four kinds of schooling, enhancing the legitimacy of French-only teaching. They include the use of memorization as the primary teaching technique, a view of knowledge as absolute, and a view of teachers as unquestionable. The persistence of French-only schooling, despite the very high rate of student failure, is due partly to the reflection of local methods and values in the colonial model.

Another reason for the stagnation of instructional methods is the difficulty of changing teaching practice. Drawing on the United States literature, it is clear that teaching practice is resistant to change, even when attempts are large-scale and high profile (National Commission of Mathematics and Science, 2000 and National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Reformers have attempted to introduce progressive education (Dewey, 1938/1997), constructivism (Sfard, 1998), and core knowledge (Hirsch, 1996), among other paradigms.

Each of these, had they been truly adopted and successfully implemented, would have significantly changed the form and content of teaching in the United States. However, although each of these may have influenced some schools, some districts and even some areas of national reform, in general schools today look little different from schools at the beginning of the century. Students are often still seated in rows, most classrooms are age-graded, and teaching has changed little from the knowledge-delivery model (Cohen, 1988; Cuban, 1993; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Some of this is inherent in the nature of schools: their characteristics as tightly structured organizations, with their own power structures, customs and norms, make them not particularly open to change,

especially change advocated by their newest members. In addition, new teachers, confronted with the complexities of teaching, may find their energies absorbed by their need to learn how to teach and how to fit into school structures, making them unlikely reformers.

In Mali and other countries in the region, policy reform and subsequent donor support has focused on practicing teachers (Farrell and Oliveira, 1993). This is partly due to the influential arguments of the World Bank publication *Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries* (1991). Lockheed and Verspoor placed increased emphasis on in-service teacher education, arguing that pre-service programs needed substantial, and thus more difficult, institutional-level change to be more effective. In response to this argument, and “folk wisdom” that pre-service programs do not have much impact on teacher practice (Grossman, 1990), pre-service teacher education programs in Mali and neighboring countries have remained unchanged for decades (World Bank, forthcoming a). Cut off from developments in the field, due to non-existent communications systems and non-existent budgets for publications and travel to meet with colleagues or attend conferences, student teachers continue to sit in rows like primary school students, copy from the board, memorize, and recite, just as their charges will be expected to do (World Bank, forthcoming a).

Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries promoted the use of professional development for practicing teachers as less costly and more effective than pre-service education for new teachers. In-service has the added benefit of not requiring donors to concern themselves with problems of scholarships for teacher candidates and

salaries for new teachers, which governments are generally required to finance²⁸ and ministries of finance are generally reluctant to finance.

In-service programs have traditionally been delivered by the “cascade” method. Programs start with central level teacher educators receiving training from international or, less commonly, regional “experts,” perhaps working in collaboration with national teacher education colleges. These central level educators are to train regional level staff, who train local staff, who eventually train teachers, who then work with students. By the time the training arrives in the classroom, its message has been so diluted as to render its effects negligible.

Despite the emphasis on professional development, its effectiveness in the “francophone” countries is largely unknown and questionable. Based on data on student persistence, outcomes have improved only slightly (World Bank, 2003a), and based on personal classroom observation data across the region from 1991-2005, practice remains mostly unchanged. A large scale, outcomes-based evaluation of the impact of in-service teacher education in the region has never been conducted.

Other aspects of teaching that make changing practice so difficult include the isolation of teachers and the centralization of academic expectations. In Mali, teachers are physically isolated: hundreds of kilometers of dirt road or sand track can separate schools from each other, and population density is so low that many schools are multigrade and employ only one or two teachers. Malian teachers are so professionally isolated that they are often unaware that different programs are being implemented in the classrooms across the courtyard (practicum data, July 2000). The organization of

²⁸ Recently, however, donors have begun to make funds available for teacher salaries, as it has become clear that system expansion in its current form cannot continue without donor financing of operational costs.

elementary school teachers by grade level rather than subject area further limits professional dialogue (see Ma, 1999 for contrasts between the American (similar to the Malian age-graded school organization) and Chinese systems in this area).

Teachers' separation from their colleagues inhibits reform by permitting teachers to enact or sabotage reform at their discretion, within the privacy of their own classrooms. Individual teachers decide whether and how much of particular reforms they wish to implement (McLaughlin, 1987). In addition, teachers' isolation stymies the dissemination of reform, even if individual teachers are interested and supportive (Cuban, 1993; practicum data, 2000). In the case of Cohen's Mrs. Oublier (1990), teachers filter reform through established instructional practice, even though they may think that they are implementing reform in its entirety. Without support from colleagues or supervisors (Malian teachers in study classrooms received fewer than one visit per year from a supervisor; see also World Bank, forthcoming a), the congruence of teacher practice with national policy is dependent on teacher characteristics.

In addition, teaching in countries with centralized education systems, like Mali's, is governed by centralized curriculum guidelines, standards, and assessment tests. This leads to demands for homogenization and constraints on teachers: there is generally only one approved textbook series per subject and no supplemental instructional materials. Teachers are expected to cover the official curriculum at the official pace, and high stakes exams are drawn directly from the curriculum, to the point of lifting reading comprehension passages and mathematics problems directly from textbooks (practicum data, 2000; dissertation data, 2002).

3.5 Designing reform to increase acceptance

The educators who designed convergent pedagogy made strategic choices to increase its appeal. They observed and, in some cases, participated in the “relevant” education movement and national language adult literacy campaigns and programs, and became aware of potential areas of resistance (*Ministère de l'Éducation de Base*, 1998). Convergent pedagogy was constructed to increase its appearance of legitimacy to teachers and parents and to convince them that, despite the obvious changes, it can deliver social mobility as efficiently as French-only teaching (to be discussed below). This strategy has several elements: (a) the introduction of the colonial language early in the primary cycle; (b) the maintenance of the structure of the French-only classroom; (c) appeals to teacher professionalism; and perhaps most importantly, (d) changes in the structure of the high stakes sixth grade graduation exam.

3.5.1 Early introduction of the colonial language. Convergent pedagogy calls for the introduction of oral French in second grade and a rapid increase in the amount of instruction in French early in the primary cycle, although most research shows that a later transition that includes continued first language instruction is most beneficial for student learning (Cummins, 1979 and others; Hutchison, 1994; Thomas and Collier, 1997; and Wambach, 1995). The entire reform, including the use of Malian languages, is promoted as a transitional strategy, designed to improve the learning of French.

3.5.2 Continuation of the French-only classroom. Convergent pedagogy classrooms and schools retain many of the structural elements of the French-only program: children are in age-graded classrooms, there is one teacher for each class, students follow the French-only school calendar, are evaluated using a similar grading

system, and take exams.

3.5.3 Appeals to teacher professionalism. Designers of the reform took several steps to increase teacher adherence to its principles. Teachers have a more professional, autonomous role in convergent pedagogy and are supported through yearly professional development courses. While the courses are short, often poorly organized, and lack appropriate materials, for most teachers, this is the first time that they are able to participate in a professional development program, as opposed to a one-time, short-term course on a topic chosen by the Ministry or an external agency.

Convergent pedagogy teachers quickly join teams responsible for bringing new teachers into the program and for materials development, reinforcing their new professionalism, and adding to their income through the form of donor-financed *per diems*. The ability of the program to produce rapid changes in student learning makes believers out of teachers: they quickly see that the program is beneficial to students (see McDonough and Wheeler, 1998 and McLaughlin, 1987 for discussions of ways in which “belief can follow action”).

3.5.4 High stakes exams. For those parents at and around the convergent pedagogy satellite school, acceptance of convergent pedagogy was enhanced by students’ pass rates on the high stakes sixth grade graduation exam. Those in charge of the reform altered the exam to include a convergent pedagogy section, which is combined with students’ scores on the French-only part of the exam (see Appendix B for a detailed explanation of the exam and scoring). High pass rates have begun to allay parental fears

and attract enrollment (Canvin, 2003; dissertation data).²⁹

3.6 Looking for answers: Education reform and the purposes of schooling

At its core, debate about education reform is debate about the purposes of schooling. In the United States, Labaree (1997) describes these purposes as “democratic equality (schools should focus on preparing citizens), social efficiency (they should focus on training workers), and social mobility (they should prepare individuals to compete for social positions)” (p. 39). Conflicts between the purposes make it difficult for any one to predominate, and reform agendas cannot succeed unless they are presented in ways that appeal to advocates of multiple purposes (Cuban, 1992; Labaree, 2000; Tyack and Cuban, 1995) or in ways that assure powerful groups that they will not lose status or resources (Cusick, 1992).

Similarly, obstacles to reform in Mali are the result of unresolved conflicts about the purposes of an education system that was inherited from a colonial regime, accompanied the country through its transition to existence as an independent state, and is now intended, at least according to government rhetoric, to enable it to “achieve lasting development” in an environment with an “increasingly fast pace of change” (Government of Mali, 2000). Democratic equality and social efficiency are becoming more important as Mali’s political and economic transitions intensify, but the primary purposes of the Malian education system, as it currently exists for the majority of students, are the reproduction of elite status for a few and the enhancement of the State’s legitimacy. Parents’ continue to see schooling as their primary means to attain social mobility,

²⁹ In 2005, exam pass rates were 78% for convergent pedagogy students and 62% for French-only students. See appendices B and E for further information about this exam and Chapter 2 for further discussion of convergent pedagogy outcomes.

through their children's escape from their communities. In pursuit of this goal, schooling in French is the first step.

3.6.1 Social mobility in Mali. As described above, education systems in the region were developed to provide civil servants for the colonial regime. The existence and importance of cash paying civil service positions reversed perceptions of status, with farming, once the occupation of the highest caste Malians, becoming the occupation of last resort (N'Diaye, 1970/1995). As the Malian civil service transitioned from its role as the subordinate administrator of a colonial regime to the administrator of a sovereign government, schooling remained the only way to access high status positions. Even though automatic entrance to the civil service upon high school graduation ended in 1983, high school graduation is still the requirement for many civil service positions.

As schooling's language of instruction and content have been completely separated from family and community life, access to the civil service has remained the primary purpose of schooling for parents and communities, with access to other employment a secondary motivator and learning a distant third (see Chapter 6). Schooling in French is not useful for the agricultural, livestock, or fishing work that sustains the Malian economy, nor for the child-rearing and other household tasks considered appropriate for Malian girls (Heneveld and Odaga, 1995). Social mobility has been the only goal of French-only education and continues to be the primary goal.

3.6.2 Escape. Social mobility in this context means physical departure, escape from poverty and low status agricultural work through urban migration. The desired schooling is best described as Escapist: symbolically and literally directed towards the separation of students from their communities. Goals of schooling are outside students'

social systems. Schooling offers symbolic access to new social systems, even if that access is severely constrained in reality. Thus, the African school is not supposed to contribute to the reproduction or transformation of the community (Freire, 1970; Purcell-Gates and Waterman, 2000; Willis, 1977) but rather to offer the possibility of escape from community through the continuation of the Real School script.

Schools have been turned into symbolic embodiments of colonial and global values, and are used by parents when they need access to the goods that these values can deliver. Schooling fits elite children into elite positions and leaves poorer children convinced that they failed through their own inadequacies, far from the transformative goal of providing them with the tools they need to change their own cultures and create their own societies (Freire, 1970). In that way, it is reproductive of elite status but not of community norms or values. Schools have not in any way become part of the communities where they are situated: one hundred and fifty years after the arrival of the French in Mali, the Bamanankan expression for public school remains *toubabou kalan*: white school.

3.6.3 Social efficiency/economic development. The social efficiency goal of American education (Labaree, 1997) is similar to the quest for economic development in developing countries. It spread to developing countries with the advent of human capital theory in the 1960s (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1962). In the United States, Horace Mann appealed to businessmen in the mid-1880s to invest in schools in order to improve the quality of workers and the output of factories (Mann, 1842).

As discussed in Chapter 1, human capital theorists in the 1960s proposed that schooling would improve labor quality, thus improving production, which would lead in

turn to economic expansion. Donor agencies initially based education investment on the premise of economic returns to education: increased years of schooling would result in increased wages and productivity.

The rhetoric around education investment in the region continues to focus on returns to education, but the definition of “return” has expanded from only a economic good to more diverse returns, including decreased maternal mortality, increased infant survival, improved health and nutrition and so forth (Eisemon, Schwille and Prouty, 1988, King and Hill, 1993; Summers, 1994). Education that is restricted to credentialing employees for the civil service is likely to reduce these returns.

As interest in these diverse goods of education has grown through both the liberalization of economies and the demands of democracy, reforms like convergent pedagogy, which increase the number of years students stay in school, enhance credentialing, and providing literacy skills linked to the requirements of emerging economic opportunities, are more likely to be supported by donors and parents than were the ruralization efforts of the 1970s.

The following section of this chapter reviews the intersection of the purposes of Malian education and the path that Malian educators are taking to reform.

3.7 Reform compromises, shifting circumstances, and changing paths to legitimacy and social mobility

The types of failures described by Sinclair (1980) ended the reforms of the post-colonial era. Efforts of the 1980s and 1990s focused on increasing access to education. The few attempts to improve quality focused on strengthening the implementation of the

existing curriculum, improving the teaching of the colonial language of instruction, and improving the materials used to teach that curriculum (Heneveld and Craig, 1996). If parents, teachers, and political elites agree that this model of schooling is appropriate, is there any chance of reform? In reviewing economic and social changes since 1990, it seems that there are some glimmers of hope.

3.7.1 Economic transition. The Malian economy has changed significantly over the past twenty-five years. Employment opportunities from the colonial era to the 1980s consisted of work in the civil service, including publicly owned industrial monopolies, and in subsistence agriculture. There were no “in between” positions for which intermediate levels of schooling might have been useful, and stagnation in agricultural techniques and available technology reduced the potential of education to increase agricultural production (Pritchett, 1996). There was no private sector: first colonialism and then the socialist regime and the French model of centralized state control of major industries precluded the development of the private sector.

In the early 1980s, pressure from the World Bank, the IMF, and political change led to the end of automatic civil service recruitment for high school graduates, the layoff of thousands of civil servants, the privatization of major industries, and other private sector development. Population growth and accelerating school enrollment made civil service employment even less likely. Parents and students in search of social mobility have been forced to look for alternative paths. Children speaking of their career interests in 2000 and graduates discussing the same topic in 2002 talked about options including academia, medicine, law, ferry operations (most of the Malian population is spread out along the Niger river), and mechanized agriculture (practicum and dissertation data).

3.7.2 Political transitions. In 1991, the Malian socialist dictatorship was overthrown and the country's democratic era began (see Chapter 2). With the end of the Cold War and an increased American presence in Africa, pressure to democratize increased. As Americans brought funding for education, they brought values about the purposes of schooling (see Moulton, 1997; Rugh and Bossert, 1998; USAID, 1994), particularly democratic equality (Labaree, 1997; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). These values influenced the EFA movement (see Chapter 1) and included pressure to provide schooling to the poor and otherwise marginalized and to increase parental and community participation in education provision (USAID, 1998).

Activities in these areas have influenced the lending of the World Bank and the programs of non-governmental organizations (NGO) often funded by USAID, such as Save the Children and World Education. In turn, these NGO have supported the emergence of local groups that, through the development of community schools and the provision of other social services, have increased pressure on government to provide access to schooling in previously marginalized areas.

For this reason, reforms like convergent pedagogy may now have a wider range of advocates. Convergent pedagogy is intended to increase community participation in schools through the inclusion of local content, materials, and people. In addition, as the program brings community members into schools, it should reduce school-community distance and encourage adult participation in other school activities and governance. This may influence adult participation in other kinds of community organizations (Rugh and Bossert, 1998) and perhaps strengthen "social capital" (Putnam, 1993) through the development of networks among students. These networks are facilitated by the use of

convergent pedagogy group work and the development of a less competitive classroom environment.

3.8 Conclusions

The lingering effects of colonialism and “real schooling” have been tremendously powerful constraints to African education reform. The legacy of colonialism has so far precluded any significant change. Political and economic environments are so restrictive that communities are unable to protest with instruments or leverage other than their feet, thereby resigning themselves and their children to a continued reliance on meager revenue from subsistence agriculture. At the same time, no national lobbies have emerged to protest that school leavers’ skills are so low that their country’s development will remain dependent on international goodwill and increasing indebtedness for generations to come.

The results are astounding. No country in sub-Saharan Africa has yet been able to enroll all of its students in primary school. Adult literacy rates on the continent average 32% for men and 49% for women (World Bank, 2001). In 1999, USAID conducted a study in Guinea that found reading levels far below grade-level expectations (Swift-Morgan et al, 2005). This is despite an ever-growing number of donors interested in providing financing for the sector and increasing international rhetoric about Education for All (EFA), including the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary completion (United Nations, 2000).

Convergent pedagogy offers some hope for change, although the compromises required have diluted the potential benefits of the reform. It is an example of a top-down

reform that has succeeded thus far due to a remarkable confluence of historical circumstances and careful design that serves multiple constituencies and purposes. There have been no reallocations of resources from rich to poor, nor, so far, any attempt to convert all schools to convergent pedagogy schools (although it is national policy), so the elite have not openly rebelled.

Changes in Mali's economic structure have created space for parental acceptance of the reform. Convergent pedagogy offers parents an enhanced form of social mobility and two particular advantages: linguistic, through the teaching of both languages, and credentialing, through increased exam pass rates. Attempts around the world to make education more relevant at the end of the colonial era described in Sinclair (1980) failed because there were minimal alternatives to the civil service in the formal sector. Parents did not see schooling as leading to anything other than civil service positions and "relevant" programs often lacked the legitimizing characteristics of school programs needed for the public sector (courses were shorter, certificates were not always provided, time in school was limited, buildings were locally constructed, and materials were less frequently available).

At this point, it is unclear that parents want schooling to consist entirely of the French-only model. As Mali's net enrollment rate of 44% (UNESCO, 2005) and high dropout rates demonstrate and dissertation data confirm, many parents are choosing not to send some of their children to school at all and others remove them before they complete even the primary cycle. It seems likely that parents have contradictory goals for their children, revolving around issues of economic escape, identity, and reproduction of cultural patterns (Lancy, 1996; Peshkin, 1972; dissertation data, 2002).

At the same time, diminishing opportunities for civil service employment are influencing parental decisions related to schooling enrollment and persistence. In addition to keeping children out of school, parental exposure to alternative educational opportunities has, over time, resulted in increased interest in private schools with different educational offerings (as observed particularly in Conakry, Guinea) and in convergent pedagogy instruction (Canvin, 2003). The first option is primarily available in urban areas, but it is an indication of parental openness to non-French-only curricula, despite the continuation of high stakes exams based directly on the French-only curriculum.

As traditional, isolated village life slowly becomes less so, parents become obliged to make decisions about an uncertain future. Inglehart (1997) writes about intergenerational value change: the premise that the circumstances of people's early years influence their adult values. As the period of economic change stretches, children who have grown up during urbanization, shifting institutional systems and uncertain job opportunities may look for a kind of education for their children that can better enable them to respond to changing circumstances. If convergent pedagogy increases children's literacy and numeracy skills, as appears likely, and also allows higher exam pass rates, parents may be more willing to risk enrollment (see Chapter 5 for the perspectives of recent graduates on their children's schooling). The increased contextualization of convergent pedagogy, by which activities in the classroom are built on children's prior knowledge and linked to life outside the classroom, may help school-leavers find or create productive, more local employment when they leave school. This kind of schooling is likely to increase students' productivity in urban and rural non-formal

sectors, as well as helping students develop social skills and collaborative working habits (Muskin, 1997).

Convergent pedagogy also offers the government recognition for apparent participation in global education reform (Anderson-Levitt and Alimasi, 2000). The government has received praise and funding from many donors and organizations for convergent pedagogy (ADEA, World Bank, UNESCO, and USAID, among others). However, the 2002 government transition installed an administration unsupportive of convergent pedagogy. In 2005, several documents emerged in which the government signaled distance from the reform (see CEPEC, 2005; *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank forthcoming b), and thus convergent pedagogy's future remains very much in doubt.

Chapters 5 to 8 of this study explore the theory and implementation of convergent pedagogy in Mali from the perspectives of those involved in school-level implementation. Reform literature and this review have concentrated on the perspectives of policy makers; this study focuses on the perspectives of actors. These perspectives are technical, but also cultural and economic. Convergent pedagogy is a radical reform, despite the attempts of its advocates to position it as non-threatening. The perspectives chapters explore the results of a conflict between a globally inspired attempt to change the fabric and purposes of schooling and a culture that is conservative and still influenced by the lingering effects of colonialism.

CHAPTER 4: CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY'S

THEORETICAL PREMISES AND IMPLEMENTATION REALITIES

4.1 Introduction

Convergent pedagogy consists of three reforms: (a) a set of changes in teaching methods from methods based on memorization and recall to more interactive, student-centered, constructivist methods; (b) a change in curriculum to increase local and national content; and (c) a change in language of instruction (LOI). This chapter describes the theoretical premises of the reform and then examines implementation conditions and gives examples of the reform in context, contrasting convergent pedagogy and French-only classrooms.

4.2 The theoretical premises of convergent pedagogy

The first part of convergent pedagogy is a set of teaching methods that are radically different from those of French-only Malian classrooms. The theoretical foundations of convergent pedagogy are a combination of (a) a method called *conception structuro-global audio-visuel*; (b) cognitivism; (c) constructivism; and (d) learner-centered methodologies, as interpreted by Michel Wambach and described in *La pédagogie convergente à l'école fondamentale: Guide théorique* (1995) and *Méthodologie des langues en milieu multilingue : La pédagogie convergente à l'école fondamentale: Guide théorique* (2001).

Conception structuro-global audio-visuel was developed by Guberina (1965), Renard (1979), and Rivenc (1991, 2000) (cited in Wambach, 2001), and further

developed by the *Centre International Audio-visuel d'Etudes et de Recherches* (CIAVER). As summarized by Wambach and translated and summarized again here, these authors thought of language as a structuring process, but not as a process of learning of structures. They perceived the structure of language as global and involving individuals in their totality: psychologically, affectively, and linguistically. They felt that understanding relationships between the parts of a whole would allow students to build new structures by combining the elements in new ways. Pedagogical strategies focused on what they saw as a natural process of learning to speak and were centered on authentic communication. Relationships between students and between teachers and students are prioritized, as is the provision of classroom materials that match students' needs and further teachers' focus on facilitation rather than direct instruction.

Wambach (2001) defined cognitivism as the belief that students' prior knowledge determines what they can learn and enables them to develop strategies for learning. Individuals have their own cognitive structures and systems of organization of knowledge. For him, the important aspects of cognitivist philosophy for language learning were that working with information is more important than memorizing it and that individuals' knowledge consists more of strategies for learning than of particular facts or content.

The key constructivist idea incorporated in convergent pedagogy is that knowledge is constructed or reconstructed by students, not transmitted or communicated to students. In this way, Wambach considers it to be diametrically opposed to the transmittal strategy used in French-only classrooms. Educators cited by Wambach include Piaget (1972 and 1975), for his ideas about developmental stages; Vygotsky

(1978 and 1985), for his theory that knowledge develops in social contexts; and Bruner (1983 and 2000), for his ideas about the importance of classroom social life and student interaction, the importance of social integration; and, with Piaget, on the development of understanding through experimentation and the construction of intelligence through the actions of individuals.

4.2.1 Teaching methods. Convergent pedagogy calls for a number of learner-centered teaching strategies. First, students have to “own” their constructed knowledge. This is accomplished through teaching methods that focus on the development, testing, and evaluation of student-generated hypotheses. The program prioritizes the organization of knowledge gained in context, the development of learning aptitudes, and the generation of diverse strategies to perceive, structure, and understand knowledge about students’ environments. There is a strong emphasis on differentiated learning, with individual students using developmentally appropriate learning processes. Students work towards the same objectives, but subjects and topics are secondary to the strategies being learned. In this way, the cognitive competencies of all learners expand, and student-student and student-teacher relationships are enriched.

Student-teacher relationships are also intended to be much different from those in French-only classrooms. Students are encouraged to visit teachers at home, talk with them at recess, and express themselves in class. The program also expects teachers to tell stories and sing and dance in traditional ways with students in class (*Ministère de l’Education de Base*, 1998; practicum data, 2000; Wambach, 1995).

4.2.2 Change in curriculum content. As developed by Wambach and the Malian convergent pedagogy team, the convergent pedagogy curriculum is based on students’

social and environmental contexts. Students are to visit community members and sites such as farms, artisans' workshops, and markets to conduct research on community history, traditions, and current practices. They are to read about the areas they investigate, using materials produced by teachers and other students. Students are to write about their findings and construct and present performances describing them to other members of their working groups. They then present the information to their classmates, teachers, and occasionally groups of parents and community members. When students return home, they are expected to use the knowledge they gain at school in their family, social, and cultural environments.

Unlike the French-only curriculum, which consists of a rigid number of subjects (literacy is divided into more than ten subject areas) taught at specific times, convergent pedagogy teachers are free to organize their schedules in response to student needs, working with blocks of time and varying the days and times of particular lessons in response to student and environmental factors.

Between 1987 and the time of data collection, the convergent pedagogy curriculum focused on literacy and early numeracy. As of 2003, the Government of Mali (GoM) began to develop and test a new curriculum for convergent pedagogy classes that included other subject areas. That curriculum was in only very limited use in 2005 and no new textbooks had yet been produced. Outlines for new books, which were financed prior to 2003 but not yet present in schools in 2005, included, in addition to literacy and numeracy topics, discussion of history, civic education, health, livestock raising, agriculture, fishing, crafts, and holidays, among others (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003).

As convergent pedagogy students take a two part exam, one part of which is the French-only graduation exam (see Appendix B), they must also cover the parts of the French-only curriculum that are likely to appear on the exam.

4.2.3 Language of instruction (LOI). The third essential feature of convergent pedagogy is the use of children's first language (L1) as the sole initial language of instruction (LOI). As children progress through the primary cycle, a second language (L2, defined by convergent pedagogy texts as French in Mali) is gradually introduced.

Convergent pedagogy considers language to be the origin of learning (Wambach, 2001). Language allows students to construct and enrich their thoughts, develop their vision of the world, participate in problem resolution, and develop subject area learning strategies. In a convergent pedagogy classroom, students are to acquire literacy in L1 first, then in L2 (while advancing their skills in L1), and finally in L1, L2, and other subject areas (mathematics, the social and natural sciences, and the arts). Students' L1 is used to develop ways of learning communication, speech, writing, and the beginnings of math and science. The L2 can then be learned more easily, thanks to the strategies that were developed during students' explorations of their L1. As cognitive structures continue to grow, students are able to construct understandings of the world in both languages (Wambach, 2001).

In a convergent pedagogy classroom, languages are to be used and taught as follows:

Table 4.0
Language Use in Convergent Pedagogy Classrooms

Year of schooling	L1	L2
First grade	100%	
Second grade	75%	25%
Third grade	25%	75%
Fourth grade	25%	75%
Fifth grade	100% combination L1 and L2 (both are used in all subject areas)	
Sixth grade	100% combination L1 and L2 (both are used in all subject areas; L2 is primary LOI)	

(Wambach, 2001)

4.2.4 Instructional design. As described by Wambach (2001) and the *Institut Pédagogique National* (National Pedagogical Institute, *IPN*) (1998), convergent pedagogy teaching is based on four principles:

- a pedagogy of learning: allowing the learner to find her/his own path to learning, supported by a teacher/facilitator; allowing her/him to test multiple routes in order to stimulate all of her/his talents; supporting all of the resources of her/his personality; and increasing her/his power to create;
- a pedagogy based on the learner and on her/his life and environment: taking into account the learning that the child has gained from her/his family and using the knowledge of the world in which s/he lives to make sense of new learning;
- a differentiated pedagogy: using a variety of learning strategies and methods to allow each learner within the heterogeneous group of learners to attain, on different paths, common objectives; and

- a project-oriented pedagogy based on the learner and learning, used as a motivation for teaching and as a way of applying and retaining knowledge (translated from the French and summarized).

Convergent pedagogy divides the lower primary cycle into three phases: (a) the development of speech, (b) the construction of spoken language, and (c) the understanding and construction of written language (Wambach, 2001). These phases group instructional activities into sets of increasing difficulty. In L1, developmentally appropriate activities based on each phase occur in every year of schooling. The emphasis shifts from phase one to phase three as students move from first to sixth grade. Instruction in L2 does not begin until second grade, and it begins with simultaneous phase one and two activities. Phase three instruction in L2 begins in third grade. All activities in all phases in L2 are less complex than those in L1, until students reach sixth grade (specific examples of activities for each phase as well as comparisons of activities in L1 and L2 are given below).

4.2.4.1 Phase one: The development of speech (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 2 to 6 in L2). The development of speech begins with a set of activities called Techniques of Expression and Communication (TEC). TEC is intended to help students enrich their use of language through storytelling, music, dancing, dialogue, and role play. The activities are designed to develop students' understandings of natural rhythms, increase their self-confidence, and stimulate their senses and imaginations. In first grade, TEC activities initiate convergent pedagogy students into schooling, helping them deepen their understandings of themselves and facilitating classroom interaction as they begin their schooling. The classroom relationships built by TEC exercises are the foundation of

student-teacher and student-student relationships in convergent pedagogy classrooms. French-only stories and music are used in these activities and throughout the program (Wambach, 2001).

Following the first grade initiation into schooling, and then concurrently with ongoing TEC activities, language learning continues with the *bain de langue* (language immersion). The *bain* includes storytelling sessions and associated activities, continuing the use of authentic text and oral language activities to help students make meaning from speech. Related activities (question and answer, development of spoken texts) encourage students to speak freely, develop their understanding of the rules of speech, and learn about the structure of folktales and dialogue.

4.2.4.2 Phase two: The construction of spoken language (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 2 to 6 in L2). The above activities are followed by, and then conducted concurrently with, activities that develop students' ability to construct spoken language. Role plays, dialogues, and presentation-related activities refine students' understanding of spoken language, help them construct meaning by combining prior understanding with new ideas, and assist them with the production of formal spoken language. Role play allows students to experience varied situations, present themselves in a secure setting, and observe the ways in which others respond to familiar situations. The creation of new situations through dialogues is intended to teach students about imagination, adaptation, and verbal creativity. The preparation of oral speeches from dialogues and texts helps students appropriate grammatical structures, which students then use to create their own texts.

4.2.4.3 Phase three: The understanding and construction of written language (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 3 to 6 in L2). Convergent pedagogy's third phase focuses on the understanding and construction of written language. Activities are conducted concurrently with those of the first two phases, but are increasingly emphasized as students move into the later primary grades. Phase three focuses on the behaviors of readers and writers and the variety of ways in which literacy is used in everyday life. Students become familiar with printed text from the beginning of first grade (most students do not have books in their homes other than, in some cases, the Koran) through the creation of classrooms filled with print, frequent references to this print by teachers, and frequent use of this print by students.

4.2.3.4.1 Reading. Convergent pedagogy considers students ready to learn to read when they have good spatial skills and are familiar with the structure of text. Reading instruction focuses on actual reading, not reading exercises, although preparatory exercises are suggested for students who need extra help in developing pre-reading skills. Individualized teaching is considered important, as students are seen as becoming ready to learn to read at very different rates.

Wambach (2001) calls the primary convergent pedagogy reading strategy Discovery Reading. Students learn to construct meaning from authentic texts. These texts are provided by student-teacher dictation and by teachers themselves. Texts are to be plot-centered with limited description and written like any published text, with capitalized letters, punctuation, and paragraphs. Familiar texts are always used, with a suggestion that 80% of textual material be familiar and 20% new (Wambach, 2001).

The structure of text, its division into paragraphs, titles, graphics, and punctuation,

is considered important for understanding meaning. Word structure is taught, not for decoding, but because helping students deconstruct difficult words helps them to understand the textual chunks that are essential for understanding meaning. If students are able to locate key words and phrases quickly, they will quickly understand the larger meaning of the text. Students are also taught to use a range of additional cues (word order, sentence construction, and syntax), test hypotheses, and understand meaning during reading.

4.2.3.4.2 Writing. Convergent pedagogy students learn to write in the context of individual and class projects. Project themes are proposed by students. The program calls for writing to be integrated in the life of the classroom, the school, and students' wider environments. This approach requires group work, the inclusion of elements of children's environments and a variety of topics, collaboration with adults, and responsibilities for each student.

4.3 The realities of implementation

This section discusses ways in which convergent pedagogy's implementation environment has evolved as the program has expanded, based on the realities of the study schools during the data collection period. It will do this by first presenting original program recommendations, as described in texts from CIAVER and then in a second iteration from the Ministry of Education, and then by comparing these recommendations with realities on the ground.

4.3.1 Evolving program objectives. Convergent pedagogy's goals have broadened as the program has progressed. Originally, program developers hoped convergent

pedagogy would improve the teaching of L2 in L1 dominant settings in Europe, through support for students' first languages. During the experimental phase in Mali, Malian educators hoped the reform would reduce dropout and improve the learning of L1 and L2. Currently, it is promoted as a way to increase student learning, reduce dropout, increase persistence to the end of the lower primary cycle, increase the involvement of parents and communities in schooling, and improve the teaching of French (ADEA, 2003; Traoré, 2001).

4.3.2 Meeting the objectives: implementation environment.

4.3.2.1 Teacher preparation, support, and incentives.

4.3.2.1.1 Program recommendations. Convergent pedagogy requires careful preparation by schools and teachers (Wambach, 2001). The method sees learners as having considerable autonomy, which increases risk for teachers (see Chapters 7 and 8 for examples of this). Individual students, not subject matter, are at the center of convergent pedagogy, and teachers have to be skilled in designing individualized instruction. As the program emphasizes local content and appropriateness, teachers must "be open to the lived life of their communities, flexible, ready to work, and aware of themselves and their culture" (Wambach, 2001, p. 104).

In order to prepare teachers to teach in convergent pedagogy classrooms, Wambach (2001) felt that teacher education must build self-confidence, liberate teachers' creative talents, and help teachers build their own learning strategies. Teacher education and student education are seen as having the same roots: both must start from lived experience. Teacher education in convergent pedagogy is to model effective classroom practice. Teacher educators are to help teacher learners develop autonomy and an ability

to construct knowledge about their teaching, though the use of an action-research approach.

Wambach also wrote that teacher education teams should be composed of teacher educators, educational psychologists, linguists, and artists. The program would begin in pilot schools, with teachers trained by Wambach and the central team. As those teachers became experienced, they would train new teachers. The original teachers would then become trainers of teacher trainers.

Teacher education was intended to include theoretical training, classroom experience, and reflection on the interplay between the two. Experiences in the classroom during teacher education, working with students, and observing students and teachers work together were seen as the foundation for continued theoretical development. This approach was to be used for pre-service and in-service teacher education, as well as for preparing adult literacy instructors, as Wambach felt that schools and communities would benefit if the kind of education conducted at every level were similar (2001).

Teacher education as planned in convergent pedagogy was to consist of four kinds of courses: informational, training, advanced training, and specialized training. Topics were to include: (a) methodologies of language instruction at different levels, (b) the development of teaching materials, (c) teaching methods, (d) student evaluation, (e) action-research, (f) techniques of applied linguistic research for national languages and comparative linguistic research for French and national languages, (g) textbook development, (h) program evaluation, and (i) literacy teaching methods for adults and non-schooled children.

Activities in seminars and classroom settings were to include: (a) exercises for expression and communication, (b) language immersion activities, (c) writing dialogues, (d) drawing and listening activities, (e) moving from speech to text, (f) textual grammar, (g) textbook development, (h) reading methods, (i) rapid reading techniques, and (j) grammatical exercises. Other training activities were to include projects, working with large groups (differentiated instruction), and formulating objectives (drawn from Wambach, 1997).

The training sessions were to use original materials: illustrated dialogues, reading texts, rapid reading exercises, grammatical exercises, games, examples of projects, and evaluative methods.

4.3.2.1.2 Teacher education as planned in Mali. Convergent pedagogy training courses aim to teach teachers to write in national languages and to organize and teach convergent pedagogy classes. The courses are divided into three levels, one for each of the two lower primary grades. Each course is to last four weeks, constituting twenty days of training. Courses are entirely theoretical: there is no practice teaching.

The convergent pedagogy teacher training guide states that its overall objective is “to develop the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies needed to conduct a convergent pedagogy class” (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2001). The guide contains information on convergent pedagogy activities for each of the three levels (grades one and two constitute level one, grades three and four constitute level two, grades five and six constitute level three).³⁰ Following descriptions of these activities, there are sample

³⁰ It should be noted that this was unclear to teachers: several interviewed teachers thought that level one was equivalent to grade one and so forth, and that teachers of grades four, five and six were “abandoned” without support.

materials, intended to be used by teachers during the courses. The following section is translated and summarized from the 2001 guide (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*).

The objectives of the first level of training are to: (a) initiate teachers into convergent pedagogy; (b) help teachers begin to write in national languages; (c) teach teachers the phonology, morphology, and syntax of national languages; (d) teach teachers to organize convergent pedagogy classes: how to create and post lists of student names, ages and administrative information, and learning objectives, how to arrange classroom furniture, and how to develop classroom resources such as the class memory, weather corner, and student responsibility chart; (e) teach teachers to use convergent pedagogy methods; and (f) teach teachers about the history of national languages and convergent pedagogy.

The objective of the second level is to further teachers' understanding of convergent pedagogy. There are no other specific objectives noted in the training manual (rather, it provides a list and description of objectives for primary school students), but there are descriptions of activities, including further training in national languages, training in the use of materials designated for use in third and fourth grades, and the production of teaching materials.

The organization of objectives for the third level is similar. Detail is provided for student objectives, but there are no separate objectives for teacher learners. As presented in the guides, teacher learners are to participate in the kinds of activities that they will later organize and facilitate for their students.

4.3.2.1.3 Teacher education as implemented in Mali. Pre-service teacher education does not prepare teacher candidates to teach convergent pedagogy, despite a

decision in 1996 to expand the program nationwide. The program receives only passing mention during pre-service courses, and that mention is not always positive. During data collection, when I asked a new graduate what she had learned about convergent pedagogy during her pre-service program, she told me: “I didn’t learn much, but they told me that the program was not good and that teaching in national languages is not a good idea.” In the “emergency” pre-service programs, which last from ten to forty-five days, teachers are taught to use national languages to explain terms to students that they are unable to grasp in French, but convergent pedagogy is not included in the curriculum (interview data). During the Mali case study I conducted in 2005 for the World Bank, no recent teacher education graduates interviewed could describe even the outlines of the program (World Bank, forthcoming a).

Thus, all teachers who become convergent pedagogy teachers are “converted” during professional development courses. During the experimental phase of the program, these teams were multi-disciplinary and led by Michel Wambach (ADEA, 2003). Currently, courses are taught by pedagogic advisors, who may be assisted by other regional or central level education personnel. In the past, these have included personnel from the *Institut Pédagogique National* (IPN), *Direction Nationale de l’Alphabétisation Fonctionnelle et de la Linguistique Appliquée* (DNAFLA), and experienced convergent pedagogy practitioners (Traoré, 2001). In 2002, the data collection year, there were 32 centers charged with delivering convergent pedagogy training (ADEA, 2003).

Courses lasted twenty days during the data collection period and were generally held during the long vacation. However, funding and logistical delays frequently forced organizers to hold shorter courses and to hold them at different times of the year

(Haidara, personal communication). The “conversion” course lasted for four weeks, ending a few weeks before the beginning of the school year. The classrooms of new teachers, contract teachers, and “emergency” teachers were as likely to be converted as the classrooms of very experienced teachers, and all categories of teachers attended the training course together. Courses were taught by pedagogical advisors and current convergent pedagogy teachers. Principals were usually trained only if they also teach; otherwise, they received no information about the program.

The course consists of lectures about active teaching methods, which convergent pedagogy teachers-to-be copy into notebooks. There is some instruction on the transcription of national languages, but no development of classroom materials and no practice teaching (for detailed information on the course, see Chapter Two). Teachers return to their schools without any books or materials other than their course notebooks. Although the first convergent pedagogy classrooms in Mali opened in 1987, the first training guide was not published until 2001. During the data collection period, none of the teachers or principals in the study schools had a copy of the guide. They received little or no on-site assistance or visits from supervisory personnel. Materials, including textbooks, teacher guides, workbooks, markers, and paper for wall displays, were scarce or unavailable.

It was highly unusual for teachers and even principals to visit classrooms that are not their own, and even more unusual for them to visit other schools. New convergent pedagogy teachers had never seen a convergent pedagogy class before they began teaching. Experienced teachers who did not teach convergent pedagogy classes rarely

had more than minimal, often inaccurate, knowledge of the program, and were thus unable to offer support to new teachers.

Teachers and school principals interviewed for this study spoke of the absences of trainers during the in-service sessions, a lack of materials, the memorization and recall style of the training, and a complete lack of opportunities to practice convergent pedagogy methods, either with other teacher learners or with students. Teachers returning to their classrooms in September 2002 had no convergent pedagogy materials other than the notes that they had copied.

There were few incentives to teach convergent pedagogy. Teachers did not receive a pay increase when they become convergent pedagogy teachers, nor could they chose not to teach the reform. The schools to be converted were chosen by regional and central administrators and local administrators, and teachers were not consulted, nor could they refuse. The only available professional development was the opportunity to attend additional four week courses, one per summer, to learn to teach third and fourth and then fifth and sixth grade. There were only three training courses, during which all six grades were covered. It was expected that teachers would learn the method during the first three courses and then be able to develop their teaching for the upper grades and exam course without additional support (Haidara, 2002).

4.3.2.2 Educational infrastructure

4.3.2.2.1 Program requirements. Learner autonomy and student-student and teacher-student interactions are priorities of the convergent pedagogy classroom environment. According to Wambach (2001), “classrooms should be full of little spaces that are alive.” He intended classrooms to have spaces for a library, a kitchen, crafts, and

science projects. These areas were intended to make projects easier and facilitate surrounding students with text. Teachers were to prepare classroom spaces with students, and post directions for activities on classroom walls. Classroom libraries were to be organized as authentic libraries, with readers and borrowers, and students were to develop catalogues and procedures. In this way, students were to become interested in reading from the beginning of school.

In addition, classrooms were to have adequate space and furniture for resource storage and display. Students were to have places to work as individuals and groups, and teachers were to have space to work alone, with individual students and with groups of students. Classrooms were to be quiet enough for work, well-lighted so that students could see other students' work, and contain classroom materials displayed on walls and shelves. Furniture was to be easily moveable by students, so that they could form and reform groups of various sizes.

4.3.2.2.2 Educational infrastructure at research sites. All classrooms were furnished with *table-bancs*, which are heavy wooden benches attached to desks. Each bench seated up to six students. Their size made them difficult to move, as did their condition: many would have fallen apart if moved (and some frequently fell apart while stationary). In most convergent pedagogy classrooms, the *table-bancs* were arranged in groups of two or four, so that students faced each other. In most French-only classrooms, *table-bancs* were arranged in rows facing the teacher. In no case did I ever see *table-bancs* moved for pedagogical purposes in a French-only classroom (one French-only teacher rearranged her *table-bancs* in groups, as per the request of her principal, but did not change her teaching strategies).

During the data collection period, there was no other furniture in the classrooms for student use. Teachers had small desks and chairs, which were placed in the front right-hand section of the classrooms, in front of tall metal cabinets. These cabinets contained an assortment of chalk, old and current textbooks, old and current student notebooks, and haphazard collections of materials such as rulers and triangles.

Although an unused classroom in the main study school was designated as the school library, it contained only old student exercise books and was not open to students or teachers. The satellite school did not have a designated school library space. Classrooms did not have library space (in either school), nor did they have any of the other instructional corners described above, with the exception of one classroom in the main study school and one classroom in the convergent pedagogy satellite school. In the main study school, one teacher had placed a shelf to display student crafts. In the satellite school, one teacher had created weather, message, and craft areas, although these appeared to date from several years earlier and were never used in my presence.

4.3.2.3 Classroom materials and environment

4.3.2.3.1 Program requirements. Convergent pedagogy emphasizes the importance of the presence of a range of classroom materials in French and the appropriate national language. The program calls for authentic textual materials, so teachers and schools need to build and maintain collections of stories, folktales, research and reference documents, letters, newspapers, magazines, directories, and all other types of available text. Teachers organize materials based on activities, but the materials must be sufficiently accessible for students to be autonomous.

The program calls for many listening activities (see below), so teachers need tapes

of stories and folktales, documentaries, songs, plays, and tape players. Classes need supplies of craft materials, paper for word walls and class memory sheets, pens, chalk, and crayons. The Malian program calls for the use of wooden “televisions” for dialogue and role play work (classrooms have no access to electricity and thus are unable to use audiovisual materials that are not battery operated, and batteries are also problematic), so these need to be purchased or built and maintained and require specially formatted documents and blank paper. Teachers need program guides and curricula, and students need individual notebooks, pencils, and pens.

An exception to the call for authentic materials is the textbook series *Rencontres* (Meetings). This series was developed at the beginning of the program with the support of the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique* (ACCT) and is intended to be “a complete course to teach French to elementary school students in multilingual countries” (Wambach, 1997). The textbooks emphasize oral language learning, with series of pictures and dialogues that can be used in the “televisions” mentioned in the paragraph above. Students’ transition to writing in French is to be facilitated by a variety of exercises intended to familiarize them with writing and help them understand its structure. The series was intended as a guide for teachers, to help them follow the primary school curriculum, but not as the definitive source of classroom activities (Wambach, 1997).

Convergent pedagogy also calls for text in a variety of styles of print to be displayed on walls, in order to introduce students to the production of text. The texts are to become the class memory, used as reference materials and sources of inspiration for future activities. The writings should initially be in L1, but one month after the

introduction of L2, students are to begin to develop a class memory in L2, and other classroom notes should also be written in L2. L1 and L2 texts should be separated in classroom displays.

Wambach (1997) considered classroom libraries a critical part of the program. The libraries were to include audio tapes, picture books, agricultural extension materials, and other scientific materials, all in both languages. Wambach acknowledged that it may be difficult to find some of these materials, particularly in national languages, and suggested that materials be written at the community level (with the additional goal of making communities more literate).

4.3.2.3.2 Classroom materials and environment at research site. The main study school's materials came from three primary sources: the Government of Mali (GoM) (which also transfers resources received from international donors), non-governmental organizations (NGO), and the Parents' Association (*Association des parents d'élèves*, APE). The school also occasionally received private donations (see Chapter 2). The satellite school received materials from the same sources.

The central convergent pedagogy team has spent most of its materials budget and energy since 1987 creating textbooks at the central level. As of 2003, reading textbooks had been developed for eleven languages: for grades 1 to 6 in eight languages, and for grades 1 to 5 in the three others. Three math books existed for three languages, two for three other languages, one for two languages, and none for three. There are no national language textbooks in other subject areas (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003).

As the program operated on very minimal financial resources until the influx of World Bank financing in 2000, textbooks have been of poor quality and printed in

insufficient quantities. From 2000 to 2003, there was some improvement in textbook availability, but procurement and logistical delays and theft have resulted in classrooms that still have far fewer books than students (World Bank, forthcoming a). Resources for the provision of authentic materials and help for teachers to collect them at the community level have been non-existent.

The GoM provides minimal classroom supplies prior to the beginning of school each year. These vary from year to year, depending on available financing and procurement issues, but generally include chalk, blackboard paint, and pens for teachers and principals. The government is supposed to provide large sheets of paper, tape, and markers for convergent pedagogy's word walls and class memory sheets, but, at the study schools, only minimal amounts of paper had arrived by December of the research year. In addition, Plan International provided notebooks and pens for students at the start of the school year and the APE collected dues from every parent and used them to buy materials for school administration (pens and ledgers) and additional chalk.

The sum of these efforts resulted in classrooms containing few reading textbooks and fewer books in other subjects. There were very few reference books and no other reading materials. Existing textbooks varied in age, condition, and number. Some classrooms and subjects had no books; others had enough books to provide one for every two or three students. The teacher of the sixth grade class at the main study school had one copy of the math textbook and one copy of the science textbook, which he kept for himself. The fifth and sixth grade classes had sufficient reading textbooks in national languages for two students to share one book. They did not have enough copies of the French book, *Rencontres*, to allow more than one for every five or six students. The

fourth grade teacher had no books or other documents, other than one copy of the reading textbook. Grades one, two, and three had one copy of the reading textbook per class, and no other texts. Principals held some books in their offices, purportedly to be distributed when teachers requested them, but that did not occur during my observations.

Classroom walls were mostly bare, although some convergent pedagogy classrooms had text attached to the walls, and a few others had a miscellaneous poster or two (the French-only fourth grade classroom had a poster of proper wood cutting techniques; the convergent pedagogy sixth grade classroom had a poster of an Italian soccer team). French-only classes using the French textbook series *Le Flamboyant* retrieved the posters they needed day by day from the school principal, although some in the series were missing.

4.3.2.4 Materials for teachers

4.3.2.4.1 Program requirements. In addition to the materials listed above, the teacher training guide was printed for distribution to teachers, as were teaching guides for some of the convergent pedagogy textbooks.

4.3.2.4.2 Teacher materials at research site. Teachers' materials consisted of their notes from their pre-service and in-service courses and their lesson plans from previous years. They had no professional reference books and no standard reference books such as dictionaries. Some teachers had teacher guides for language and/or math courses, but most did not. The sixth grade teacher had some geometry materials to draw figures on the blackboard. Some had wooden "televisions," used to show pre-printed text for dialogues and role plays, but some did not. Large paper was in short supply at the beginning of the year. In the middle of the data collection period, sufficient paper for

each class to have two sheets was delivered to the main study school, but the satellite school had not received its allotment by the end of the data collection period. Grade 1 in the French-only cycle, which was in its first year of teaching convergent pedagogy, had no books, paper, or markers. The principal told the teacher to buy her own markers, and the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle told the teacher that this was normal. She “should not expect to get anything for three months or so, as I didn’t get anything for a long time when I started.” The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school had developed a method of dipping chalk in water and salt, which allowed him to create long-lasting posters, but none of the other teachers had adopted it. Teachers had an adequate supply of white chalk, a limited supply of colored chalk, and an occasional box of pens or exercise books provided by the APE and Plan International.

4.3.2.5 Materials for students

4.3.2.5.1 Program requirements. Student materials were intended to include a variety of authentic texts, including audio tapes, picture books, agricultural extension materials, and other scientific materials, all in both languages, and other materials as described above.

4.3.2.5.2 Student materials at research site. Student materials consisted of notebooks, pens and pencils, and, in the lower grades, slates, chalk (often only small pieces), and pieces of grain stalks and rocks used as counting aids. Notebooks were either purchased by parents or provided by Plan International. Lower grade students had only one notebook or half a notebook each, while upper grade students had several. Older students often also had the notebooks of older siblings or friends, who had already copied the same notes for the same subject. Younger students often only had one pen or

pencil, or just a pencil stub, along with a tiny piece or two of white chalk, while older students had pencils and a variety of pens: blue, black, and sometimes red (some teachers forbade the use of red pens in their classrooms, saying that students could use them to cheat on tests).

Some students had book bags and pencil cases, some had one or the other; some used old plastic market bags; and some just carried their materials. Younger students using slates also sometimes had a bit of rag or sponge to use as erasers (and some spit on them or licked them instead). Many students carried some sort of container for drinking water, usually a container that was not intended to hold drinking water.

4.3.3 Meeting the objectives: defining teaching and learning in convergent pedagogy through a contrast with French-only classrooms

4.3.3.1 French-only schooling. As described in Chapter 2, French-only schooling in Mali centers on the transmission of a fixed curriculum, with content determined by the central government. The curriculum is designed to promote French learning in every subject, with math curricula full of word problems and science curricula consisting primarily of vocabulary exercises (dissertation data).

Teachers provided this content to students, who were expected to memorize it. In the form of teaching practiced in the Cameroonian French-only classrooms studied by Moore (2003, see Chapter 3)³¹ and the Malian French-only classrooms described here, teachers modeled desired actions or utterances and students imitated, practiced, and performed them. Most class time was spent in choral repetition, followed by instances of individual repetition in turn, with each student repeating the same content. Students

³¹ Moore collected her data in the Extreme North province of Cameroon, which was part of “French Africa” during the colonial era.

were rarely if ever asked questions that could not be answered through recitation of memorized oral or written text, and rarely were their answers considered correct if they did not consist of the exact replication of a teacher-provided phrase, sentence, or chunk of text. Reading instruction was based on phonics and memorization, and individual silent reading of text was never observed.

Despite the stagnation of the method as practiced, the rhetoric of French-only teaching has kept pace with trends in modern teaching practice. Many senior employees of the Ministry of Education were educated to the graduate level in the Soviet Union, and younger employees have earned advanced degrees in Europe and North America. Technical assistants and long-term advisors, funded by various European, particularly French, agencies and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), work with most major departments of the Ministry, bringing modern rhetoric to curriculum, teacher education, education planning, and other areas through partnerships and professional development. At the central level, there is some access to international journals and to articles disseminated on the Internet. Staff and consultants participate in regional and international conferences, alone and in teams with international advisors.

This rhetoric of modern practice had influenced the discourse of French-only teachers in the study, who spoke of “differentiated pedagogy,” “methods for teaching large classes,” and “formative evaluation” (learned during a NGO-organized vacation training course). In practice, as will be shown in the following examples, little had changed.

4.3.3.2 Convergent pedagogy. This section describes the implementation of convergent pedagogy through examples of specific activities. Descriptions of the

activities as presented in Wambach and Ministry texts are followed by examples of the activities as implemented in convergent pedagogy study school classrooms. They are then contrasted with examples of activities/lessons with similar goals as implemented in study school French-only classrooms. It should be noted that the lesson fragments were chosen for illustrative purposes; the teaching methods presented did not necessarily recur in the same classroom or occur in other classrooms during the fieldwork period. Three out of four of the sample convergent pedagogy lessons were observed in the second grade classroom; this is due to the teacher's more frequent use of convergent pedagogy methods.

4.3.3.2.1 Phase One: The development of speech (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 2 to 6 in L2). This phase is intended to familiarize students with different forms of spoken language, to develop their sense of rhythm and stimulate their imaginations, and to build interpersonal relationships.

Activity: Folktales and other stories

Materials: Stories (preferably illustrated)

Method: Students should sit on the ground, close to each other. The teacher should sit with them and read or tell the story with expression. When the story is over, the class reflects silently before beginning role plays based on the folktale. The teacher helps a small group of students act out the story. The teacher then tells the story again, several times, before allowing students to choose which characters they would like to play in subsequent role plays. Retelling should include students' responses to teachers' predicative questions, asked at different times during the storytelling, and be followed by the teacher's continued retelling of the story to confirm or correct students' answers. The

story should be retold over a period of several days, and role plays should be performed repeatedly, separated by several days from the storytelling period. Related activities should include discussions about the differences between oral and written language, student use of the classroom library to reread or check out the story, the reading of or listening to similar stories and telling them to others, the performance of role plays for other classes, the ordering and reordering of the story's pictures, and the invention by students of other stories based on a series of pictures presented by the teacher.

Sample storytelling lesson for Phase One: convergent pedagogy, second grade

teacher brings students out, sits under tree, students in center, teacher in middle

teacher asks questions, students answer, clapping

students from other classes crowd around

teacher asks students what story will be about, they try to guess

teacher starts story, students reply "naam" [French-only response meaning the speaker

has been heard], other students crowd around

teacher finishes, students clap, teacher calls girls into middle to tell story, students laugh,

it's too noisy with the crowd, can't hear

teacher tells them not to be ashamed, to speak up, two boys in middle of circle, doing

non-verbal role play

teacher does role play with girl, demonstrates and helps her, two more boys try, one

dances last part, asks who else

start doing roles verbally, teacher prompts them, laughing for dancing parts

teacher brings students back to class

calls one girl up, forms group, goes out to give instructions, other students milling around

group comes back and acts it out in front of class, lots of clapping
boy up, tells essentials, calls on girl
afterwards, other kids clapping, then another boy, another boy, boy, girl
goes back over title, story, asking questions about what happens next, goes back over
details of story, asks questions
lots of hands, keeps going over story
[entire lesson in Bamanankan]

Sample early literacy lesson: French-only pedagogy, second grade

teacher shows students a picture from *Flamboyant* [French textbook series]
asks who can point out Ada
asks a boy and then a girl, neither respond
teacher asks: “Where are they going?”
students come up and touch picture to show that they are going to school
teacher writes on board: Ada goes to school
teacher reads, class repeats 4 times
teacher-Ada carries her bag on her back, repeats in Bamanankan, class repeats three times
teacher asks in Bamanankan: “What month does school start in?”
teacher answers: “School starts in October [school started in September this year].”
teacher writes on board: bag-october
teacher asks students when vacation begins
boy, girl say October
teacher says: “In the month of June, school ends” in French, repeats in Bamanankan
teacher picks up pointer, tells students to repeat, points to Ada goes to school

students repeat bag-October four times

teacher does again, most students repeat

[lesson in Bamanankan and French]

4.3.3.2.2 Phase Two: The construction of spoken language (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 2 to 6 in L2). This phase exposes students to a range of language situations, teaching them to speak in front of an audience and listen to others. Students also learn about appropriate word choices and grammar for varied situations, preparing them for the multiple kinds of written text they will construct in Phase Three.

Activities: Listening, role plays, dialogues, and presentations

Materials: Dialogues, illustrations, transcriptions of students' speech, authentic text on tapes, or read aloud

Methods: A variety of listening activities help students learn to listen in three different ways: globally, selectively, and precisely. To teach listening, teachers are to introduce textual themes, have students listen to tapes and then present the content orally, and orient students to listen to tapes in specific ways. When the listening is part of a project (see details below), students should decide how to listen themselves according to the project goals. Students should also listen to stories on tape and retell them to other students, prepare role plays after listening to tapes, and listen to tapes of interviews and conferences, the radio, and other tapes on a variety of subjects sent to the class by class reporters.

Role plays: Role plays are constructed and performed as an adjunct activity to the telling of folk tales (see Phase One), but should also be based on home, school, and other familiar situations. Role plays should be based on authentic texts, first in L1 and later in

L2. Dialogues and other authentic texts that can be made into plays can be used. When they are introduced, students should practice them first and then present them to a new audience.

In order to perform a role play, students should first hear the text several times or read it carefully in order to “own” the text and be ready to prepare the role play. Students should choose their role freely and, with the help of the teacher, decide where to perform it and how to arrange the space. Initially, they present the play to classmates, who sit in a semi-circle and add words and gestures, without the teacher’s intervention. Once several groups of student have performed, the best are chosen to perform in front of an audience. Then, another group of students rewrites the role play into a formal, textual play, and yet another determines how it should be presented. The teacher determines the movements of the actors, as well as correcting pronunciation and language.

In L2, role plays are inspired by dialogues. The theme of the dialogue is used to inspire the production of texts for the role play. If students are uncomfortable in L2, they can use illustrations (following specific instruction in the “reading” of illustrations) accompanying a story in L2 to develop role plays. As students increase their knowledge of L2, illustrations are replaced by written indications of main themes and by texts written by teachers and inspired by events in students’ lives. In the beginning, class role plays start with dialogues and are non-verbal: students decide which roles they will take and how the play should be performed. Students express themselves through gestures and discuss the results with the teacher and other students. Next, they perform verbal role plays, with teachers initially showing pictures and playing roles themselves, which are then performed by students.

The role play activity should include work in phonetics and grammar, as needed. Teachers should be ready to correct rhythm and intonation and to point out specific grammatical features of language as they occur. Role plays give students opportunities to use different kinds of language and to express ideas of space, time, logical links, and relationships.

Oral presentations: These are to begin during first grade (Phase Two) and increase in complexity through the grades (Phase Three). Initially, students should be exposed to presentations of folktales and stories. Then, they should be involved in projects where they develop their own presentations of folktales, class work, reports on fieldtrips, and literary and/or poetic sessions. These presentations should be done as projects: students present their point of view and interests and persuade audiences to agree. Students should learn about the importance of gestures and body language and include them in their presentations. In L1, students should prepare stories to present to new audiences and presentations about various experiences for other classes. In L2, students can prepare new stories by combining a series of dialogues. Teachers present several stories and ask students to use them as inspiration to create their own.

Alternatively, teachers and students can build new dialogues together. Speeches should encourage self-confidence, intuition, imagination, prediction, and attention to rhythm and intonation.

Sample role play: convergent pedagogy, second grade

teacher gets out the “television,” students happy, clapping

teacher rotates images, talks about the story, everyone is watching

teacher tells students to sit, picks a girl and a boy to construct and perform role play, goes outside with them

other students watching, waiting expectantly

students and teachers act role play non-verbally, everyone watching and clapping

repeat role play again, everyone still watching

more volunteers, great enthusiasm

second group of students comes in confused, teacher tells them to go out again and think some more

three students work together to act

teacher tells them to speak up

three more, boy next to me tries, but teacher had picked a girl and insists that she goes

class waits for the others to come back

teacher tells them to sit down

teacher asks questions, lots of hands go up

teacher goes out with two students, others getting restless

students go to window to watch preparations outside

teacher helps, acts with students

French-only classroom, second grade reading instruction

teacher tells students to take out slates

teacher writes on board: rene to prepares to go school

teacher tells students to sit and listen in Bamanankan

teacher leads group, reads: rene to prepares to go school

asks girl to show go, she shows to and then school

boy shows go

asks someone to read, boy reads go

another boy reads

in Bamanankan, asks class to show rene, girl gets it right

group repeats rene

asks someone to show school, boy shows it

group says: sch-ool (*é-cole*)

asks to show to, girl shows rene

(all directions are in Bamanankan)

boy gets it

group recites as the principal points out school, to, go, rene

asks the group in Bamanankan if the sentence is correct

asks them in Bamanankan to put the words in order

reads again, asks the boy for the first day of the sentence, it's rene

teacher writes rene on the board and then asks girl to come up and point to it

teacher writes go on the board and asks boy to come up and point to it

asks a girl to come up and point to it and she does

asks a boy to come up and point it out, and he can't find it on board

asks class to say go and it goes

teacher asks for a volunteer to read [in Bamanankan], calls on boy who can't, another boy who can't

boy does, girl repeats, boy repeats, three boys, one girl, three more boys

class reads as group three times

teacher moves on—shows group a picture in the one copy of the textbook

4.3.3.2.3 Phase Three: The understanding and construction of written language (grades 1 to 6 in L1, grades 3 to 6 in L2). The behaviors of readers and writers are to be taught in this phase, which begins during the first days of school with the creation of print-rich classroom environments. Most of convergent pedagogy's direct reading and writing teaching is based here. Convergent pedagogy's timetable for learning to write in L1 is as follows:

- familiarization: no later than the middle of grade one, sometimes at the beginning of grade one
- functional writing with teachers and the development of reference sheets: first trimester of grade one
- development of class memory through dictated texts, visual discrimination, and other exercises: middle of grade one
- understanding and production of writing, through Discovery Reading, individual reading, functional writing, and projects: last trimester of grade one

When students begin to work in L2, they follow the same steps, but at a slower pace.

- familiarization: third month of grade two
- functional writing with teachers and the development of reference sheets: beginning in third grade
- development of class memory through dictated texts, visual discrimination, and other exercises: same

- understanding and production of writing, through Discovery Reading, individual reading, functional writing, and projects: same

Activity: Discovery Reading

Materials: Varied texts (posters, publicity fliers, letters, math problems, summaries of local events)

To prepare students for Discovery Reading, teachers develop a variety of pre-reading exercises for their classes, such as factual and structural true and false and multiple choice questions, word and sentence finds, and sentence order questions. These exercises are based on class-produced memory texts, which are dictated by students to teachers in the early grades and written collaboratively by teachers and students in the later grades.

When students are considered ready to learn to read text, the text to be read is shown to the class at the beginning of the lesson and then hidden. With students in front of the board and interested, the teacher uncovers the text and asks students to read silently and mentally summarize the meaning of the text. Students inventory and discuss unfamiliar words, and teachers ask questions to help students determine textual elements such as context, punctuation, and word length. Teachers then hide the text again from students and talk with them about their collective hypotheses. Students begin to figure out unfamiliar words and start to construct the meaning of the text in conversations with others. Instead of asking students questions to determine if they have understood a specific text (convergent pedagogists believe that students might be able to answer factual questions without having understood the text), teachers are to ask students to present the main textual ideas in order, to prepare speeches in response to the text, and/or

to develop related texts. These steps are designed to ensure that students read carefully, understanding words and text, and learning grammatical and spelling rules.

Activity: Writing

Materials: Varied texts, including writings about the events of daily life, invitations, receipts, math problems, large sheets of paper, markers, other paper, pens, pencils, and slates.

Writing instruction is intended to begin after students' first month of first grade. Students must first be capable of delivering oral presentations and have mastered pre-writing exercises, which teach students about the structure and organization of text and words (spelling rules, comparisons between spelling in L1 and L2). This builds on Discovery Reading, as students learn about textual forms, grammar, and organization. Students become ready at different rates, so convergent pedagogy calls for extensive differentiated instruction at this stage. Convergent pedagogy students learn two primary types of writing: *functional writing* (includes writing, evaluation, and rewriting) teaches students about structure, grammar, and spelling; and *imagined text writing* emphasizes the development of creative texts in groups as students develop vocabulary and structural competency.

Writing instruction continues as students tell stories to their teachers. Teachers rewrite them following grammatical, structural, and spelling conventions. Students and teachers determine the objectives of text and the nature of audiences, so that students learn to pay attention to audience. Next, teachers read the texts for students, rewrite them according to student direction (initiating students into the process of revision and rewriting), and post the texts on classroom walls. Teachers help students learn to quickly

find ideas, words, and phrases in the text. Students then begin writing themselves, using class memories, vocabulary sheets, word walls, reference books, and grammar sheets prepared by the teacher or the students and stored in a special area of the classroom. During this process, teachers point out differences between spoken and written language and between writing in L1 and L2. Teachers use paper without lines to help students learn to manage space.

A special group of exercises concerns letter writing, an important form of communication for rural Malian families. The ability to read or write a letter was the most frequently mentioned non-employment benefit of schooling during interviews conducted for this study. When studying letter writing, students work in groups, discussing objectives and content. Groups then write letters and present them to the class. Teachers evaluate them for structure, grammar, and spelling, and students compare them with a model letter provided by their teacher. Letters are then rewritten by the groups and evaluated again, this time by students. They are again presented to the class, which chooses the best letter, to be revised again and then sent.

Activity: Projects

Materials: Varied

Projects are a central part of convergent pedagogy instruction. They incorporate the learning phases described above and are intended to bring community and family life into classrooms. Wambach (2001) proposes three kinds of projects: (a) school projects, such as organizing classroom spaces, schedules and procedures, planning celebrations for birthdays, allocating student responsibilities, reporting the weather, managing libraries, and keeping classrooms clean; (b) work projects, which include more complex activities

such as letter writing, surveys, school festivals, school gardens, raising small animals, and community work; and (c) learning projects, including cooking, individual projects like grammatical and spelling exercises, and math problems. These projects develop students' reading and writing abilities, as they read and write to solve real problems. Activities can include learning to read directions, figuring out questionnaires, writing invitations to a school festival, and writing summaries of daily events. In this way, teachers help students develop the habits of readers and writers.

Projects are usually conducted in groups. Wambach emphasizes that groups must be formed carefully so that all students are challenged. Each students must have important tasks to execute, so that all may contribute, depending on their individual abilities.

Sample lesson for Phase Three reading: convergent pedagogy classroom, second grade
Discovery Reading

story on board, teacher asking questions

teacher asks students to name the characters in the story, lots of hands, students say names one by one, teacher shows the text again

boy and girl point out names of characters on board

second question: where are Amadou and Mariam going?

boy and girl answer correctly

third question, teacher tells students to write it down, they have slates out, don't

understand, trying to figure it out, teacher jokes with students, but they still don't get it one has gotten it, teacher encourages them

teacher brings boy and girl up to board as examples

teacher asks for different words, students identifying well

3/64 write on slates

true/false section, students voting, shouting out, discussing with teacher

teacher has students come up, show the relevant parts of the story

asks what sound dog starts with, students can't point it out

teacher writes w [first letter of dog in Bamanankan] on board, has students make the sound, writes the rest of the word --ulu

points it out in other writing, has another students look, who gets it right, finds another one as well

tells them to go back to the writing, has another student look, gets it right and finds another one

teacher asking students to point out ws, there are lots of hands

tells students to sit, others coming up to show w words

French-only classroom: Fourth grade reading instruction

teacher says they're going to read

gives out 2 books and tells students to open them to page 18

students don't know how to find page 18, teacher has to show them

teacher gives out a third book, moves some students to front, still 3/8 of this group can't see them

students are supposed to be reading, but no instructions given

other students just sit, talk among themselves

moves book to next group of students, moves another one, everyone else is sitting

teacher standing around, trying a little to get groups to finish so he can move book, tells them to hurry up, otherwise silent

teacher sits down at desk, holds head, girls fight over book

teacher looks up to ask what's wrong, teacher answers in Bamanankan, teacher sits at desk, waits, student comes in, teacher talks to him, teacher collects books, gives one back to front, takes one for himself

teacher reads out loud

students start whispering among themselves, asks for volunteer to read, one hand up,

student can't read the title: Back to School, teacher gets up, reads

asks for another volunteer, one more, can't read, teacher prompts by line, boy repeats, can't read ahead

goes straight to explanation, more hands, teacher asks what passage is about

has students repeat phrase again and again, asks another question, tells students to look at text for information, teacher asks question, student gives answer that makes no sense, no more hands

another volunteer can't answer, five or so answer, no one has any idea, teacher has to answer, asks- it's about school, isn't it? kids say yes

silence, no one seems to understand, only boys have answered

teacher asks when was the beginning of school?

no one can answer

teacher says October 1, which is what it said in book, but here it was September 30

another question with no volunteers, teacher sitting at desk

teacher asks if it's true or false that the back to school was September 22

student says true, another false, teacher asks why and student can't answer, no one can answer, then one volunteer, wrong, no more volunteers
teacher asks for another reading volunteer, student manages first line, can't do any more, teacher feeds him lines
teacher switches to grammar

Sample lesson for Phase Three writing: convergent pedagogy classroom, fourth grade
(I never observed students involved in independent writing or projects. This lesson had more writing than any other observed lesson)

teacher gives out pieces of paper with true and false questions for each group
text in French already on board, about child who has malaria
teacher tells students to read, respond to questions
teacher goes from group to group, explains questions in French
girl at board, looking at questions
students all gather around paper, looking together
teacher goes from group to group
in text, doctor tells boy's mother to get a mosquito net, also says that mosquitoes cause malaria
teacher explains the work again
students working on different questions, some have the same, but in different order
most working, some chatting, teacher helping
students finish
teacher reads the text slowly
some students copy it into notebooks

teacher goes over questions, students raise their hands

boy to read, doesn't, boy can't, boy gets with help from teacher on beginnings of words

teacher asks students to point out places in text with words

...

[all questions are factual, directly drawn from text]

boy get right

second group has a hard time, has to respond to same kind of questions, but in words, not true or false

teacher has groups write answers on board

teacher tells students to watch, reminds them that Samba has an m in French and n in Bamanankan, asks in Bamanankan if they understand

Writing instruction: Sixth grade French-only classroom

(I never saw students writing (other than copying) in French-only classrooms. Writing instruction (instruction that took place during the slot in the timetable allotted for writing) consisted of grammatical exercises like the following):

teacher reading sentences on board

teacher reads second sentence, asks for verb

girl: to develop oneself

teacher reads next, asks again

girl: is

boy: has

girl: created (without French auxiliary verb, teacher adds)

teacher reads again

teacher writes list of verbs that are conjugated alone

class repeats three times

teacher: these verbs are conjugated without auxiliary verbs, teacher repeats three times

teacher: the present tense is a simple tense, class repeats two times

teacher: the imperfect is a simple tense, repeats twice, asks for another

silence

teacher: simple future, simple past

teacher asks why

silence

. . .

teacher erases

teacher writes “Conjugation: The simple past of verbs in the first group” on board

class copies

4.4 Conclusions

The Malian education system operates in an extremely low resource environment. With 90% of the population subsisting on less than \$2 per day (World Bank, 2005), many students come to school with poor health and nutritional status. Most are from non-literate households and very few speak the language of instruction or hear it spoken at home. Low enrollment rates and poor learning outcomes have thus far failed to lead to large scale systemic change.

The advent of convergent pedagogy, a complex, controversial reform, initially produced dramatically different classrooms, student behavior, and learning outcomes. When the program started, the core implementation group was able to control many aspects of implementation. However, the state of the education system meant that classrooms and schools were in poor condition and materials were in short supply right from the beginning. When the program started, national language textbooks were still being developed, even for Bamanankan, and other pedagogic materials were not available.

As the program expanded, the core team controlled fewer implementation parameters. Funding for teacher education and materials was very scarce until 2000. Even then, teacher education was not a priority. During the years of rapid expansion (2000-2003), it became difficult to deploy the multi-disciplinary teams called for by Wambach and to have more than minimally qualified trainers. Many teachers became teacher educators despite having only limited experience with convergent pedagogy. Training materials have been close to non-existent, with teachers at the main study school receiving their first copies of the training manual during the data collection period (the sixth year of convergent pedagogy implementation at the main school).

Procurement issues have continued to constrain the development and production of program materials and purchases of the French textbook series have been limited by financial and copyright issues (World Bank, forthcoming a). Student evaluation was reduced from a series of formative and program-specific summative evaluations to the minimal, centrally-organized summative examinations required for students to progress through the system. The possibility of school-level development of a wide variety of

educational materials diminished as the program was integrated into the larger, centralized education system.

In addition, convergent pedagogy has expanded at the same time as enrollment in Mali more generally. As the program has expanded, classrooms have become more and more crowded. Instead of the 35 students in the first convergent pedagogy classrooms, there were 256 students in one of the study school classrooms in 2005 (observed during World Bank mission, 2005).

As the program has expanded, it has less and less resembled the complex pedagogy articulated in Wambach's writings and the Ministry's plans. The examples given above are the best examples I observed of convergent pedagogy teaching, and they did not occur more than two or three times during the data collection period. Lessons using convergent pedagogy strategies to a lesser extent were more common.

Generally, however, the method was very diluted by French-only teaching styles, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of materials. Given that the study school classrooms were relatively close to the capital, it is likely that implementation is even weaker in other parts of the country (for discussion of this in the Dogon-speaking areas, see Ramseger, 2003 and Sankaré, 2003). The low level of implementation has produced increasingly diminished outcomes (dissertation data, 2002; CEPEC, 2005; World Bank, forthcoming a) and makes the reform, already endangered by the political context, even more fragile. To make the situation even more complex, the system began testing a new curriculum in convergent pedagogy classrooms in SY2003-04. This curriculum is ostensibly designed to strengthen convergent pedagogy in non-literacy content areas, but with materials provided only in French and teachers given minimal training, teachers and

administrators are struggling with implementation (World Bank, forthcoming a). Despite these difficulties, convergent pedagogy students continue to have lower repetition and dropout rates and consistently higher exam pass rates than students in French-only classes (ADEA, 2003; *Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2003; World Bank, 2004b).

The following chapters explore the perspectives of actors living with the reform, as they struggle with its theoretical premises and implementation complexities.

CHAPTER 5

CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY GRADUATES' PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have reviewed the Malian context, relevant literature, the theoretical premises of convergent pedagogy, and the state of implementation from my perspective as an observer. This chapter is the first of four that attempt to convey the views of those directly involved in reform implementation. The perspectives of convergent pedagogy graduates, parents of current students, teachers, and school principals/pedagogic advisors are explored in depth. This allows readers to gain a complex understanding of these actors' knowledge of the reform, reactions to its theoretical premises, and implementation experiences. In addition, each chapter explores supplemental themes that are particularly relevant to that group of actors. In the graduates and parents chapters, for example, decisions related to enrollment, as the first step of the school journey, are explored. In the teachers and principals/pedagogic advisors chapters, more attention is paid to the theoretical premises of the reform. Taken together, the chapters describe the diverse paths and multiple rationales behind implementation and their impact on teachers' professional lives and students' academic and social lives.

This chapter explores the views of young adult convergent pedagogy graduates. Students are the group most affected by reform or lack thereof; it is their lives that may be altered by their educational opportunities (see Thomas and Collier, 1997; Walter, 2004). The continuing struggle of the Malian education system to enroll even a majority

of school-age children, let alone produce internationally competitive levels of student learning, is reflected in social indicators that are close to the worst in the world (see Appendix A). The belief that education reduces poverty, the core justification for giving national and international rhetorical priority to the sector (see Chapter 1), has been tested on these graduates. They reflected the impact of the reform in their responses to interview questions and the directions they have taken and plan to take in their adult lives.

This chapter is placed first in the series to give readers an understanding of the impact of the reform during early implementation. During this phase, implementation was more intense, although materials were scarce. Classes were small and team taught; supervisors visited frequently; and materials were developed collaboratively. At this time, external assistance was very limited, consisting almost entirely of technical assistance from the founders of convergent pedagogy and funding for small quantities of materials. The experiences of these graduates show the potential of the reform, as implemented within Malian financial and systemic constraints.

5.2 Context

When reading this chapter, it is key to recall that the schooling experiences of these graduates were unique (see also section 2.3.9.1.3). First, their convergent pedagogy classrooms were among the first to open. Students and teachers benefited, particularly in their early primary years, from continuous support from regional, national, and international educators. Second, Mali's political context changed dramatically, with great impact on the education system, during these students' primary school years.

As discussed in Chapter 2, convergent pedagogy was introduced following eight years of experimentation with an earlier bilingual model. The class in which these graduates were enrolled was team taught by carefully selected teachers and regional pedagogic advisors. They were frequently visited by Michel Wambach, the founder of convergent pedagogy, who observed classes, worked with teachers, and developed materials. Wambach was such a presence in the area that some parents and graduates still called convergent pedagogy “*les classes Wambachi*” at the time of data collection.

According to one teacher (two teachers team taught the class for six years), his classroom at the time had only a few rudimentary textbooks, but did have markers, large sheets of paper, and the wooden “televisions” that are supposed to be standard equipment for convergent pedagogy (see Chapter 2). The school had a library and “if there was nothing else to do, we read books” (graduate), an experience that is extremely rare in Malian schools today (personal and dissertation data collection, 1996-2005). Class sizes were small; teachers advanced through the primary cycle with their students; and there was considerable interest in student progress at the local, regional, and some parts of the national level. This level of implementation was considerably deeper than that experienced by students at the main study school and satellite schools (see Chapters 2, 4, and 7).

In the political realm, these students went to first grade in a Soviet-aligned military dictatorship and to high school in a democracy. The dictatorship fell in 1991, in large part because of the actions of the students’ union (*Association des élèves et étudiants Maliens*, AEEM) and also because of global political changes. More than 300 high school and university students were killed in the uprising. Student-led strikes began

prior to 1991 and were ongoing in 2005, with students and later teachers and other workers demanding increased scholarships and salaries and better studying and working conditions. In the 1990s, strikes were often violent and schools were closed for months at a time. In 1994, the school year was annulled because of AEEM action: no exams were held and all students were required to repeat the year. These events hindered the schooling of those interviewed for this chapter and, as will be shown below, seem to have influenced their views on participation in group activities, the AEEM, and Mali's developing democracy (see Chapter 2 for further information on Mali's political history).

5.3 Convergent pedagogy graduates, their experiences, and their future plans

5.3.1 Family background. Not all graduates were willing to divulge details of their backgrounds, but most reported that their mothers were their primary caretakers and that their fathers were employed by the private sector. Given Ségou's size and administrative importance, the number of parents working in the public sector was higher than would be expected in more rural areas of the country. At 7.6, graduates' average number of siblings was just above Mali's total fertility rate (TFR) of 7 in 2005, which has been stable for the past fifty years (United Nations, 2005). The following table provides data about some of the interviewed graduates:

Table 5.0
Backgrounds of Convergent Pedagogy Graduates

Gender of graduate	Mother's occupation	Father's occupation	Number of siblings*
M	At home	Radio repair	12
F	At home/small business	Weaver (commercial)	10
M	Civil service	Farmer	5
F	Civil service	Civil service	3
M	At home	Guard/weaver	8
M	At home/small business	Carpenter	9
F	At home	Driver	11
M	At home	Guard	7
M	At home	Civil service	6
F	At home	Mechanic	5
F	Dead, raised by grandmother	Not present	Unknown

*same mother/same father (see Chapter 2)

5.3.2 Early schooling: recollections of enrollment. Unsurprisingly, given Mali's very low enrollment rate in 1987, school enrollment for some in this group was uncertain. Decisions were primarily made by fathers and sometimes depended on haphazard interactions with friends and neighbors. One student reported that he was only enrolled because a principal lived across the street and agreed to enroll him. Another student said:

I was from the countryside and my dream was to go to school. I had a friend in second grade and I studied with him. One day my father noticed this, noticed that he was interested in schooling, and decided to enroll me. My brothers and sisters had only attended Koranic school.

However, for most students, living in a well-established and relatively prosperous urban area, siblings and neighbors also attended school. Their own enrollment was not a

surprise, even if the substance of schooling was hazy. Never having attended preschool, they had little idea of the routines and rituals of schooling. Only one student, whose father was a civil servant, reported that he knew what school was “from watching TV.” Nine of them reported remembering that they were scared of school, one because her brother told her the teachers were mean and would hit her and others because of the large number of students and their lack of knowledge about the school setting.

Only one graduate recalled looking forward to school enrollment, because his father “had told me that studying was good and that people all by themselves can’t know everything.” Another was calmed by an older brother who told him to relax and to listen well, as “school’s very important and can help you in the future.” Two others remembered being told that school was important. Another went to school when his father told him to go, reporting that he hadn’t thought about school except that it would be a “hassle” and that the other kids didn’t go.

Memories of their early days of schooling were scarce. One graduate reported enjoying the first day of school, when the students watched the wooden “TV” and enacted verbal and non-verbal dialogues (explained as playing being deaf and mute). Only one graduate remembered the details:

I went with my father. I wore green pants and a blue shirt and I carried a plastic bag. I thought that the mass of kids was going to kill me [during the class registration and assignment process]. I went into class, slept the whole morning, went home at recess and didn’t want to go back. My father made me. I didn’t sleep that afternoon, the teacher was nice, things were good, and I decided that everything would be all right.

5.3.3 Convergent pedagogy: enrollment and preliminary understandings. Even more than their enrollment in school, many graduates perceived their enrollment in convergent pedagogy as also haphazard, dependent on chance interactions with neighbors. Of the seventeen interviewed graduates, only six knew the reasons for their enrollment. One said: “I was signed up for convergent pedagogy by chance only.”

For five of the six, the enrollment decision was made for personal reasons. In the first case, the graduate’s father had known one of the convergent pedagogy teachers. Once the teacher talked to the father about the school, the child was enrolled, even though his father had originally planned to enroll him in “French school.” In the second and third cases, enrollment was the result of encounters with neighbors, who told the children’s fathers that convergent pedagogy was a better system and that her children were already enrolled (first neighbor); and that “it is very important to learn in two languages” (second neighbor). In the fourth case, neighbors told the graduate’s father that convergent pedagogy was a new program and that it might have some advantages over French-only instruction, due to the use of a language of instruction that was spoken by the students. In the fifth case the interviewee thought that her father had enrolled her in convergent pedagogy for content-related issues: she thought that she had probably been enrolled “because he thought it would be better to speak Bamanankan and French, as the two would help me in life.” In the sixth case, the graduate had really wanted to go to school, which started in October, but was unable to convince his father to enroll him until three months later. At this point, the convergent pedagogy teachers were willing to take him, as they were having difficulty filling classes.

None of the graduates recalled knowing what convergent pedagogy was when they started school, although they reported quickly realizing that their schooling was different from that of their siblings and friends (see below).

5.3.4 Convergent pedagogy outcomes: school careers. Almost all of the interviewed graduates were extraordinarily successful in school, especially when viewed in comparison with students in French-only classes. In 1994-95, the first year for which relatively reliable data is available, the repetition rate for Malian primary school students was 19% *per year* (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2005). The repetition rate among the interviewed graduates *over their entire school careers* was 5% (this number does not include those who repeated as a result of the 1993-94 annulled school year). National data from 2003 showed annual repetition rates of 3.7% for convergent pedagogy students, versus a rate of 18.1% for students in French-only classes (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The following table shows interviewees' gender, age, and school status at the time of interview; all data is self-reported. Age data is particularly unreliable, as it is common practice for students to provide falsified birth certificates in order to facilitate school entry and avoid school exclusion (dissertation data).³² In addition, in some locations and for some families, it is difficult for parents to record and/or register births.

The CFEPCEF is the *Certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle d'enseignement fondamental*, given at the end of the first cycle of primary school; the DEF is the *Diplôme des études fondamentales*, given at the end of the second cycle of primary school; and the *Bac* is the *Baccalauréat* exam, given at the end of high school.

³² The MEN has stringent maximum age requirements for particular grade levels. Students and parents at the study schools falsified documents and presented them to school administrators as needed. The practice, when observed, was endorsed by one principal as a way to avoid expulsion for students who had failed multiple grades or who had entered school late. Parents reported that the fraudulent documents were easily obtained in Bamako, "for a price."

Table 5.1
Age and Academic Status of Graduates

Gender of graduate	Age	Year completed in school	Exam status	Years of school repeated
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	19	10 th	DEF passed	2
M	20	11 th	DEF passed	1
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	20	12 th	Bac taken	0
M	19	12 th	Bac taken	0
F	19	12 th	Bac taken	0
F	19	8 th	CFEPCEF passed	3
F	18	9 th	DEF taken	1 (before leaving)
M	19	1 st university	Bac passed	0
F	20	1 st university	Bac passed	0
M	20	11 th	DEF passed	2
F	19	11 th	DEF passed	1
F	19	11 th (technical)	CFEPCEF passed	1

These students did not only obtain passing grades; they often excelled. One reported being first in his class in his 12th grade year. Another said that he was first in his class in 11th grade and always among the first five (and often first) in 12th. Another reported always being among the top five students in his class. Only one said that he was not an excellent student, adding that he had never had family support for his studies, but that he had never repeated a year and had passed the *Bac* on his first try.

Students reported varying successes and difficulties in subject areas, as well as issues with different grade levels. One student reported that he always did particularly well in history, geography, biology, and math. He had problems with 10th grade French,

but overcame them. Two reported particular difficulties with *rédaction* (a type of dictation).

Only two reported having significant problems in school. According to one, he was a good student in the lower primary cycle but not so good afterwards, as “I wanted to have a little fun with my friends.” He repeated eighth and ninth grades. The second repeated sixth grade, had no problems with the transition to secondary, and thought eighth grade was easy but was prevented from moving to ninth grade by his father, who thought his grades were too low. He found ninth and tenth grades easy and was preparing to enter eleventh grade in the fall.

Only one student had left the academic education system, and that was to enter the technical system. A young woman, 19, left regular classes in 9th grade and was enrolled in a secondary level technical institution after failing to pass the graduation exam for the academic upper primary cycle (the DEF). She finished the first cycle without repeating and was particularly good in math. She did well in seventh grade, but repeated eighth grade after having problems with chemistry. She failed the DEF and then decided to leave, as “all of my friends from convergent pedagogy went on without me.”

Several students reported receiving positive benefits from convergent pedagogy that were not directly tied to school success. One said that she was especially glad to be able to write in Bamanankan and French; another thought that convergent pedagogy had helped her learn to enjoy reading and another said that she was happy to now be able to write letters and read in both languages. One graduate thought that convergent pedagogy “lets people have a certain something, to speak more clearly. People are used to getting up in front of groups and talking, since everyone participated in convergent pedagogy

classes, which was not always the case in other classes.” Another stated that convergent pedagogy students received a better education than French-only students in many ways, as they “learn lots of things, including greeting your grandparents and respecting them and respecting other family members.” In addition, “you learn to speak with others, to express yourself very well,” and “convergent pedagogy students are better than students from French-only classes, since they learn many things quickly.”

The graduates told me that the student union-led strikes during their upper primary years made attendance and concentration difficult. One reported that he couldn’t work in seventh grade and eventually repeated the year due to strikes. Another repeated 10th grade due to receiving a failing grade from a literature professor who was unhappy that students left when the *Association des Elèves et Etudiants Maliens* (AEEM) threw rocks at them to scare them out of class.

After the data collection period ended, I was informed that the teacher was aware of *Bac* results for six of the graduates who had taken it: five had passed. The national success rate was 26% that year (*Ministère de l’Education Nationale*, 2005).

5.3.5 Convergent pedagogy experiences: classroom interaction. Graduates stated that their relationships with their convergent pedagogy classmates were warm and supportive. One told me that he knew everyone in his class and that they met after school to review their lessons. Relationships between convergent pedagogy teachers and students were also supportive. One graduate told me that he and his classmates spent all of their time at their teachers’ houses.

5.3.6 Transitions to upper primary: results and experiences. When these graduates completed sixth grade, they were split up and integrated with students from

French-only classes for seventh grade. This required social and academic adjustments. One graduate recalled how quickly his relationships with his teachers changed when he entered the upper primary cycle: teachers and students were no longer close. Another said that the lower primary cycle maintained the same atmosphere from first to sixth grade, but that things changed in the second cycle. Students began to miss classes and entire days of school, and the graduate had a difficult time adjusting to that shift in the classroom environment. Another graduate told me that the transition to upper primary made her feel “different all the time.” Another said that all of her friends in high school were former convergent pedagogy students, as “we understood each other.”

Graduates generally reported that their academic performance was superior to that of their classmates from French-only classrooms when they arrived in ninth grade. One said: “[C]onvergent pedagogy students are better students than graduates of French-only classes, since they’re very smart and can understand things quickly.” Most saw their strengths in language-related subjects; a few reported some initial difficulties with math. Others thought they performed more highly in all areas. Of those who spoke of initial difficulties, none of them linked their problems to convergent pedagogy methods. One thought that “math was too hard for me,” and another said that he had “personal difficulties” in math.

Convergent pedagogy graduates did have personal difficulties with their colleagues from French-only classes when they started seventh grade: one told me that she had no friends at the “French school.” Most misunderstandings revolved around the premise that convergent pedagogy students would be behind their classmates. Several graduates reported that students from French-only classes told them that they wouldn’t

pass, but that convergent pedagogy students always did better anyway. One graduate told me that, when she entered seventh grade, the other students thought the convergent pedagogy students “were different and bothered us, but the convergent pedagogy kids always did better.” Ten others reported similar experiences. One thought that the achievement gap between the groups of students widened in favor of the convergent pedagogy graduates as the students advanced through the upper primary cycle.

Conversely, four others reported not noticing many differences. One thought that the two groups had similar difficulties in French, and one thought that her friends in French-only classes were better in French.

5.3.7 Involvement in extracurricular activities. When I began this research, I hypothesized that behavioral differences between convergent pedagogy and French-only students, specifically the trait of being *éveillé*, mentioned by so many teachers and parents, would lead to extensive extracurricular involvement. I found the opposite: graduates reported that they focused on their studies and avoided distraction. One young man said: “I’m not interested in those things, I only want to work. I’m the only one in my family to go this far in school and so I have to work by myself and study at home.” A young woman reported that she was “not a member of any group, I don’t want to participate. They have lots of meetings, sometimes during class and the group members don’t go to class.” She told me that she went to tutoring every Thursday after school and couldn’t go to meetings since she didn’t want to miss her classes. Another young man reported that he’s not a member of any group because he “didn’t want to be involved in those things, I’m here to study, the groups are too political, too many groups are influenced by politics.” Another said that he didn’t like the way group members behaved

and he thought they were “always looking for excuses and didn’t want to study.” Others said they were simply too busy for anything outside of class work.

Only three graduates reported participating in any kind of group activity. One raised money with other, non-convergent pedagogy students to organize parties and also played basketball on a school team. She was the accountant for the group, but the other leaders all went to French-only classes in the lower primary cycle. Another played soccer with a group but was not involved in team organization. Another was part of a neighborhood improvement group that cleaned, organized social events, and mediated disagreements between neighbors. The president and the treasurer were both convergent pedagogy graduates, but the secretary had never attended school.

5.3.8 Union (AEEM) involvement. My expectations for union involvement were similar to those for participation in extracurricular activities, particularly since teachers reported that part of being *éveillé* was debating student and teacher roles. However, students’ experiences with union-led strikes and violence, combined with their focus on their studies, seem to have kept them from having any interest in joining or working with the AEEM. Thirteen graduates specifically mentioned being opposed to the activities, and, for some, the existence of the union. Their reasons included the group’s use of violent tactics, the perceived political involvement of the union, parental opposition, and the union’s interference in their academic careers.

However, graduates reported that they thought many other students did belong, with some of them saying that students joined only because they were able to miss classes as a result: “[T]he students have not understood, they think that it’s only about throwing rocks and acting like they’re someone important.” One said that he thought the

AEEM “are the ones who are destroying Mali,” and “a good citizen shouldn’t do that, it’s their fault that education is behind.” The general consensus on their lack of participation in the AEEM was best captured by this graduate: “You have to avoid them because you could study really well, but that wastes time.”

5.3.9 Future plans. Graduates had a range of professional ambitions. None of them mentioned agriculture or housekeeping, the most common Malian occupations. They planned secretarial work, army positions, teaching high school geography, other high school teaching, teaching university-level history (two) and archaeology, studying science (biology or chemistry, technology or geography at the university, becoming a lawyer or judge (three), working as a tourist guide, becoming an accountant, and working as a customs agent. Only two graduates did not have any career plans. One offered many diverse possibilities (a nurse, a midwife, a secretary, an accountant, a customs agent or perhaps even a mechanic). The latter had yet to pass the primary school graduation exam, so she had many years in which to decide.

Graduates gave a wide variety of reasons for their career choices. Three mentioned an interest in furthering Mali’s development through working in teaching, law, or the judiciary. The potential tourist guide was hoping to “understand life through the tourists.” The future geographer saw his plans as an intellectual pursuit: his brother had given him a geography book when he was in the early grades and he had been interested ever since. The future customs agent chose his career “because they earn a lot of money, and that’s what’s important.” None of the other graduates linked their career decisions to financial concerns.

Graduates did not have adult support or other resources to help them prepare for their professions. One aspiring lawyer knew a lawyer, but had not discussed the profession with him. None of the others had discussed their plans with anyone practicing their targeted profession. None had access to any written information about their desired career, including required qualifications.

5.3.10 Escape or return? Thirteen graduates planned to stay in, or, for those who had departed for secondary or higher education, return to Ségou. This number was much higher than I expected, and much higher than projected by parents for students in the main study and satellite schools (see Chapter 6). It may have been due to Ségou's urban environment, with more employment possibilities than the semi-rural setting of the main and satellite study schools, or it may have been due to students' ties to their community (see below). In some cases, graduates said their plans to stay were dependent on the availability of employment, but most planned to stay regardless. One young man told me that he wants "to come back, but if I find another job [in high school teaching], I will stay there [wherever the work was]."

The aspiring tourist guide was one of four who planned to leave, saying "if I know white people, maybe they'll let me go to their countries." She had immediate plans to try to go to France. Another aspiring emigrant wanted to go "somewhere on the American continent: Canada, or maybe Brazil." Another said that one never knows about the future. He didn't want to stay in Ségou but didn't know where he might go. The last wanted to go to Bamako, France or Belgium, to find work, any kind of work.

5.3.11 Plans for their own children. When I asked graduates about their educational plans for their children or future children, many first mentioned their desire

to limit their family size. In a country where the average age of first childbirth is 18 (DHS, 2001), only one graduate had a child.

When we discussed where graduates would enroll their children, only one said she would prefer to send her children to French-only classes. All of the others expressed a preference for enrollment in convergent pedagogy, if classroom conditions were acceptable. Five graduates stated that the implementation of convergent pedagogy had so declined since their days in school that they would send their children to French-only classes instead. One said that he felt forced to do this and was opposed in instruction in French “since it’s not our language,” but he had seen that current convergent pedagogy students “can’t write their names in Bamanankan or French,” which he felt was a significant decline from the era of his primary schooling. Another concurred, saying she will send her children to French-only classes, because the “convergent pedagogy classes of today aren’t working well.” Yet another said that the convergent pedagogy classes “really aren’t very good anymore,” saying, “it’s not really school, since the level is very low.” He concluded this was because “neither the teachers nor the students want to work anymore: in Mali there’s no more studying.”

Only one graduate was interested in private school. Although he said he would consider sending his boys to secular private school, he would send his girls to the madrassa (Islamic school) only. He had made this decision for several reasons: he wanted to “follow in the footsteps of my father,” “sees the world as changing and young women as becoming very distracted,” and felt that families “have forgotten their customs and that they need to better follow Islam.”

5.3.12 Current issues in schooling. Echoing parents and teachers (see Chapters 6 and 7), several graduates voiced concerns about the current status of the primary education system and the work ethic of students and teachers. One thought “students’ levels are too low; the schools let them pass from year to year with really bad grades. They should be expelled if they can’t do well enough or they don’t work.” Another complained about the lack of books in the library. A young man thought that:

Children today don’t take their studies seriously There are times in life when you really have to work, these children don’t have the same levels they had, when you talk to your brothers, you can tell, it’s also the fault of the professors, no one wants to work now, they don’t like school, they are too influenced by the life of today.

Another student said that he was able to manage his studies, but “the generations aren’t the same.” In earlier generations, he thought that students wanted to work more, but “the world changes, and I don’t know if students today will have the courage that we had when we were young.”

5.3.13 Commitment to community. As discussed above, most graduates planned to remain in or return to Ségou after completing their studies. In addition, several were already involved in or planning to lead community-service activities, while others had chosen their future professions based on their potential for community and national service. As mentioned above, one graduate was a leader of a neighborhood improvement group. One planned to start a group devoted to helping children go to school, especially poor children, and another hoped to start a group to clean up the neighborhood and fight malaria.

Regarding professional plans, one graduate hoped to become a teacher and then eventually “reform education in Mali, since students’ [achievement] levels are so low.” Another, already in university, wanted to study law in order to be a lawyer or a judge. She told me that this had been her ambition since starting high school, to be “a woman wearing a uniform, to defend people.” Another planned to be a lawyer “to help defend innocent victims.”

5.3.14 Opinions on convergent pedagogy: language of instruction, methods, and curriculum.

5.3.14.1 Language of instruction. Graduates reported enjoying studying in national languages during their years in convergent pedagogy. One remembered: “I really liked studying in Bamanankan, studying in my own language that is spoken every day.” Nearing the end of their secondary education, graduates, with one exception, endorsed the language strategies of convergent pedagogy. Reasons for wanting to learn in French and Bamanankan included: “if you can’t defend yourself well with one, you can with the other;” the desire to learn to read and write in their own language, observation that learning in Bamanankan made it easier to learn to spell in French and to become a better French student than students in French-only classes; and the conclusion that each language “has its own advantages.” Five additional graduates said that learning in Bamanankan made it easier for them to learn French. Another young man said that it’s a good thing to study national languages because students should “know the traditions and how to use them: we are Bambara, not French.”

Graduates also thought that studying in Bamanankan would enhance their prospects in higher education and their careers. One thought her primary schooling

would help her at the university, as “even at the university, they use Bambara.” A future lawyer thought that his convergent pedagogy education had been essential because “when there’s questioning [in court], people don’t speak French, you have to take notes in Bamanankan.”

The sole graduate who did not approve of the method thought that French was more important, saying “Bamanankan is not good French is good. If you travel, you can manage in French.”

5.3.14.2 Methods. Graduates also appreciated the reform’s methods, citing close student-teacher and student-student relationships, an ability to speak in front of groups, increased knowledge of their culture, and learned respect for their parents as benefits. Two graduates spoke specifically about program methods. One thought that convergent pedagogy was good because it “lets people have a certain something; it lets them speak more clearly.” He said that, in convergent pedagogy, people are used to getting up in front of groups and talking, and also that everyone participated in convergent pedagogy, which was not always the case in other classes. Another said that the methods of convergent pedagogy have “had a big impact on the way I think: they have allowed me to better understand myself.”

5.3.14.3 Curriculum content. The only cases in which graduates spoke of curriculum were descriptions of ways in which content was carried by language. The use of their first language as the language of instruction resulted in other, non-linguistic changes. Regarding the advantages of the program’s curricular inclusion of local content, one graduate saw Bamanankan as important for cultural preservation, as it “helps children better understand and value the education they receive at home from their

grandparents.” Convergent pedagogy taught her to greet her grandparents, to respect them, and to respect other family members. She thought that convergent pedagogy students received a better education than students in French-only classes. She also thought that convergent pedagogy students learned to speak well with people and to express themselves well.

5.4 Conclusions: The future of convergent pedagogy

These interviews provide a window into the experiences of early convergent pedagogy students. They allow us to see the impact of the reform during an earlier period, when classrooms contained some basic materials and teachers were provided with continuous collegial, administrative, and technical support. Graduates thought highly of the program and it clearly had an impact on their academic and social lives. They wanted the program to succeed, wanted it to expand to the secondary and university levels, and wanted to enroll their children. This came with an important caveat: they would only enroll their children if implementation conditions were acceptable.

Graduates had become advocates for the reform, with one graduate telling me that he “always talks to everyone about convergent pedagogy,” particularly since “at the beginning, people didn’t like it, they thought we only learned Bamanankan.” They continued to keep in close touch with their teachers and classmates and continued to advance in school. Their academic success and professional aspirations show the promise of the reform.

The following chapters discuss the realities of implementation during the data collection period, when the reform had expanded from four classrooms to more than a

thousand, and support, materials, and other implementation conditions had changed significantly.

CHAPTER 6

PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER PERSPECTIVES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines parents' and community members' perspectives on schooling. It begins by providing background material on parents and schooling, primarily for readers who are unfamiliar with the regional and national context. The chapter then listens to parents as they speak about their views on schooling for themselves, their children, and Mali's development. These perspectives are organized in six broad categories: (a) rationales for school enrollment, (b) understandings of convergent pedagogy and French-only instruction, (c) ability to make programmatic choices, (d) theoretical perspectives on the substance of schooling, (e) lived experiences of schooling, and (f) the demands of schooling.

This chapter shows how historical and institutional factors constrain parents' involvement in schooling. Regrets about their own lack of schooling and a desire to improve families' economic standing led parents to enroll at least some of their children in school. However, the lack of institutional mechanisms and traditions for interaction with teachers, combined with, in most cases, the use of a language of instruction that parents did not understand, kept them from understanding the substance of schooling and supporting their children's learning. The parents and community members in this study were limited to an understanding of a script for schooling. If school was open and teachers present, they considered their children's schooling successful.

Parents' views of the language of instruction issue varied, but all continued to see the learning of French as the essential aspect of schooling. Parents' limited openness towards instruction in national languages was multi-faceted and somewhat contradictory: a result of their view of national languages' ability to aid in the journey of escape (through increasing student learning) and also to tie children to their cultural roots, in danger of being lost in a modernizing and urbanizing society.

The story of parental perspectives on education in Mali continues to be one of distance, from school, from teachers, and ultimately from children, for whom school success was seen as a valued and coveted chance to leave their communities. Parents' role was limited to the decision that children would be enrolled; they saw events inside the classroom as appropriately managed by teachers and administrators.

As a reminder, parents and community members were interviewed in groups, some of which were large. In most cases, due to cultural norms of participation, the number of interviewees sharing similar views was not equivalent to the number who spoke. There were many kinds of non-verbal communication to indicate approval or dissent. I have made every attempt to indicate when views were widely shared and when they were not. See Chapter 2 for more information about sampling and data collection methods.

6.2 Background: Essential understandings

In order to provide background information and introduce the themes of this chapter, I begin with four "essential understandings" about schooling and parenting in

Mali. These understandings are derived from a review of the literature, an analysis of statistical information, and interviews conducted as part of this study.

First, schooling in Mali is not a widely shared experience. Many parents of children in the study schools had never participated in schooling themselves or had participated only minimally. In 1977, Mali's gross enrollment rate (GER) was 22% (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). In 2005, the average number of years of schooling was 0.9 for Malian women and 1.6 for men (World Bank, EdStats database, 2005). The convergent pedagogy satellite school did not open until 1986. There was no school in the village prior to that date.

Enrollment is limited by poverty (see Chapter 2) and the agricultural focus of the economy. Allowing children time off from agricultural work to attend school carries significant opportunity costs, in addition to the direct costs charged by many schools (enrollment fees, report card fees, and parents' association fees, among others, see Chapter 2). Even in families that participate in schooling, any particular child may be excluded, as parents allocate resources and make choices between their children to maximize potential family-level economic and social benefits (dissertation and practicum data; World Bank, forthcoming a).

In 2005, these factors combined to produce a 67% gross enrollment rate (GER) (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*). More than half of all school-aged children never began school (these are national averages; enrollment rates are significantly lower in most rural areas and lower again for rural girls) (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). During data collection, one pedagogic advisor boasted that all of his children

went to school, implying that enrollment is not universal even among administrators' children.

Second, schooling is precarious even for enrolled children. Starting school late increases children's chances of being pushed out of the system before graduation or being refused access to the upper primary cycle, as the system has mandatory age limits. For girls, starting school late reduces the amount of schooling in which they can participate before reaching puberty and being restricted in their activities outside the home and/or married.

Even children who start school on time frequently leave before graduating from the lower primary cycle. They leave for school-side reasons of too much grade repetition and inadequate academic performance, and for home-side reasons such as insufficient family income, long home-school distances, household labor needs, and puberty-onset marriage (World Bank, forthcoming a). Schooling in Mali, even at the primary level, is an uncommon experience with an unpredictable trajectory.

Third, parents who send their children to school are only minimally involved in decisions and activities related to that schooling. This has a historical basis: during the colonial period, parents' distance from schooling was both physical and psychological. Enrollment was extremely low and concentrated in a small part of the country, as the regime was primarily administered from Dakar, Senegal. Instruction was entirely in French and, as seen in Chapter 3, was designed to separate children from their parents and communities (Kelly, 1986).

Pre- and post-independence, the use of a centralized teacher posting system (including many French nationals prior to independence) made many parents, especially

rural ethnic minorities, culturally as well as linguistically distant from teachers. Most teachers came from urban or semi-urban Bamanankan-speaking areas and were unfamiliar with rural life. The expanding system of parents' associations (*Association des Parents d'Elèves*, APE) did little to reduce the psychological distance between parents and schools, as they existed mainly to collect financial contributions and did not have a significant role in school management.

Even in 2005, parental participation in school life remained extremely limited. As about 90% of Malian students still attended school in French, most parents could not directly understand the substance of their children's schooling. Other school factors had remained static: centralized teacher and administrator posting, no widespread parental role in school management (although this was beginning to change with the advent of NGO supported School Management Committees [*Comité de gestion scolaire*, CGS]) and no institutionalized parent-teacher interaction.

In addition, non-school factors that have always limited parental participation continued: the high labor demands of subsistence farming; French-only and religious strictures on women's participation in public life, combined with a high percentage of male teachers and higher percentage of male administrators; high fertility rates; poor family health; and considerable home-school distances made more significant by a lack of personal transport and very limited public transport.

The fourth essential understanding about parenting and schooling in Mali is that Malian parents enroll their children in school to change their futures, especially their economic and social status. There is a long tradition in Mali of emigrating for economic reasons, from young men and women who leave rural areas to work in more urban areas,

to the children who are sent to Côte d'Ivoire in conditions of virtual slavery to work in the cocoa plantations, to school leavers who find more promising labor markets in the coastal economies of the region than at home (Gros-Ngaté, 2000). Schooling is seen as a way to enhance children's chances in these competitive labor markets. Most parents expect and encourage this, and some resist it by only sending a limited number of their children to school (dissertation and practicum data). Some parents keep girls at home, wishing them to marry in the community, raise children, and maintain tradition, but most parents report hoping that all of their children will leave, even while acknowledging that is unlikely (dissertation data).

6.3 Rationales for schooling: Decisions about enrollment

6.3.1 Hoping for escape. Parents enrolled their children in school so that children could escape their parents' lives of poverty. Parents regretted their own lack of schooling and saw that as having limited their life choices. One parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school told me: "I didn't get to study, so I wanted them to." A parent of a fourth grader in the French-only class said: "I couldn't go to school, I regretted it, I didn't want the same thing to happen to my children, didn't want my children to be like me" and continued: "If I had stayed [at school] . . . there are others who are teaching, others are Ministers, if I had continued, maybe I would have been a teacher."

Most parents assumed that physical departure was necessary for economic mobility. The same fourth grade parent also said: "I want my children to leave." This view represents a major, post-colonial change in a hitherto very traditional society, where it was assumed that children would replicate the lives of their elders. Even more

surprisingly, it was nearly unanimous among those who spoke about the purposes of schooling. As the parent of a second grade French-only student said: “You always have to get out, you always have to get out. If you get out, if you haven’t studied, you can’t manage.” I asked a group of parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school where they wanted their children to live, and they said: “[T]hey don’t have to stay here, they have to go.” It was surprising, in a culture that values family solidarity, that the desire to have children leave was so strong, and so I asked as a follow-up question whether everyone felt that way. The answer was yes. A parent at the main study school said: “Yes, I want all my kids who are at school, everyone who’s finished, to leave” [Q: girls and boys?] A: Yes” (fourth grade French-only parent).

In the convergent pedagogy satellite school, where the parents sent all of their children to school (see Chapter 4 for details), and the main study school, parents may have included a calculation of school failure in their enrollment decisions. When I asked if the village could continue to exist if all the children left, one parent at the satellite school laughed and said: “the village will be here. The mothers are here, the fathers are here, it’s not everyone who will leave.” At the main study school, the second grade French-only teacher said: “No, I don’t want all the kids to leave, I hope that not all of them will leave. Some of them will go ahead in their studies, some of them won’t. Some will go to the end, and the ones who don’t”

Some parents at the main study school sent children abroad to work: “Those who aren’t at school, some are in other countries looking for money, in France [nine], Libya, Saudi Arabia [three]” (fourth grade French-only parent). One parent of a French-only fourth grade student told me that he would send his son “even if he has to go to the

United States, and it would be good for him to stay there.” Another parent from the same class said: “[Y]ou came, and it’s far from here, we want our kids to be far from here. Our kids should go with you.” According to parents, children were ready to travel:

You can’t have a good hold on children [C]an a child who decides to go have adventures, can you stop them? No, you can’t. They’ll leave. And why?

Because they want to escape something? What? Poverty. They want to find a certain well-being. They go to look for that. You can’t stop children from leaving. (sixth grade convergent pedagogy parent)

Parents strategized that departing children would later assist their families and village:

“[I]f you leave, find work and money, to prepare your future, after you think of your parents and your village, come and visit, pay, help with things that need to be done” (fourth grade French-only parent).

Despite their stated determination to send their children to school, parents at the main study school did not enroll all of them. They kept some out of school for agricultural and other work, to provide for families’ immediate needs, and sent some to school as an investment for the future. When I asked parents how they decided who would go and who would not, they told me that they considered the matter carefully: “If the kids know how to talk about doing things, if everyone is together, you can watch their behavior, you compare it, you can tell who needs to go to school and who needs to stay home” (parent of fourth grade French-only student). Another parent of a child in the same class had a set exercise he used with groups of similar aged children: “I give each kid a chick, before the kids are old enough to go to school The kid who takes the best care of the chick will be a farmer The one who doesn’t raise the animals well

goes to school.” The second grade French-only teacher at the main study school let his young children decide:

Well, me, at a certain age, I ask the kids if they want to go to Koranic school or if they want to go to the white school. I ask them and if they say they want to go to the white school, I let them.”

His children were asked to make this choice when they were seven.

6.3.2 *“Growing Up Modern” (Fuller, 1991).* For some parents, school has simply become a part of modern life, necessary for individual and national development. A parent from the convergent pedagogy satellite school, located in a village that did not establish a school until 1986, told me: “Well, the future has changed now. You have to go to school. Everyone has decided to send their children to school.” A community member from the same village told me that they had finally decided to establish a school because: “really, we were obliged to send their kids to European school . . . those children would dominate.” A parent, of a French-only fourth grade student, told me: “As the world evolves, the child needs his base for himself, that will help him, that’s why he’s in school.” Many parents have lived through the end of colonialism, *coups d’état*, civil unrest and now a time of democracy and peace. Increased access to schooling is part of that transition. A view of schooling as part of a modern transition may not be the case in more isolated parts of Mali, but was in the area of the study schools, relatively close to the capital.

6.3.3 *Contributing to national development.* Linked to parents’ desire for modernity was a conviction that families should contribute to Mali’s future by sending their children to school. A parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school told me that

he sent his children to school: “To study, to encourage them to do other things. After school, the country needs to arrive, like other countries have arrived.” Similarly, the parent of a convergent pedagogy sixth grader told me, contradicting those who were primarily schooling their children for departure:

Studying, it’s not only for going away. You can do studies that will help here.

Introduce new knowledge; teach that to children, even for here, so they can create a path. Some go, but some stay here, given knowledge and energy, thanks to what they learned at school, they become even more powerful than those who leave. Studies are to better manage our own country, to do something solid, feasible. No one said that all children who are in school, who learn something, are destined to go to the exterior. If everyone leaves, we’ll have to call other countries to come here and build our country.

6.3.4 Learning. Learning was explicitly mentioned by a few participants as a desirable schooling outcome. When I asked the fourth grade French-only parents why they sent their children to school, one told me “[s]o they would learn, for learning itself.” When I asked him what he wanted his children to do after school, he told me that he “want[ed] them to do advanced studies.” Another parent of a child in the same class told me: “I hope that, God willing, my child, will continue at school.” Another parent at the same school: “To learn Bambara, English, French, something else, people have to study, learn something else.” At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, a community member said: “Really, not everyone can leave the village, but we put a lot of children in school so that even those who don’t become civil servants can still manage their lives, understand what’s good and what’s bad, become enlightened.”

6.3.5 *Gender issues.* Girls' education in Mali has long lagged behind that of boys. The GER for girls in SY2003-04 was 60, compared to a rate of 82 for boys (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). Some parents spoke of different ambitions for girls, not including them in discussions of wanting children to leave. When I asked one parent if others in the community wanted their girls to leave, just after he had told me that he wanted all of his children to leave, the group of second grade French-only parents being interviewed told me: "No, not the girls." The answer to what they wanted the girls to do: "Get married."

These parents had enrolled all of their girls, though, and they said that they would be willing to see them continue post-primary, before marrying.³³ "We put girls in school so they learn and get a diploma. They'll continue if they want and they'll get married." One parent of a fourth grade convergent pedagogy student told me that his girls would be allowed to travel, but that marriage remained the expectation: "Yes, even if they go to Europe, with their diplomas, they'll work there and get married too." In asking about their career paths, one of the fourth grade parents told me: "It's not up to me to decide, it will be their husbands who will tell them what to do." He expected his girls to marry at 15, unless they passed the exam at the end of the primary cycle: "Those who pass the *DEF* [lower secondary exam], it's hard for them to get married before high school. If they get all the way there, you'll let them continue." Parents also valued girls' education in different ways, looking forward to girls' contributions to the family while expecting boys to travel:

³³ This is contradicted by education statistics, which show significant drop-offs in enrollment rates for both boys and girls after the transition to seventh grade (MEN, 2005).

Girls today are more concerned about their parents than boys are. If you have a girl, no matter what happens to her, civil servant or not, here or abroad, she will contribute to the family; (second grade convergent pedagogy)

if we see that a child cannot succeed, a girl, better to marry them instead of letting them languish there [in school]. If boys can't study . . . those who are expelled, make them start farming, if they can't do that, send them off for adventures; and (community member, satellite school)

we often say that the boys do not belong to their society; they belong to the world (sixth grade convergent pedagogy).

6.3.6 Changing expectations and purposes of schooling. As discussed in Chapter 2 and above, parents have historically enrolled children to move them from a life of poverty and subsistence agriculture to higher status and more lucrative positions in the civil service. Consistent with this, none of the parents interviewed for this study wanted their children to work in subsistence agriculture. Few wanted their children to work in agriculture at all, and those who were willing to consider it insisted on the importance of new (to them) methods and technologies. One community member at the convergent pedagogy satellite school said, speaking of children who might stay in the village: "They'll stay and farm, but not like we do. They'll use animal-driven plows and plant mangoes. They won't use hand hoes, they'll use cattle." This level of consideration of agriculture as a possible career choice was rare. Most interviewed parents were not sure what kinds of work their children would find, but wanted them out of the fields.

However, with civil service employment no longer guaranteed for high school graduates,³⁴ parents saw the purposes of schooling as more diverse and the paths of graduates as less certain: “[W]e don’t make children to direct them in a certain path” (fourth grade French-only). Eight parents spoke directly about the difficulty of predicting students’ future employment. One parent of a sixth grade convergent pedagogy student told me:

Actually, things have changed. We don’t put children in school so they become big civil servants. We put them in school to learn something, so that from what they learn, they can take other paths, in the area of agriculture like their fathers do, they can improve that, or, they can go into other areas, improve themselves for the better.

Another parent of a child in the same class told me:

The children don’t go to school anymore to become civil servants. If they do, it’s good, if not, it’s good too. But now, studies, we do them to become capable of figuring things out Not all of those children can become civil servants. It’s impossible.

This fourth grade French-only parent was unsure of his children’s futures, but knew that learning would change them:

I send my kids to school to learn. If they learn, the knowledge that they have, these kids in all liberty can use their knowledge to become what they want to become. It’s also for escaping from the status of illiterate, which is what they are living now . . . working the land in a primitive fashion. If you don’t go to school, that’s what you’re going to do.

³⁴ Automatic civil service recruitment with a high school diploma ended in 1983.

Parents did not feel that they were in charge of their children's futures, but rather that schooling gave children options. A parent of a sixth grade French-only student said: "Always, you have to know a lot of things. Even if school ends, if you can do other things, you should do them." For these parents, school opened multiple doors:

To go to school, it's to know a lot of things. If you finish school and you know a lot of things, you can become an accountant, partner, secretary, you can find something else. But if you haven't learned things, you'll always be at the bottom.

6.4 Beyond enrollment: Understandings of the substance of schooling

With a few exceptions, almost all civil servants, parents at the main study school did not know that their school housed French-only and convergent pedagogy classes. Their understanding was hampered by a lack of communication from school authorities and teachers; their cultural images of schooling; the newness of the reform (the main school had a sixth grade class for the first time during the data collection period and the satellite school had its fourth sixth grade cohort); and their own inability, due to time, distance, and institutional and cultural constraints, to discuss the substance of schooling with teachers and principals.

Parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school knew that their school used Bamanankan as the initial language of instruction and that other schools used French. Their knowledge was probably due to the reduced complexity of a one-program-only school, the controversial and much-discussed decision to open a school at all in the village, the employment of local teachers, and/or the smaller size of the community.

No parents at either site, other than convergent pedagogy teachers, were aware of even the basic outlines of the reform. Most parents at the main school thought that students who started in Bamanankan would continue in Bamanankan through primary school, just as those who started in French stayed in French. One parent of a student in the fourth grade French-only class did know that different languages were used in the different schools and also that convergent pedagogy students eventually learn French: “[T]here it’s mixed, they speak Malinké³⁵ over there; here it’s French.” No knew about the convergent approach to language learning, the differences in teaching methods, nor stipulated changes in curriculum content.

Most parents reported that they did not receive any information from the schools about the existence of the two programs or differences between them. A few reported receiving contradictory information. A parent of a fourth grader in School B was aware that the primary school was officially divided into different schools: “I know there are two different schools, A and B” but did not know the details of the differences. Another parent of a child in the same class thought that “if there are two [programs], pedagogically, they can have the same sense, but the programs could be different,” but again, did not know anything about the differences. The fourth parent in this group simply did not know that one school was convergent pedagogy and one was French-only. No one told him that there were two programs when he enrolled his children.

In interviews with second grade convergent pedagogy parents, none of the four interviewed knew that two different programs were being implemented at the school. One told me: “I just sent the children to school; I didn’t know.” This parent added that

³⁵ In principle, the school used Bamanankan, not Kita Maninkakan, the language to which he was referring (see Chapter 2).

many parents in the community without school age children did not know about the two programs either, although they had coexisted for five years when the study was conducted. He thought that parents of children in his child's class were only starting to realize that the convergent pedagogy program even existed, in its second year: "Before, we didn't know, but with time, we understood that there was a difference between [School] A and [School] B, but before we didn't know, and we don't really know what the differences are."

Parents of sixth grade children in convergent pedagogy also reported receiving no information prior to enrollment. They learned about the linguistic outlines of the program as their children progressed through the primary cycle:

In the beginning, when I heard that they were teaching Bamanankan here, we didn't ask much about it. Now that we've seen it, in the beginning we couldn't chose, but now that the two exist, we have something to say, but before we didn't have any information.

Another agreed: "[W]hen they started school, we thought it was all French, we didn't know that they would learn Bamanankan." After more than five years of experience with the program, they still did not know that convergent pedagogy methods differed from those of the French-only program.

No parent in either school, other than teachers, knew that convergent pedagogy was a coherent educational reform introduced by the educational system to improve student learning, nor that national policy called for it to be introduced to all primary school classrooms. One parent of a fourth grader in the French-only school thought that it was the teachers who decided to teach in Bamanankan: "The teacher had the idea to

teach in Bamanankan” and another thought that convergent pedagogy was the idea of external projects: “Since there are new projects that arrive, the projects there, they need Bambara.”

6.5 Choice?

Given most parents’ lack of knowledge about the differences between the programs, it was impossible for them to choose their children’s placements. They generally reported not being given a choice at all, contradicting statements by school personnel (see Chapter 8). Some parents received incomplete information: one fourth grade parent at the main school was told when he enrolled his child in first grade that his child would be in a convergent pedagogy class. As it turned out, the cycle in which the child was enrolled retained French-only classes and the other cycle was converted to a convergent pedagogy school, so his child went to French-only classes. This parent, a French speaking civil servant, knew that the two programs were different, and he knew of the existence of convergent pedagogy. He did not know, however, that the school had simply switched the classes, and no one ever informed him that his child could have been transferred had he wanted to pursue the convergent pedagogy option.

A few families did know about differences between programs and divided their children between the two public school programs and a mix of Koranic school, French-only apprenticeships, and agriculture. One parent, speaking of his decision to enroll his children in different public school programs and Koranic school, said: “[T]hey must all have benefits” (sixth grade convergent pedagogy). Another parent of a fourth grade convergent pedagogy student based his decision on the seeming newness of the reform, and his need to understand more fully before putting all of his educational eggs in one

basket. He told me that: “The teaching of Bamanankan and French, before it was French only, but now that there are both, it’s a new experience. So, I’d prefer that one child go to A and two go to B, and maybe with time, I’ll be able to get some experience.”

Wanting to learn more about parents’ willingness to enroll their children in convergent pedagogy, I asked what they would have chosen for their children *had they known of the differences between the programs*. None of the four sixth grade convergent pedagogy parents seemed able to contemplate having such a choice. One told me: “[T]hey would just be put in school, I wouldn’t know.” Another parent said: “I didn’t chose. The children came, they were recruited, and the division was done at the level of the school and they went to either school A or school B.” Another said: “No one asked me, the Parents’ Association divided them up, it was like that.” Yet another, this time the parent of a fourth grader: “I didn’t have a choice, it was obligatory. I put them in school and I didn’t know that it would be like that.”

A few parents, mostly civil servants but not all, did choose their children’s placement. One was interviewed as the parent of a sixth grader in a French-only class, but he had a total of four children in primary school. Two were in French-only classes and two were in convergent pedagogy classes. He told me: “I sent two there [convergent pedagogy] and two in French. Me, I decided that.” He did this based on his knowledge of education in France: “[I]n France, the children, when they go to school, they start speaking their language. Me, I saw, if they’ve mixed it, there’s something there.” I asked him why he kept two in the French-only classes: “In order not to lose that side either. In French, in Mali, we speak French, so I put two over there for that.” He still did not know that convergent pedagogy students transitioned from national languages to

French. A parent of a fourth grade convergent pedagogy student also decided that he wanted his child in convergent pedagogy, told the principal, and his child was placed as he wished without complications.

Two parents of children in the second grade convergent pedagogy class (one a civil servant) placed their children for pedagogic reasons, believing that it is easier for children to learn in their first language: “It is much easier for them to learn in their first language, in Bamanankan, which is why I sent them to school A” and “I decided to put my son in A. I told myself that the new method, it’s easier for a kid to learn in his own language than in a foreign language, French.”

At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, in a village that had never had French language schooling, parents were accustomed to their one-option-only situation. According to community members, when the school was founded, they were told by local authorities that it would be an experimental school (see Chapter 2), and parents agreed: “[T]hey said that was fine, as long as they had a school.” When I asked parents why they didn’t want their children to start in French at school, they simply said “Because they don’t start school here in French.” This village was isolated and did not have direct experience with schooling during the colonial era. However, as shown below, village parents were still influenced by a French-only image of schooling.

Most parents were satisfied with their children’s placement and were unconcerned that children were in one class rather than another. This was partially because they did not understand the differences, but also due to Mali’s long history of restricted and disrupted schooling (violent student and teacher strikes closed schools frequently during

the 1990s). A parent of a second grader in convergent pedagogy had this response to my questions about school placement:

Our main preoccupation is that children go to school and that they're taught. It doesn't really matter what class they're in, that really doesn't matter. The main thing is that children go to school and study.

6.6 The theoretical substance of schooling

6.5.1 Introduction. Discussion about differences between French-only schooling and convergent pedagogy focused entirely on language of instruction. Parents unanimously told me that they were satisfied with teaching methods, even though they were unable to cite differences between the programs. There was no mention of differences in curriculum content.

Parents' views on language of instruction were nuanced. The evidence suggests that most parents want their children to learn French by the end of the lower primary cycle, but that there is a growing awareness of and interest in having children learn their own language, prior to or concurrently with learning French. This is seen primarily as a way to increase children's chances of academic success, but also as a kind of cultural reinforcement. Some parents, however, were adamant that they wanted their children to only study in French.

6.6.2 Reasons for preferring French-only instruction.

6.6.2.1 "Real School" (Metz, 1990) is in French. In 2005, one hundred and fifty years after the beginning of colonial education in Mali, school continues to be seen primarily as a place to learn French. When asked why they wanted their children to learn

French, parents replied: “It’s French that we know about, Bambara has arrived only recently” (fourth grade French-only parent) and “The school began in French, it’s Bambara that came afterwards” (second grade French-only parent). Another parent of a child in the second grade French-only class summarized his feelings by telling me that: “First, school is to learn French. So, the French-only school is better.” Another parent said: “What I know is that I sent my child to school to learn French, not Bambara” (fourth grade French-only). A parent of a child in the sixth grade French-only class said: “Yes, they came to school to learn French. Bambara came like that, if not, I put them in school to learn French not to learn Bambara.” A parent of a fourth grader in a French-only class said: “But really, the problem of Bambara, we don’t even want to talk about it. We want our children to learn another language at school, not our language.”

As discussed in Chapter 3, Metz (1990) describes the ways in which teachers and parents continue to adhere to a script for schooling that matches their image of “Real School.” Although she wrote about the United States, her thesis is a powerful way to help understand why an ineffective schooling model continues around the world and specifically in Mali. Many of those interviewed for this study, including civil servants, administrators, teachers, and parents, wanted school to be in French because that fit their image of legitimate schooling. When pressed to specify their reasons for wanting their children to learn French, parents returned to their reasons for school enrollment: economic/physical escape, personal independence, and national identity, all seen as being enhanced by French knowledge.

6.6.2.2 Escape. The importance of learning French to enable students to leave their communities was directly cited by twelve parents of the twenty-five interviewed.

No parents contradicted these speakers; no other issue received such a consistent or widespread response. These parents thought that French would serve their children wherever they went: “But even if you go to England, if you don’t speak English, you can speak French and it will be OK” (sixth and second grade French-only). This travel was linked to the expansion of economic opportunities: “Our children will be more appreciated in the global market only if they speak the language” (parent of sixth grade convergent pedagogy student).

One parent of a child in the fourth grade French-only class told me that the difference between children who go to school in Bamanankan and children who go to school in French is that “the one who learns in French and goes abroad, he can manage right away. The one who learns in Bamanankan can’t.” Another parent of a child in the same class said

Now, we live in a global world. We can travel no matter how and no matter where. Children who learn only in Bamanankan will be limited to the places that speak Bamanankan. To leave and go out, to France, the U.S. or elsewhere, if you only know Bamanankan, when you leave to go to the other side, French is more often spoken than Bamanankan.

In order to escape, as one parent of a second grade French-only student said “you have to learn in French [because] French is much more widely spoken than Bambara.”

6.6.2.3 Independence. The ability to read and write letters without having to rely on the services of neighbors or paid letter writers was often mentioned during data collection as a primary motivation for schooling. Text was rare in the study school communities; letter writing and reading was one of the few uses for literacy skills. A

parent of a child in the same class said: “If he receives a letter, the one who can read, he’ll ask him to read. The one who can’t read, he doesn’t call him, because he doesn’t know French.”

6.6.2.4 National identity. When I asked parents at the satellite school why they wanted their children to learn French at all, they responded that it is the official language of Mali. Parents at the main study school also wanted their children to learn French due to its status as the national language.

6.6.2.5 The low status of national languages. Some parents who did not want their children to learn Bamanankan in school thought of the language as already known, of little practical use, and socially inferior. School was seen as a place to learn new and different things, and children speak Bamanankan: “If school were to learn Bambara, the kids learn that at home. It’s our language. You don’t have to put your child in school for that” (three of four second grade French-only parents). Written Bamanankan was a novelty, used only by adult literacy participants, agricultural extension offices, and some newspapers, all of which were rarely seen in the community (see also Chapter 2). Although text written in French was also rare, parents correctly believed that it was more widely available than Bamanankan text.

Learning French was seen by some parents as a way to change their identity, to rid themselves of a sense of inferiority linked to colonialization and perpetuated through schooling (Kelly, 1986). A fourth grade parent of a child in a French-only class said: “I wanted them to learn French, like you, that’s how they can speak with others Even to be black isn’t good at all,” a view which was also expressed by a second grade French-only parent and several parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school. Learning

Bamanankan was seen by some parents as a step backwards: “[I]n doing convergent pedagogy, the child goes backward. Putting children in school is for learning French. If it’s for learning Bamanankan, he learns Bamanankan at home” (second grade French-only).

Other parents thought that Bamanankan was not sufficiently developed to be used in school (see Chapter 7 for similar teacher perspectives). Among parents who objected to it as a language of schooling, some thought that it could not be written at all, others thought it could not be used in primary school, and others thought it could not be used in higher levels of education. One parent thought it could not be written: “You have to know how to write, you have to know French, Russian” (sixth grade French-only). This was similar to an experience recorded by John Hutchison in the 1980s: when he told a parent that he was studying Bamanankan grammar, the parent told him that he needed to study French instead because “Bamanankan doesn’t have grammar.”

Parents who were opposed to the use of national languages in schooling for the reasons above were not interested in differences in learning outcomes and exam pass rates between convergent pedagogy and French-only students (Appendix E). To them, decisions about language of instruction were based on their expectations of schooling, not on experiences of schooling: “But really, the problem of Bambara, we don’t even want to talk about it. We want our children to learn another language at school, not our language” (fourth grade French-only parent).

6.6.3 Interest in national languages. Some parents believed in national language instruction, primarily for academic reasons, but also for its cultural values.

6.6.3.1 The value of multilingualism. Mali is a multi-lingual society, with many adults, especially those from minority linguistic groups, speaking two languages and some speaking three (Haidara and Diallo, 1999). Some parents saw value in this: “What’s important is to learn at least two languages. It’s also very good to study your own language, because you can speak it already, but if you can read it too and write that language, it’s also very important, to be able to use a language other than your first” (sixth grade French-only). Three of four interviewed parents of sixth grade convergent pedagogy students shared this opinion, as did several parents of students in other classes and parents at the satellite school. There were some differences of opinion as to the best time for introducing French, with parents of sixth graders in particular wanting French to be introduced in first grade. Others wanted children to reach a certain level of proficiency in Bamanankan before starting in French: “[M]aternal language is easier. You have to start by understanding Bamanankan well. We want our kids to start in Bamanankan” (convergent pedagogy satellite school).

The decision of those who designed convergent pedagogy to downplay the intrinsic importance of national languages (Wambach, 2001) in hopes of increasing parental acceptance is supported by parental attitudes. The parents cited above were pleased that their children were learning both languages, but none reported a desire for national language-only instruction.

Parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school were more insistent about the value of national language learning. They thought it was important for children to learn written Bamanankan at school, even if they learned oral Bamanankan at home: “Even if they learn it at home, they don’t learn how to write it there and that’s important.” They

also expressed the wish that Bamanankan classes continue in the upper primary cycle. This may be linked to their experiences with national language adult literacy classes (see below), or with their single approach-only, very successful (as measured by exam pass rates) school.

6.6.3.2 *“They should learn about their roots.”* For parents interested in maintaining children’s cultural heritage and ensuring their children’s cultural socialization, formal instruction in Bamanankan was an important part of their education. A parent of a student in the sixth grade convergent pedagogy class, who had placed his child in convergent pedagogy intentionally, wanted his children to learn Bamanankan, even though he thought that French was the most important language for their future. He told me:

The school, when they created it, it was in French, in the hopes of teaching French there. The Bamanankan that they teach now is barely spoken in the world. Once the kids know how to read and write here in Bamanankan, if they leave for another world, they risk becoming lost. So, I would prefer that there be much more French taught than Bamanankan, at the same time. The Bamanankan is to recuperate, it’s from youth; they should know their story from its roots. Once they know their story from its roots, the kids can stay sociable in their society. To have roots in their community. But in the general culture, when they leave this place, like leaving another, they’ll be lost.

Other parents had similar opinions. One parent at the satellite school told me: “When they introduced Bambara, it let the kids be better rooted in their society.” A parent of a

second grade convergent pedagogy student explained: “Here, the goal of education in Bambara is to transmit values to the child so he becomes a social being.”

6.7 The observed substance of schooling

Few parents knew much about their children’s classroom life. They neither spent time in their children’s classrooms, spoke with their children’s teachers about school, nor discussed school events with their children. Children received no homework, so parents did not have any contact with schoolwork. Consequently, they did not comment on these aspects of their children’s schooling experience. As a parent of a fourth grade French-only student and a third grade convergent pedagogy student said: “[T]he differences there [in classrooms], I can’t talk a lot about that.” Parents’ observations about the substance of schooling were limited to the areas of language of instruction, student behavior, school quality, school management, and the impact of democratization.

6.7.1 Conclusions about language of instruction. Parents’ experiences with schooling, even when they had children in convergent pedagogy and French-only classes at the same time, did not do much to alter their views of language of instruction issues. Parents with more exposure to schooling were more favorable towards the use of national languages, as were parents with higher “modern” social status, i.e. local civil servants, which was also linked to exposure to schooling. Parents’ views were contradictory: two stated that they thought children learned more easily in the French-only program; others thought children learned more quickly in convergent pedagogy classrooms.

6.7.1.1 Understanding is easier in French-only classes. As seen in Chapter 5, parents gained most of their knowledge about school from social networks and the

observation of children during non-school hours, not from communication with school personnel or in-school observation. One parent, a French speaker, of a fourth grade student in the French-only class told me that he preferred French-only methods, due to his observation of his neighbor's child:

I have a neighbor who had his girl in convergent pedagogy, he took her out to put her in French-only classes, since then, I've liked French-only classes, I like that method. I'm a new parent, but I like the French-only methods. Because, the understanding is easier.

Another parent, with a child in the fourth grade French-only class and another in a convergent pedagogy class, thought that "the one in [School] B understands things faster than the one in [School] A." He realized, though, that there could be many other factors involved, saying: "but that's two different children who don't understand the same."

6.7.1.2. Understanding is easier in children's first language. Many parents of children in convergent pedagogy and some parents of children in French-only classes thought that children understood more easily when instruction was in their first language. Nine of the twelve convergent pedagogy parents mentioned this directly, and these are some of their words: "For me . . . it is easier for a child to learn in her own language than in a foreign language" (second grade convergent pedagogy).

Another parent, of a second grader in convergent pedagogy:

You should start with Bamanankan, when I compare my son with his friends who are in the school B, really, the difference. Because, generally, there are certain aptitudes that develop. When he was in second grade, he had friends in third

grade, his level was often higher, especially in math. So, you see already, the understanding is a lot easier in convergent pedagogy classes than in French-only classes.

A sixth grade convergent pedagogy parent told me: “It is much easier for them to learn in their first language, in Bamanankan, which is why I sent them to school A.” At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, women interviewed unanimously said that they wanted their children to start in Bamanankan because it would be easier for them. One parent told me: “The introduction of Bambara has allowed the level to be raised,” and another agreed: “[T]he introduction of Bambara at school makes it easier for the kids to learn.” Another said: “When the children do both [languages] at the same time, learning is easier.”

Principals and pedagogic advisors saw significant learning differences between their children in French-only classes and those in convergent pedagogy, and were more able to articulate them than other parents. Pedagogic advisor 3 (PA3) (see Chapter 8 for background information) reported that he could see definite differences between those of his children who were in French-only classes and in convergent pedagogy classes, as the latter were far ahead in reading, math, and general understanding (*éveillé*). One of his children in the French-only classes took the primary school graduation exam (*Certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle d'enseignement fondamental*, CFEPCEF), given at the end of sixth grade, but he found that his convergent pedagogy fifth grader had no difficulties completing the test (this has significance beyond the one grade difference, as pass rates on the *CFEPCEF* are very low) (see Appendix E). PA4 had enrolled one of his children in convergent pedagogy and found that this child learned faster than his children

in French-only classes. He saw him as “very curious and always reading at home.” The principal of the main study school also saw significant differences:

[T]here are differences, there are big differences. I have my young one who is in the French-only classes, fifth grade. I tell him to write my name: He writes “Me.” But my little one in second grade, in Bamanankan, he wrote my name and the names of everyone in the family. That’s a big advantage already.

6.7.2 Student behavior. While parents felt unable to comment on elements of schooling apart from language of instruction, they discussed behavioral differences between schooled and unschooled children at length. Most agreed that schooled children came closer to emulating socially sanctioned behavior than unschooled children in all areas except the very important one of sexual behavior. Eleven parents at the main school spoke directly about differences, and they were not contradicted by others in their interview groups. A parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school said “children are not the same, now that they go to school.” A parent of a child in the fourth grade French-only class told me:

[C]hildren who have received education and children who have not, they don’t behave themselves the same way in social situations. Even children who have been educated, they behave better than children who have not.

A parent of a child in the second grade convergent pedagogy class said:

[A]n educated man, a man who’s been to school and a man who hasn’t been to school, there’s no comparison, someone who hasn’t studied is like an animal, a man who has been to school should be able to understand things, from the things he’s studied, there’s no way to compare them.

In addition to general statements, parents spoke about several specific aspects of desired and observed behavior: respect, household behavior, attitudes towards work, friends, interactions between children and parents, and sexual behavior.

This section first looks at behavioral differences between schooled and unschooled children and then hears from the few parents who spoke of differences between students in French-only and convergent pedagogy classes. The entirety of the discussion of children's behavior informs understandings of parental expectations for schooling.

6.7.2.1 Respect. Respect for parents and other elders is a central value in Bambara culture. When I discussed children's behavior with parents at the study schools, it was the most-often cited concern. Parents unanimously said that schooled children were more respectful than unschooled children. They did not differentiate between convergent pedagogy and French-only students. A parent of a second grade convergent pedagogy student said: "Generally, children who go to school, in the area of respect, they're more respectful." One parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school told me: "[C]hildren who have been to school know how to respect their fathers, respect others." For a second grade French-only parent: "The ones who are at school respect people more than the ones who aren't at school."

Many parents saw greetings³⁶ as an important part of showing respect and thought that school taught students to greet adults properly. A parent of a second grade French-only student explained to me that: "Because when you come to school, they insist on

³⁶ In many cultures in the region, including the Bambara culture, greetings are a ritualized process. The dialogue generally proceeds something like this: how are you? how is your family? how are your children? how is your health,? and, upon hearing fine as a response to each question, the greeter ends by saying "Thank God." The greetee then becomes the greeter and the process is repeated.

respect. It's not like kids who don't go to school. You have to say hello *madame* or hello sir and sit down. That explains it in one word." As convergent pedagogy emphasizes the correct use of traditional greetings, the importance of this area bodes well for parental acceptance of the reform.

In addition to respecting their parents and other elders, parents also mentioned the importance of children knowing and respecting themselves. A parent of a second grade convergent pedagogy student told me: "Often, we see that the children don't respect people. Children who go to school and receive a good education are an exception. Why? From education, you learn to understand yourself. If you understand yourself, you can understand others."

6.7.2.2 Changed interactions with parental authority. Despite parents' insistence on the importance of respect and the maintenance of traditional parent-child interaction patterns, the latter changed with school enrollment, especially convergent pedagogy enrollment. I heard the following at the convergent pedagogy satellite school, while meeting with community members:

When children come from school and see that their mother is fighting with the neighbor, if their mother is at fault, they're going to tell her that it's her fault, that she shouldn't be fighting. When children come from school at lunch and lunch isn't ready at noon, they will tell her lunch should be ready. When you steal in front of your children, your child will say that you shouldn't steal. Those are the things that children can say.

When I asked: "And is it really acceptable for children to talk like that, even in front of neighbors?" the woman told me "[c]hildren are allowed." A village council member told

me “convergent pedagogy students do this and parents are used to it now.” When I recalled a Bambara proverb, that children learn from adults and not the other way around, the parents at this school told me that “school has changed all of that.”

Not all parents agreed with this, however. Among parents of sixth grade convergent pedagogy students, one said: “The children who need to be beaten, they do it so they study, so they obey the orders of their parents.” I heard this comment from other parents during informal conversations and also from teachers (see Chapter 7). The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school expressed this contradiction:

Me, I’d like my kids to be *éveillé*, I want them to ask if they don’t understand something. I don’t want them to just stay quiet if they don’t understand something. But I want them to be polite and respectful to their elders.

6.7.2.3 Attitudes towards work and preparation for adult life. Regardless of their schooling status, parents expected children to participate in household work: “Children who are at school, if there’s not school, and after school, he goes to the fields with his parents and works . . . ” Some parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school thought that schooled children were more receptive to family work, such as agriculture, livestock management, and housework, than unschooled children. One parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school told me that schooled children differed from those who did not go to school: “Those who go to school are more willing.”

Others, however, thought that children were using school as a reason to avoid household work: “Now, every morning, if you ask the children what they’re doing, the children who are in the street, they’re not doing anything, only going to school, no work

at home like before.” This parent continued: “It’s the times that are changing, they have made people lazy. Now, things are too easy, children don’t work. The changes in the world, that’s what keeps children from working, not only that, the school changed things too.”

Parents thought schooled children were generally better prepared for adult life: “[C]hildren who have not been to school make a lot of mistakes, in life too” (parent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school). One parent of a sixth grade French-only student thought that the structure of schooling supported children in their development: “[T]he children know that often . . . when he doesn’t understand, he’s in a hard place, but he has help, a structure.” Another parent of a child in the same class said: “For me, I think in the same direction. I have two children, one who goes to school and one who doesn’t. The kid who doesn’t go, the morning, he passes his whole day under the trees, he comes back at night. The one who goes to school, at 7:00, he’s called to go, and to work.”

6.7.2.4 Premarital sexual activity. This was a major issue for parents at the study schools. Many parents reported that schooling increased premarital sexual activity, taboo in Bambara and Muslim culture. A parent of a fourth grade French-only student spoke of the consequences: “[G]irls get pregnant, problem, boys, starting too early is a problem, it’s hard to continue with school, they’re starting something they can’t control, and he added that he saw this problem “more often with children who go to school.” Another parent of a child in the same class added that “at school, [they] ask questions about this and that, girls and boys start to think about sex.”

Parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school were very concerned about their children’s sexual behavior. Most of the concern centered on girls and the possibility

of unwanted pregnancy. Parents admitted that both girls and boys behaved badly, but said that girls are the ones who have to stop studying if they get pregnant. According to these parents, schooled girls were more at risk, as they were less supervised than unschooled girls, who worked with their mothers.

6.7.2.5 Behavioral differences between convergent pedagogy and French-only students. Parents did not often report differences between the two groups, and two told me that there were no differences. Only two parents, of a fourth grade student in a French-only class, with another child in a convergent pedagogy class, and the principal of the main study school mentioned that there were differences. The first parent could not specify which behaviors were different. The second had seen differences related to interest in schooling: he found that his convergent pedagogy student “wrote all the time . . . on the slates, until they’re all used up.” He also said: “[T]hey write . . . I encourage them. But the others, they don’t do it at all, the ones in French-only.”

Given the strong views that teachers had on differences between groups of children (see Chapter 7), it seems unlikely that there aren’t any differences, at least in the school setting. This lack of observed difference may be due to children’s abilities to code-switch when moving back and forth between home and school, rigid behavioral rules of home and community that overpower school effects (see Castle, 1997), or perhaps to the limited amount of interaction that these parents, mostly fathers (see Chapter 2), had with their children.

6.7.3 Conclusions about school quality. Questions about school quality did not elicit responses from parents beyond general comments about their satisfaction with school, their satisfaction that school was open every day, and concerns about insufficient

resources for the rapidly increasing number of students. One parent of a fourth grade French-only student, in response to a question about teaching, said: “At one time, we were frustrated; the time that the children spent outdoors [with school closed] was more than the time they spent at school. But now, we have more confidence, and that’s how it should be.” Another parent in the same group agreed, saying that he was also “satisfied.” Another was unhappy with a perceived teacher shortage, but generally pleased: “I want to talk about the problem of not enough teachers, that’s the negative side, really, there aren’t enough teachers. The program, I’ve seen it a little, it’s OK. And when the kids advance in the program, they don’t have problems, the program is good.” A parent of a second grade convergent pedagogy student said: “We hope with time that there will be more teachers, more books, more classes”

Only one parent spoke about the problem of school quality, and the decline that he noticed in student achievement in French:

Knowledge, the kids don’t receive the things they should have learned in their first cycle. The school was created in 1945. After three years, the kids managed to read and write in French. But today, it’s in sixth grade, after six years, that a kid might learn maybe to manage in French. So the learning that we give is not satisfying. (sixth grade convergent pedagogy parent)

Other parents were concerned about double shifting, teacher absenteeism, and the hiring of contract teachers with limited pre-service teacher education, all consequences of insufficient resources inefficiently used.

6.7.4 Conclusions about school management. Parents felt distant from school management. One parent of a child in the convergent pedagogy second grade was

appreciative of the French-only school principal: “The principal of school B . . . he’s part of the family, he knows about the children’s behavior, their level, [he treats them like] they’re his children or his brothers’ children, he knows them,” but no other parents made similar comments. Another parent in the same group was frustrated about system administration and the lack of resources:

When I went to school in 1970, we went in the morning and the evening, but now they go only half days, and for how many days, there are lots of times when they don’t come, we went all the time except for Thursday afternoon and Sunday. Now, the teachers are even absent. They go here and there, how are the children supposed to learn? Apart from that, who is a teacher now? Anyone can be a teacher, anyone. An accountant, a carpenter, a metalworker, anyone.

To a degree, parents held those responsible for school management accountable for quality. A parent of a sixth grade convergent pedagogy teacher told me:

The low level of the kids isn’t always a problem of teachers. Before, when parents gave their kids to the school, the kids, the teacher could see all the children, manage them. We, everyone brings all their kids, we bring so many that we’re chased away. The class is overburdened. Can he manage everyone? That has to be a problem too.

Many parents shared his views about declining school quality due to insufficient teachers, schools, and materials, but their goal was to reinforce the existing system, not to push for change in the existing parameters of schooling.

6.7.5 Links between school quality, school management, and democratization.

When I asked parents how the advent of democracy in Mali had affected education, they

responded that democracy had caused school overcrowding and the consequent decline in quality mentioned above: “With the advent of democracy, the education system has gotten worse . . . the children are really badly served” (fourth grade French-only).

Parents felt powerless to affect schooling: “Even if there are new changes, it’s only the political people who can manage it, not us [parents]” (sixth grade convergent pedagogy). Another parent of a student in the same class concurred: “Here, where we are, things stay the same, we voted, but we’ve always voted, there haven’t been any changes.” A parent of a child in the fourth grade French-only class told me when I asked about the changes: “We don’t know anything about that. If you don’t know anything in the world, you can’t do anything.” One parent stated that he thought schooling could increase his children’s ability to make political changes: “You understand your rights better too, as you’ve been educated” (convergent pedagogy satellite school).

6.8 Parental involvement in schooling: demands and challenges

6.8.1 The financial and logistical demands of schooling. As described in Chapter 2 and above, schooling results in significant direct and opportunity costs. Parents viewed these costs as an investment that would be wasted if their children did not succeed: “If the kid at school doesn’t do well, money has been wasted” (convergent pedagogy satellite school). Failure is much more likely in French-only classrooms (repetition and drop out rates are higher; exam pass rates are lower) (*Ministère de l’Education Nationale*, 2005), but this does not seem to affect parental decisions about school enrollment.

Tutoring was another possible cost of schooling, one that parents at the main study school could not afford. Three of the four sixth grade parents spoke of this: “[I]f

we had enough money, we would pay a teacher to teach our children [supplementary hours], but we don't have the resources" (sixth grade convergent pedagogy). The costs of schooling became more prohibitive in the second cycle: "For kids in school, if they go to second cycle, supplies are expensive and parents don't have enough money" (fourth grade convergent pedagogy). These increased costs were reflected in the low primary to secondary transition rate.

Schooling also carried significant opportunity costs and related logistical challenges, as it limited parental access to child labor. At the main study school, several parents told me that they did not send all of their children to school, in order to keep some for field and housework. At the convergent pedagogy satellite school, with its enrollment rates of close to 100%, parents told me: "[M]en and women do the work. It's hard, but we have to do it so kids can go to school." Children also have different work schedules now: "[S]ome work before school . . . kids know they have to work to keep the family going. They also go to the market on the weekends and work there."

6.8.2 Cultural demands of schooling. As Mali's economy begins to diversify and modernize, parents' roles are becoming increasingly complex. Exposure to television and foreign videos, and increases in HIV/AIDS, delinquency, unwanted pregnancy, urban migration, and drugs present new childrearing challenges:

[C]hildren now, children are very badly behaved, parents don't control their children well, they don't punish the children correctly [I]t's not only the children, we are also responsible, times have changed (second grade convergent pedagogy parent).

Parents at the study schools were critical of each other, observing that many of their neighbors did not parent with the required vigilance. A parent of a fourth grade French-only student told me that parents of children who are not in school “don’t pay enough attention to their kids, don’t discipline them, there are these differences in households.”

Another parent of a child in the same class talked about how parenting had changed:

[B]efore, the education of the children, it was the responsibility of the community, during this period, when a parent saw his child being corrected by another person, he didn’t even ask questions, he knows very well, that children have to obey the rules of the society.

The other fourth grade French-only parents agreed with him, and one spoke of the consequences of changed child-adult interaction: “[C]hildren are very difficult now, they aren’t scared of people, they come to school when they want, they do things when they want” Schooled children are more empowered and spend less time under parental supervision than unschooled children, requiring increased efforts by parents to ensure behavioral conformity.

Parents saw parents and teachers as partners in the development of appropriate behavior in their children: “If it’s not for school, you couldn’t manage them. If they’re at school, you can manage. There are teachers and there are parents. It’s both of them that work together” (parent of fourth grade French-only student). Another parent, of a second grade convergent pedagogy student, said: “It’s the parents, the students’ parents and the teachers, the two, who manage the children,” and another “the parents and the teachers work well together.” A parent of a child in the sixth grade convergent pedagogy class

said: "So, every family needs to take about this problem in hand, to try to teach children to behave well in accordance with his community, his family, his peers, his teachers who are trying to educate him."

6.9 Conclusions

At these schools, differences between convergent pedagogy and French-only pedagogy are mainly contained in the school setting, largely off limit to parents. Although teachers reported behavioral and achievement differences between French-only and convergent pedagogy students in Chapter 7, these differences were largely invisible to parents, in their isolation from schooling. Parents were unable to make informed decisions about their children's schooling, and when they attempted to make decisions based on advice from friends or neighbors or conversations with teachers, they were frequently thwarted.

For most parents, however, the chance to enroll their children in school and see them attend was so new that it was more important than programmatic choice. Their decisions focused on how many of their children to enroll in public school, not on which public school program they would attend. In the convergent pedagogy satellite school village, there was no school at all until 1986. In the main study school village, the school has been open since the colonial era, but was smaller and in very poor condition until the mid-1990s. In addition, schools were frequently closed for strikes throughout the 1990s. With increasing political stability and access, many families are sending children to school for the first time.

The designers of convergent pedagogy were correct in believing that the programs' focus on learning French and increasing exam pass rates would reduce parental resistance. Parents' moderately increasing emphasis on learning as a desired outcome of schooling also created some openness towards the use of national languages of instruction. However, parents' lack of information kept them from understanding convergent pedagogy's motivations and rationale. Although some parents mentioned the importance of cultural preservation, and some spoke of children's increased learning through the use of convergent pedagogy, economic mobility was the most desired schooling outcome.

In addition, older parents had seen reforms come and go and were not interested in having their children be the subject of experiments. No parents at the study schools knew that the program had been operating for fifteen years and that its expansion was national policy. Particularly for parents of students in French-only classes, who had no conception of the convergent process or methods, the idea of studying in a low status national language was unwelcome. In addition, respect was cited by many parents as an important behavioral characteristic, and will have to be balanced with convergent pedagogy's emphasis on changing teacher-student interactions.

The data show that parents will not become strong supporters of the program, and others will not support it at all, without additional information. Principals, pedagogic advisors, and some teachers claimed to have discussed convergent pedagogy with parents. They may have, but their discussions have been insufficient. Explanation, observation, and ongoing involvement may be required to change perspectives in such a controversial area. If attention is given to publicizing convergent pedagogy's benefits,

particularly students' increased exam pass rates, parents could become its strongest advocates. As the country's democracy matures, its economy continues to diversify, and the civil service continues to shrink, convergent pedagogy's emphasis on learning, not only credentialing, will be important for students' futures.

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**PEDAGOGIE CONVERGENTE (CONVERGENT PEDAGOGY):
USING PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES TO UNDERSTAND
THE POTENTIAL OF EDUCATION REFORM IN PRIMARY SCHOOL
CLASSROOMS IN MALI**

VOLUME II

By

Penelope A. Bender

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

College of Education

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CHAPTER 7

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

7.1 Introduction

Teachers' ability to change long-standing practice has been at the core of convergent pedagogy implementation since the reform began. In focusing on teachers, administrators have made the program dependent on the premise that opportunities for professional growth, enriched relationships with students, and improved student learning would provide sufficient incentive for teachers to radically change their teaching.

Administrators have been correct, at least in part. Teachers have changed some elements of their practice, with a minimal amount of professional preparation and almost no material, financial, or in-school support. Where these changes have occurred, they have resulted in increased student learning and exam pass rates (see Chapter 2 and Appendix E) and changed student-teacher interaction. These results in turn have produced long-term effects, increasing the number and changing the type of students who are able to continue to the upper primary grades and beyond and increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of those for whom sixth grade is their terminal year of schooling. Changed relationships between students and teachers could catalyze wider changes in the interaction between government institutions and their beneficiaries, with implications for development and democratization (see Levine et al., 2001).

In addition, the extent to which the convergent pedagogy teachers interviewed for this study have changed their practice illustrates a possible fundamental break with much of the research on teacher change. Most of this literature emphasizes that teachers teach

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as they were taught and are resistant to abandon methods that match their image of Real School (see Chapter 3), regardless of the teaching context (Lortie, 1975; Metz, 1987; Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Even those teachers who try to implement reform filter new approaches through their own experience and beliefs, diluting reform while believing they are implementing a “true” version (see Cohen’s “Mrs. Oublier,” 1990; also Cohen, 1988). In contrast, convergent pedagogy teachers who are implementing this reform, at least in part, are challenging their own and parents’ long-held beliefs about the substance of schooling, including language of instruction, appropriate teaching methods, and the value of local curriculum content.

Program implementation is far from perfect. Implementation difficulties are discussed in previous chapters. Teaching practice suffers from a lack of training and support. Classrooms are mostly devoid of textbooks and other materials. Teachers are struggling to use convergent pedagogy teaching methods, particularly in reading, the heart of the reform, and only a minimal amount of local content has been included in curricula.

Nonetheless, all convergent pedagogy classrooms observed in this study, even the ones with the least skilled and least experienced teachers, have a number of components that look significantly different from French-only classrooms. This transformation has primarily occurred through the use of Bamanankan and changed student-teacher interaction. In turn, as shown by the testing I conducted and by other evaluations and exam results (see Chapter 2 and Appendix E), convergent pedagogy students are outperforming French-only students.

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Observation of classroom practice showed that teachers' implementation difficulties, in many cases, are due to their imperfect knowledge of reform techniques, stemming from insufficient preparation and no professional support, and a near-complete absence of materials. The convergent pedagogy teachers interviewed for this study expressed strong philosophical support for the reform and intent to implement it in their classrooms. The teaching of reading, described later in this chapter and in Chapter 8, was an exception.

This section explores the perspectives of study school teachers: (a) their understandings and beliefs about the three major domains of the reform; (b) their perceptions of convergent pedagogy's outcomes; (c) the demands they felt the reform made of them; (d) their responses to those demands; and (e) their consequent views about the future of the reform. These issues converge at times, and the reader will see that beliefs are related to outcomes and that both have been shaped by the reform's demands. It should also be noted that two of these teachers were school principals (fourth grade at the main study school and sixth grade at the convergent pedagogy satellite school). I have attempted to separate their reflections on teaching from reflections stemming from their work as principals, but there is inevitably some overlap.

In addition to the lived experiences of current convergent pedagogy teachers, this chapter explores the views of French-only teachers who will become convergent pedagogy teachers and upper primary cycle and high schools teachers who will and/or have received convergent pedagogy graduates.

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7.2 The study school teachers

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, teachers interviewed for this study taught second, fourth, or sixth grade in the lower primary cycle or in the upper primary cycle at the main study school; and second, fifth (substituting for the fourth grade teacher), or sixth grade at the convergent pedagogy satellite school. This section provides background information about the teachers, including some elements of their teaching, from observation and interview data. I did not collect data on the backgrounds of upper primary or high school teachers.

7.2.1 Main study school.

7.2.1.1 Second grade convergent pedagogy. The second grade teacher was in his third year of teaching in the public schools and second year of teaching convergent pedagogy. Of all his colleagues, he had the strongest combination of enthusiasm for the method and time to teach, undisturbed by administrative issues. Prior to this position, he had worked as a volunteer in Mali's far north, where he taught and worked in community development. He had attended a community development training session, participated in three months of teacher preparation before he started working in the public school system, and attended two short term in-service teacher education programs and the first level of convergent pedagogy training. He was frequently absent for family reasons and hoped to transfer to another town as soon as possible (and did so after the end of data collection). He became a teacher "because, well, I didn't have another choice. I left school when I was in high school . . . after failing the *Bac* once." He did not plan to remain in teaching; he hoped to become a national level politician.

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This teacher used many convergent pedagogy methods, including verbal and non-verbal dialogues, collaborative writing, and class projects. He also organized some group activities, seated students in groups, did not use corporal punishment, and encouraged students to speak up at certain points during lessons. He incorporated local materials, but did not use any community human resources while I was there. Many of his students participated in class and seemed comfortable with him and their classmates. However, he also used many French-only methods. He lectured to students, copied large amounts of text on the board, and asked students to re-copy the texts into their notebooks. He asked many questions, but most answers required only direct, memorized responses.

The teacher frequently spoke of the strong relationship between himself and his students and between students in convergent pedagogy classrooms, saying that this increased the students' *éveillé*-ness (see Chapter 2). However, many students in his classroom did not participate at all, remaining silent and inactive throughout entire lessons. He did not respond to their inactivity, telling me he had too many students and those who did not participate would just have to repeat the year.³⁷

7.2.1.2 Fourth grade convergent pedagogy. The fourth grade teacher was also the school principal. He had graduated from a long-term teacher education program and attended all three levels of convergent pedagogy training. As principal, he had many administrative duties and was frequently absent from his classroom. He planned to remain in teaching until his retirement, only a few years away.

This teacher had many years of experience, more training than the other convergent pedagogy teachers, and expressed great enthusiasm for the method.

³⁷ He had attempted to fail 50% of his students the previous year and was frustrated that administrators reduced his repetition rate to 15%.

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Unfortunately, his teaching did not reflect this. His administrative activities, as well as his need to supervise other classes during their teachers' frequent absences, reduced his teaching time to a fraction of the official schedule. During his absences, he wrote lessons on the board in his classroom for students to copy. He rarely formally planned his classes and even more rarely used convergent pedagogy activities that required preparation. He would very occasionally divide the class into groups for joint work on questions regarding a text, necessitating the advance preparation of question sheets. He did use Bamanankan and arranged students' table-benches to facilitate group work. There was not much evidence of group organization or discipline in his classroom. Students copied very, very slowly and then worked on questions alone or with friends. There was not much follow-up of the question work when the teacher returned. When the teacher was present, he used group activities that seemed to have been copied from the previous years' work (when I asked for sample lesson plans, he gave me an undated class preparation notebook filled with months of plans). The activities did not constitute a coherent curriculum and did not seem to respond to specific needs or interests of students. I did not observe any incorporation of local resources.

7.2.1.3 Sixth grade convergent pedagogy. The sixth grade teacher began teaching in 1996. He had taught French-only and convergent pedagogy classes. He was a contract teacher, paid by the government. His initial teacher preparation lasted fifteen days. He had completed all three levels of convergent pedagogy training as well as several training sessions in French-only pedagogy. He planned to remain in teaching until he retired, at least ten years away.

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This teacher felt that the particular teaching method used was unimportant: he could teach using either French-only or convergent pedagogy. He used mainly lecture/copying methods, but didn't require the mass recitation or memorization of the French-only classes. Students were asked questions requiring independent responses and were encouraged to speak up if they did not understand the material presented. He did not use convergent pedagogy activities, telling me he didn't have time for that, as he had to teach the French-only curriculum and the convergent pedagogy curriculum in the same amount of time that the others had to teach just the French-only curriculum. The teacher interacted only with a very small group of students, all boys, only occasionally calling on a girl and then referring back to boys for corrections.

The teacher called on students to answer factual questions, but he did not usually call on many of them to repeat the same answer to the question, as was the case in French-only classes. When not responding to direct questions or commands from the teacher, students remained silent. There was minimal teacher-student or student-student interaction. The teacher did not use any local resources or appear to have any professional interaction with the community.

7.2.1.4 Second grade French-only. This teacher was in his first year of public school teaching. He had previously taught for one year in a community school, then went to work in the post office. He was recruited for this job as a parent-paid contract teacher through a friend who was a member of the local Parents' Association (*Association des Parents d'Elèves*, APE). He had finished the ninth grade and participated in forty-five days of training prior to beginning work. He planned to remain in teaching "unless something better comes along."

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This teacher was enthusiastic, late less often than other teachers (he usually arrived by 2:00 for the afternoon shift, see Chapter 2), and rarely absent. However, he knew very little about teaching, working with one student for up to twenty minutes at a time while sixty-five others did nothing, calling students to the board to “read” the same passage over and over, again while the other students did nothing, and constructing lessons that had little to do with students’ knowledge or interests (morality lessons about sobriety in second grade). He had no teacher’s guides or other materials for assistance.

7.2.1.5 Fourth grade French-only: The fourth grade teacher was in his second year of teaching and was a government-paid contractual teacher. He had received forty-five days of training prior to beginning work. He had not wanted to teach, but told me that other work was in short supply and he had no choice. He was frequently absent for family reasons.

This teacher was the most physically abusive of the teachers I observed, beating students for incorrect answers. He threatened students constantly and called them names. His students could not read and he wanted to give them first grade level work, but he told me that the school principal would not let him, saying that he found the students in fourth grade and that is what he was required to teach them (see Chapter 3). He also frequently worked with one student at a time (i.e., had the student repeat the lesson over and over as he fed it to her/him word by word) while the rest of the class did nothing.

7.2.1.6 Sixth grade French-only. The sixth grade teacher began teaching in 1980. He had graduated from a long-term teacher education program. He was a principal for a brief period but preferred teaching. He planned to continue teaching until his retirement, only a few years away.

He was skilled in the application of the French-only method and was conscientious about attendance and schedules. His philosophy was that teachers provide the lessons and it is the students' job to learn them. The year before, he told me that only 40% of his students passed the primary school graduation exam, even though the questions were all ones he had reviewed in class, including identical math problems. He told me that the problem was that students didn't know how to read and didn't learn because they were uninterested in studying. He told me that he would never teach convergent pedagogy.

7.2.2 Convergent pedagogy satellite school

7.2.2.1 Second grade. This teacher had been teaching for four years. He grew up in the school's community, attended school through eight grade, traveled briefly, and then was hired by the APE. Although he began teaching in 1998, he did not participate in any teacher education until 2001. He then attended about two months of teacher education specifically designed for community school teachers, organized by a religious organization. He was not certain he would remain in teaching, as he was struggling with his work (he thought he would have managed better if he had only had a teacher's guide). He planned to leave if he found something better, but otherwise thought teaching "is not bad work."

This teacher had developed strong relationships with his students and incorporated many convergent pedagogy methods. He struggled with the management of his large class and focused more on participation than on lesson content or student learning.

7.2.2.2 *Fifth grade.* The fourth grade teacher at this school was not interviewed, due to his extended absence for medical reasons. In order to include a third teacher at this school, I interviewed the fifth grade teacher. He also taught the fourth grade class several times during the data collection period. He had begun his teaching career in 1998, at this school. He was a government-paid contract teacher and had participated in a government-run three month teacher preparation program designed for teachers who would use French-only pedagogy. In addition, he had participated in all three levels of convergent pedagogy training.

This teacher used a combination of French-only and convergent pedagogy methods. In the few lessons that I observed, his students were completely unable to follow the lesson (they had had very few hours of instruction that year). The teacher continued through the lesson without the students, who observed his questions rather than answering them.

7.2.2.3 *Sixth grade.* The sixth grade teacher was also the principal. He had begun working at this school when it was founded, initially teaching the first generation experimental program (see Chapter 2). He planned to continue to teach until he retired.

The sixth grade was rarely in session, as the principal was busy with administration and traveled frequently. He had an extended absence of several weeks during the data collection period, while his wife delivered a baby in a neighboring village. When I observed his class, he used primarily French-only methods, in Bamanankan.

7.3 Perspectives of convergent pedagogy teachers: understandings and beliefs

This section explores convergent pedagogy teachers' perspectives on the three major areas of the reform: the use of national languages, the change in teaching methods, and the change in curriculum content. Those teachers' beliefs were also reflected in their perceptions of outcomes, which are explored in the following sections.

7.3.1 Perspectives on teaching in national languages. Convergent pedagogy teachers,³⁸ like other actors, saw the change in language of instruction as the core convergent pedagogy reform. Those who were favorable towards the use of national languages thought that it improved student learning, transformed the classroom climate, and facilitated the transmission of cultural values. Improved student learning was the most common reason for approval:

[T]hey understand already, already they understand that in their language, when you come and write that, they understand it quickly, when you do a problem that's in French, it's a problem with vocabulary, but already in Bamanankan, they understand already, they come with something already acquired; and (sixth grade, main study school)

Me, I think it's different. Because if I take the example of myself [in a French-only class], at the beginning, we had problems when we recited things globally.

Me, in reality, we couldn't use this, it was afterwards when we saw things, we had an idea, but when we were little, we tried to echo only. They tried to inculcate the knowledge only. Now, it's different. (fourth grade, satellite school)

The change in classroom climate was also seen as significant:

³⁸ Where the term "teachers" is used, there were at least two teachers who provided evidence.

Teaching in national languages, the advantage is that students like this method.

We see that with convergent pedagogy, the students like school, they are too demanding, they are the first ones who come to school, they demand work, in contrast to the other method where the students feel like they're in a foreign country. There's this opening, for example, when he leaves home and goes to school, he finds himself in front of another person who speaks another language, he's going to be a little defiant. With convergent pedagogy, though, there is some opening, and there are fewer absences, students rarely miss school. (fifth grade, satellite school)

Teachers also expressed interest in the cultural value of national language use:

[T]he national language that allows us to promote our social and cultural values Because by using this language those are our values, in our language. If it were done in French, the students don't understand, they don't understand. So it allows us to value our ways of being. (second grade, main study school)

7.3.2 Perspectives on convergent pedagogy methods. Convergent pedagogy

teachers' reactions to convergent pedagogy methods were very general, with the exception of their discussion of the teaching of reading. They did not discuss the details of teaching a convergent pedagogy class. Some of their reflections on method may have been more related to the use of national languages. They saw that as the predominant feature of the reform. Speaking about methods, the second grade teacher at the satellite school said: "For me, it's very, very, very, very good." The fifth grade teacher at the satellite school:

In the other method, the teacher, for the student, they consider the teacher like a policeman. But here, the teacher, the student knows the teacher like a friend, so, truly, that progresses a lot. Because there are certain . . . links between the teacher and the student, that influences motivation and participation.

The teaching of reading was an exception to the general endorsement of convergent pedagogy methods. According to the sixth grade teacher at the satellite school: “[R]eally, the old method, the syllabic method, is the one we should use.” Other teachers, as will be shown below in the responses section, and school principals/pedagogic advisors as shown in the following chapter, also believed that there were problems with reading methods.

Some teachers were uncertain as to whether it would be possible to use convergent pedagogy methods with French as the language of instruction: the sixth grade convergent pedagogy teacher stated that for him “methods don’t matter.” The second grade teacher (main study school) concluded that the use of French as the language of instruction would make the use of convergent pedagogy methods impossible, at least in first grade:

[T]he students, at the first grade, they come to school and they don’t speak French. The difference comes from that . . . the method of teaching itself, the efficiency, the quality, it comes from that. But if it was about using the convergent pedagogy methods in French, the problem would be in first grade, when the students start school, that would be the problem.

7.3.3 Perspectives on the inclusion of local content. The second grade teacher was the only one who spoke of this, and even his comment may have been more related to the use of national languages than to curriculum content. He said: “It [convergent

pedagogy] allows the students to know their surroundings and it integrates their home and community life into the school: they find themselves.”

7.4 Teachers’ perceptions of convergent pedagogy outcomes

Five of six convergent pedagogy teachers thought that reform outcomes were positive, with most citing improved student persistence and learning, the transmission of cultural values, and stronger teacher-student relationships. The sixth grade teacher at the main study school initially said he thought the method was unimportant, but went on to specify several ways in which he thought convergent pedagogy students outperformed French-only students.

7.4.1 Student persistence. The fifth and sixth grade teachers at the convergent pedagogy school told me that their students were very eager to come to school and that they worked harder than French-only students. They linked this to changed student-teacher relationships. In turn, some saw that as partly due to the change in language of instruction:

Now, even that there are some who aren’t even old enough to go to school, but they tell their parents that they want to come; (fifth grade)

[students are] com[ing] back over the things they’ve written we see the students even during recess, working on practicing ;(fifth grade)

Even if the teacher last year he was sick, he was in bed. The students went to look for him, he had to come to school If it’s not convergent pedagogy,

they wouldn't do that. [Q: And why do you think they went?] A: They wanted to come to school. Even this morning, they come together, they're going to look for him at home. They always come to school; (sixth grade) and

there are [differences between convergent pedagogy and French-only] because . . . the ease of the students to talk and write in their language, if, it's the lack of understanding that creates an aversion, really you are turned off by the class, but since I know the language that I know, everything the teacher says, I understand, I can respond, there are no constraints to coming to class. But if I know that I don't know my lesson . . . I don't know how to explain myself in French, I'm scared, I have that fear to explain myself in class, that keeps me at home, that makes me want to stay home, because when I come to class I'll be frustrated. (sixth grade)

The sixth grade teacher at the main study school agreed: "The students who are in convergent pedagogy work more than students in French-only classes."

7.4.2 Student learning. Convergent pedagogy teachers felt that their students achieved better results than French-only students. This was supported by data from a series of evaluations, including testing that I did, and by exam results (see Chapter 2 and Appendix E). Teachers attributed the differences to the use of students' first language, new methods, and differences in classroom climate. They also spoke of students' ability, in convergent pedagogy, to build on previously acquired knowledge. The sixth grade teacher at the satellite school said:

[T]hey have better tools . . . because they have already, in their language, they understand what the others have to learn, they understand already, already they

understand that in their language, when you come and write that, they understand it quickly, when you do a problem that's in French, it's only a problem with vocabulary, but already in Bamanankan, they understand already, they come with something already acquired.

He also thought they had better results in reading:

[T]he students already, since they're the same letters, the students who are already used to, they have gotten used to evolving in that language at home, they are very active, they come with something already acquired, when they come to class, that reinforces what they have already, so, now, that allows a kind of openness, that makes reading easier.

He also noted better results in writing: "[W]hat I've seen, . . . since I've taught both kinds of sixth grade, the students in convergent pedagogy write better, they write better than students in French-only classes"; and in math: "[T]he convergent pedagogy students are well-equipped, in my estimation." This teacher did have concerns about students' abilities in French:

In writing, what I've seen is the liaisons, the transitions, when we're together, they use a heavy, incorrect French; their pronunciation is, they find the words more easily than the students in the French-only classes, but sometimes the pronunciation is hard.

The second grade teacher also felt that there were significant differences between French-only and convergent pedagogy students: "In convergent pedagogy, the students are much more *éveillé*. Their capacity to retain information is much more developed than that of students in French-only classrooms." The fourth grade teacher agreed:

In any case, in comparison with the French-only [students], they are doing very well. That's what I think, I've compared them. In French-only, the students, they have big problems with reading, but in convergent pedagogy, the students read everything and they understand everything.

The fourth grade teacher at the main study school spoke of his amazement during his first year of teaching convergent pedagogy, when he found that first grade students could learn to count from one to one hundred and "often add and subtract as well," whereas students in French-only classes only learned the numbers from one to ten in first grade. He also found, for the first time, that students could understand what they read and respond to questions, instead of being limited to reciting teacher-provided answers.

More perspectives on student learning:

In French-only classes, the students . . . , they have big problems with reading, but in convergent pedagogy, the students read everything and they understand everything; (fourth grade, main study school)

Everything that we do in French, we do in Bambara, the students understand already what it is. When we introduce it in French, the students recognize it already. Only the names change; (second grade, satellite school)

They [the convergent pedagogy students] are more capable [than French-only students]; (sixth grade, main study school)

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In learning, too, it speeds up, it speeds up their progress in the different disciplines, in national languages, students learn faster, than in the French-only classes; and (fifth grade, satellite school)

The students participate a lot, because the teacher is kind of a facilitator, so the students do lots of work. (fifth grade, satellite school)

The fifth grade teacher at the satellite school also thought that convergent pedagogy had the potential to turn the education system around: “Malian education needed that. If we had had that a long time ago, the failure that we’ve known for a long time, we wouldn’t have had that.”

7.4.3 Cultural outcomes. The second grade convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school thought that the use of national languages “allows us to promote our social and cultural values Because using this language those are our values, in our language. So, it allows us to value our ways of being.”

7.4.4 The transition to upper primary. The sixth grade teacher at the main study school spoke about convergent pedagogy students’ transition to the upper primary grades. He thought that they might struggle initially, but that they would adjust:

At first, there will be a little gap . . . in behavior, but afterwards, when the students see that really the students who came from the other schools aren’t smarter than they are, really, they will start to wake up.

He thought that students would be able to maintain the active learning behaviors of the convergent pedagogy classroom:

Q: [D]o you think that when they go to the second cycle, that things will change?

A: [T]hey'll always ask questions, they're not going to change.

The sixth grade teacher at the satellite school, however, was concerned about the future of the convergent pedagogy graduates: "The students we teach, after sixth grade, they, if they aren't very courageous, they don't make it They have problems, lots of problems [in the second cycle]." He saw these difficulties as due both to a lack of mastery of French and the transition to different teaching methods. Regarding switching to all-French instruction, he said: "[D]ue to the number of hours that they study French, they're not really a lot Above all the transition of subject matter from Bambara to French." Regarding the transition to French-only teaching methods:

They're used to the work in groups. The strongest work together and it doesn't work well for everyone. If there's a group of ten students, there are two or three or even four who don't do anything, they only watch. And when they get to the second cycle, there's no more group work. A student can do well in sixth grade, but when he gets to the second cycle, he has problems.

However, neither school envisioned any collaboration between the lower and upper primary teachers. Teachers did not plan to share information or to help upper primary teachers support students' different ways of learning:

Q: [H]ave you talked with the teachers in the second cycle, to prepare them?

A: No, not really.

Q: And are you planning something, since the students will go there?

A: It's going to be different there, whether the teachers know about it or not, whether the students are convergent pedagogy or not, they're going to teach the

same things, they won't change anything . . . there's nothing they're going to change. They haven't had any training. There's nothing that's going to change, even the lessons won't change; and (fourth grade, main study school)

No, we don't [ease the transition with some use of Bamanankan and/or convergent pedagogy methods], the curriculum doesn't envisage that. We too, in our training, we didn't learn to do that If we have to teach Bambara in the second cycle, when other schools don't do that, it would be difficult We give them a lot of advice, because Bambara is not bad, but we don't work in Bambara in school, after seventh grade. (sixth grade, satellite school)

7.4.5 Post-graduation outcomes. Convergent pedagogy teachers thought that participation in the program would influence students' adult lives. The sixth grade teacher at the satellite school saw graduates as more likely to do well in science and law, because "they're people who aren't afraid to speak in front of others." He also thought that the behavior learned in convergent pedagogy would continue: "They're not timid. And when they get older, it will always be the same thing." Another teacher reflected on the value of convergent pedagogy teaching for students who will remain in the village: "[I]f they can't advance in their studies, finally, when you are done and stay in a Bambara area, can stay in Bambara, can write, that's important" (second grade, satellite school).

7.4.6 Student-teacher relationships. Malian school environments are not very congruent with young children's home environments. Prior to beginning school, children play outside and work with their parents, peers, and younger children on household tasks.

Boys are more free than girls to play and wander, but neither spend much time in direct instruction from adults (see Chapter 4). When school begins:

[T]he students when they come to school, in the schoolyard, they think that they are in the prison with the benches, because when they are at home, they go to the fields with their parents. So, when they're in the fields, they hunt, insects and so forth; they're a little free. When they come to class, they have to sit down for many hours, that bothers them. (sixth grade, main study school)

According to teachers, the convergent pedagogy classroom is a much more welcoming environment, due primarily to student-teacher relationships that are strikingly different from those in French-only classrooms. In French-only classrooms, "to get them used to it, the teacher, the objectives can only be met if there are certain conditions in class; the students are silent, they pay attention . . ." (sixth grade, satellite school); and "[i]n the French-only classes, everything came from the teachers. In convergent pedagogy, we ask the students to work together with the teachers" (second grade, satellite school).

Changed student-teacher interaction, based on and beginning with the use of a common language, made teachers feel able to communicate with students for the first time. They saw students as much more comfortable in class:

[T]hey act quickly, they're animated, they're free, they don't feel restrained.

When the teacher asks a question, the students know their part, they're not scared, that emotion isn't there; (second grade, main study school)

in French-only [classes], the teacher speaks French, the students don't understand, so they're afraid of the teacher, they're a little scared. Whereas in

convergent pedagogy, the students, whether it's in Bambara or in French, the students understand more, so they're more relaxed; (fourth grade, main study school)

[T]he behavior of the teacher even towards the students, because the students are perceptive, because, they know, if you hold yourself in a certain way, they might be afraid, but even so, you are obliged to smile, to go in a good way, to bring them back. It's like, between us, if we're with the students, the teacher sees himself like the students, he puts himself at the same level as the students; (sixth grade, main study school)

It's really different, because when we go into a French-only class, we see that the students are shy, they are a little scared, but here we see that the students are completely relaxed and also the work that teachers do in class, the students always stay in class, they are busy with the work . . . ; and (fifth grade, satellite school);

[T]here are students who are shy at home, when they come here, when talking to other students, it helps them find themselves, helps them to open up. (second grade, satellite school)

Teachers felt that this comfort level, propelled by the use of students' first language, led to increased student learning:

It's also a little different, in convergent pedagogy, the students know, if they say something to each other, they aren't embarrassed because it's their language.

Here, the problem of the students is that it's too hard to say everything that you want to say in French. Maybe if you want to say something, maybe they can't pronounce it correctly, or even the words to say it, if they want to say something, they're afraid to say it, even when you give the courses in French, they stay quiet, even if they understand and know the answer, they're afraid to say it, they say it in incorrect French, the other students are going to laugh, you see. That's what keeps them from speaking up, even if they know the answer. That's the constraint. (sixth grade, main study school)

Teachers found closer student-teacher relationships to be a source of improved student learning and a personally rewarding aspect of convergent pedagogy teaching:

[T]he teacher, the student knows the teacher like a friend, so, truly, that progresses a lot. Because there are certain links between the teacher and the student, that influences motivation and participation. (fifth grade, satellite school)

However, some conflict about appropriate roles for children and adults remained, as was the case for parents in Chapter 6 and as discussed below. When I asked the fourth grade teacher at the main study school about his expectations for his own children, he explained:

Me, I'd like my students to be *éveillé*, I want them to ask if they don't understand something. I don't want them to just stay quiet if they don't understand something. But I want them to be polite and respectful to their elders.

7.5 The demands that convergent pedagogy makes of teachers

As described in the introduction to this chapter, convergent pedagogy expects its teachers to change their teaching practice with little support. Chapter 4 described the system's approach to teacher preparation process and support. This section listens to teachers as they speak of the challenges of teaching the reform.

7.5.1 Learning to teach convergent pedagogy. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers transitioning to convergent pedagogy participate in a four week training course. This course does not include practice teaching or materials development and does not provide teachers with reference texts or teachers' guides.

In discussing preparation for convergent pedagogy teaching, teachers did not comment on the lack of practice teaching or materials, which are features of all of Mali's pre-service courses and most of the country's professional development programs. They did comment on the length of the courses. The fourth grade teacher at the main study school thought the time allotted insufficient: "I think they're [the training courses] extremely insufficient. Insufficient! Each year, we take 20 days, level one 20 days, level two 20 days, level three 20 days. It's really insufficient, really insufficient," but not by much: "Thirty days would be enough."

Discussing the content of the courses, this teacher thought that there should be more emphasis on subjects other than literacy:

Q: And what subjects need to be added or lengthened?

A: They could, for example, multiply, take lots of time to talk about the teaching of subjects, like math. Sometimes they write, they write only.

Q: And concerning the subjects, are there some that take more time? That are more difficult?

A: There are lots that are important.

Q: Are there some that are more problematic than others?

A: The TEC (techniques of expression and communication) (see Chapter 4).

Often, we don't really know how to do that. It's often a problem.

The fifth grade teacher at the satellite school spoke of his difficulties in making the transition to convergent pedagogy teaching and the additional difficulty caused by a mid-year transfer to a class using a pedagogy he did not know:

Well, my first year, when I went for the first year, before I started, I went in the middle of the school year and I hadn't been trained to teach convergent pedagogy. When I arrived, I saw, there was a blockage, perhaps the technique that I brought contradicted the behavior of the students, that they already had, because I had a fifth grade class, that had been in convergent pedagogy since first grade. So, I really had some problems. So, but there wasn't a teacher and it was necessary to keep the students in class until the end of the year, when I could take the training course.

When I asked how he managed in this situation:

Well, to manage, I didn't even master the language, because I'm not even from here.³⁹ I speak it, but for writing it, I'd never learned to write it or to read it, I had this problem. I based things overall on the French lessons that I had, but even

³⁹ This teacher spoke Peul/Fulfulde as his first language. Also, see Chapter 2 for a discussion of differences between Bamanankan and Kita Maninkakan and the difficulties they may pose for instruction.

with that, I didn't do convergent pedagogy. The techniques that I'd brought, I used those for the level of the students.

7.5.2 Learning to teach in another language. The sixth grade teacher at the main study school, who was experienced in the French-only method, explained the challenges of teaching in a different language with only minimal preparation:

When I went to convergent pedagogy, I had to completely change, in first grade, everything is done in Bambara, you see the difficulties of transposition, well, there are certain substitutions, the words aren't even the same, there are problems . . . certain words . . . even the main words of the lesson.

As he was also required to teach the French-only curriculum, in order to prepare his students to take the French-only exam, he was struggling with the transformation of lessons from French-only to convergent pedagogy, and thus his need to transpose:

[W]e were able to manage the lessons in French, because we were used to it, it made the lessons easy. Now, to do it again in the national language, since from first grade we were used to doing it in French, now when we do it in the national language, there's a certain gap, it takes us a little time before we manage even in the language, before we can transpose.

7.5.3 Learning to use new methods. Making the transition to convergent pedagogy methods was another challenge. The principal at the main study school thought that most teachers were able to change, but found that one of his teachers could not:

Q: How do teachers manage when they go from French-only teaching to convergent pedagogy teaching?

A: With the training, with the training. When they go, that changes them.

Q: But do they really manage to change?

A: Many do, many do. It's the one in first grade who I don't like right now. He's too old, it's too hard, he's been teaching for 37 years.

When I asked the principal again about the abilities of teachers to change their practice, he said:

A: With some, I'm satisfied. With others, I'm not at all satisfied. There are some, especially in first grade, the teacher didn't understand anything from training. He still teaches like he did before.

Q: Yes, I saw the *Flamboyant* [textbook series used in French-only classrooms] on the board

A: That's right, he hasn't understood convergent pedagogy.

Given his administrative and teaching duties, he felt unable to provide the support this teacher needed: "All the time, I'm going to talk to him in class. I'd like to go every day, but now I have my class here and every day the parents come. It's hard." Both would have preferred a transfer back to a French-only class, but the central administration had denied a request the previous year and the principal could not initiate or compel action.

When I asked about the possibility of a transfer:

Q: He could be transferred to a French-only school and a convergent pedagogy teacher could come here, right?

A: Yes, that's possible.

Q: Have you asked?

A: No, he's the one who has to ask. This year, he asked to go to Kati, but it didn't succeed.

Q: Can't you, as the principal, ask too?

A: I can ask, I can ask, when he does the request, I put my endorsement, but it didn't work.

The fifth grade teacher at the satellite school had been more successful in changing his methods:

To be a facilitator, especially, we have the work groups. So, every class has the arrangements, the students are divided into groups, so for work we give directions and the students in the groups, so there are directions that are given, so maybe the teacher will go group by group to see if the students have understood the directions and will help them understand the directions, so as to orient them in their answers . . . [W]hen we give directions, often, the students do research, even outside of class, and we work on it together, also in the production of summaries, because after the plenary sessions, the teacher does recapitulative questioning in order to be able to have the results.

This teacher also spoke about the differences between convergent pedagogy teaching and French-only teaching, where he began his career:

Really, before, that didn't exist, what we do now, because when we came to school, in general, the teacher kept an eye on the talk, maybe there were some little questions, but there wasn't any group work, the research, we didn't do that.

The teaching of reading, which is convergent pedagogy's focus content area (see Chapter 4), is the area that posed the most problems for teachers. Similar to what the

sixth grade teacher at the satellite school said in section 7.3.2, many teachers preferred French-only syllabic methods. The reaction of the sixth grade teacher/principal at the satellite school was similar to the reactions of other principals and pedagogic advisors, whose perspectives are explored in Chapter 8. He said: “The policy here is to do everything so that the students read. Do everything so the students can read. The method that you use doesn’t matter. Different people can do different things.” The second grade teacher at the satellite school told me “syllabic work is not asked for, but sometimes we cheat and introduce it.” He would not denounce the convergent pedagogy approach to the teaching of reading, but he did say: “Really, for me, the method given in convergent pedagogy, it’s good. However, once you see that one side isn’t working well, you have to replace it.”

7.5.4 An expectation of teacher initiative. The French-only teachers interviewed for this study used the same lesson plans year after year, in keeping with the system’s emphasis on the transmission of set knowledge (see Chapter 4). As a response, French-only students commonly used older relatives’ or friends’ exercise books, with answers to all the questions and exercises in the teachers’ lesson plans (observation data).

Convergent pedagogy teachers did not have this kind of curriculum to follow, nor, in most cases, did they have years of lesson plans to use over and over (one exception was the fourth grade teacher who had five years of convergent pedagogy experience and did rely on previously prepared plans). Their lessons were less scripted, and thus, even when questions and exercises were similar to those used previously, their students had to work independently of last year’s students. Teachers were obliged to develop new

lessons across the curriculum, to seek out and incorporate community knowledge, and to respond continually to the needs of their students.

In turn, they had the freedom to use instructional time in ways that they thought best responded to the needs and interests of their students. They also found respite from their role as an authoritarian transmitter of knowledge, as they worked with students as facilitators:

Me, as a teacher, I'm much more free here than I was in the French-only classes. I have a certain amount of freedom. Here, I'm here, I facilitate, I coordinate things. Because every day, in convergent pedagogy, the work is done through advice, I divide tasks, I give them to the groups, they start to work. In French-only, it's usually the teachers who give lectures. The students are there and they absorb things. In evaluation, the teacher asks a question according to what he's said, the students open their eyes, and they can't say anything. In French-only, I'm used to that. But in convergent pedagogy, the students are at the center of their learning. What you give, they're the ones who do it. So, as you work, little by little, they do it. (second grade, main study school)

In convergent pedagogy, teachers saw lesson planning and teaching as dependent on teachers' understandings of student motivation and learning. The sixth grade teacher at the main study school explained:

[W]e had to only teach the right way [in French-only classrooms], the pedagogic way in Bambara [in convergent pedagogy], you have to understand and make the students understand, put yourself at their level . . . [I]n convergent pedagogy, there is a certain liberty, it's a liberty, you let the kid act, in a constructive way, in

a constructive way, he doesn't have to be still, to cross his arms, to pay too much attention. In convergent pedagogy, you take into account the willingness, the wishes of the students. Because I want them to say what they're thinking, the students can say that they want to draw for a while and I'll let them draw. If they want to sing, we sing.

Regarding curricular and lesson planning, the sixth grade teacher at the main study school said:

When I was in the French-only classes, because they are the French-only classes, it's not exactly the same context. Because, there is a fixed program . . . [Q: And there isn't in convergent pedagogy?] Well, now, following the timetable, there isn't a fixed schedule, hour by hour, no, but only, when you go to class, you plan to do certain classes that day, but not necessarily hour by hour, but even so I plan to do those classes today, as far as possible. I won't say that if I plan to do conjugation or grammar, if I find a lesson that won't work well, I leave it, if there's something else that will work better. And later, I can come back to it, even if the students say that really, we'd like to do something else, I can say ok.

7.5.5 Changed classroom climate. French-only classrooms have a set style of student-teacher interaction: teachers lecture and ask questions; students copy and answer (see Chapter 4). Convergent pedagogy classrooms are less predictable, due in part to changed teacher-student relationships, and thus more challenging. Teachers saw themselves as working with students:

[I]n class, when the students come to school, they don't have the same problems when they come. Maybe one, a parent hit him in the morning, but he's obliged to

come So that he [the student] forgets all of that, we sing, we do little stories, other things to relax them. Now, my objective, now I can start the [lesson], now I can start to teach what I want to teach, following the willingness of the students too. If I want to do math and the students think we've done enough math, now, if they want to go outside, we'll go outside. (sixth grade convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school)

As students and teachers work together, student behavior changes in ways that lessen teacher authority and change classroom dynamics. Students have more control over classroom climate and events. Students express themselves and ask questions in different ways:

The students are direct, they don't even know if there's something that will make the teacher feel bad. You're not ready for the things they say. They'll even go to intimidate the teacher, because they'll even tell you straight out if you make mistakes on the board. Because in class there are social aspects as well, if there's a feeling that you don't know something, they're going to tell you. In French-only [classes], they won't say anything, they don't feel equal, they won't say anything because the teacher, he's the one in charge there, there's a certain threat that obliges the students to keep respecting him, even if sometimes he doesn't really; (sixth grade, main study school)

They're students who, if you write something in French, they come and tell you you've made a mistake. So, I have to go up and change it. It was another class,

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you wouldn't have that. The students would see it, but they would be quiet about it; (sixth grade, satellite school)

With French-only classes, you are in a framework, the teacher is the model, he shows, he is in the middle of everything, he wants to make the student in his image. But in convergent pedagogy, there is a certain liberty; and (sixth grade convergent pedagogy main study school)

In convergent pedagogy, we try to allow certain liberties to students, so they learn without keeping them too constrained. So, now, they have a certain liberty; they are *éveillé* [Q: what do you mean by *éveillé*?] They're not scared of the teachers, they get used to the teachers easily. (sixth grade, main study school)

Teachers' perception that convergent pedagogy students are to have more freedom can result in classrooms that are difficult for teachers to manage: "[I]f this state of things [teaching in French-only classrooms] is turned upside down, the order is reversed, really the teacher will have a hard time teaching, even to teach what he wants to teach" (convergent pedagogy sixth grade teacher at main study school).

Even the fourth grade teacher, the most experienced convergent pedagogy teacher in the study, had difficulty managing his students without the strictures of French-only discipline:

A: It's a little different. The convergent pedagogy students bother us more, in comparison with those in French-only.

Q: What do you mean?

A: Well, in French-only, the teacher speaks French, the students don't understand, so they're afraid of the teacher, they're a little scared. Whereas in convergent pedagogy, the students, whether it's in Bamanankan or in French, the students understand more, so they're more relaxed. They're *éveillé*, too, too *éveillé*. They're not scared of the teacher.

Corporal punishment is officially forbidden in all Malian classrooms and was perceived as being particularly forbidden in convergent pedagogy classrooms. However, I observed it on several occasions. When I asked the sixth grade teacher at the satellite school about it, after having observed him and another teacher beating second cycle students for being late, he said:

Here, in Africa, when we let the students go, it's difficult. Total liberty, we can't manage it. They don't care about advice, etc. It can't work without hitting. Without it, really it's difficult. They're used to it at home. Even the parents are upset if we don't do it, to correct the students. They're happy when we correct them at school. If the teachers aren't mean, the parents are unhappy. They need some force, some threats. Advice, etc, doesn't work. They have to be scared.

7.6 The future of convergent pedagogy: perspectives of current and future teachers

7.6.1 Current teachers. Current convergent pedagogy teachers were generally positive about the reform's future. The second grade teacher at the main study school had become an enthusiastic advocate for the reform:

I've talked with lots of parents, [here] and in other places. I never stop informing them about convergent pedagogy, in every way possible. I tell you, I love it, I

love convergent pedagogy, I love talking about it during discussions with people.

Whenever I have the opportunity, I talk about it.

The second grade teacher at the main study school and the sixth grade teachers at both schools expressed an interest in seeing the program continue through the second cycle:

I've always wished that there were a continuity at the level of the second cycle.

The students start here and then they have a problem, they cut the cord. At the secondary level, it needs to be introduced. We have to have that; (second grade, main study school)

[T]he teaching of national languages, I think that if that could continue, it could have advantages, even until university, because the students could do research in that language, because they are able to manage certain words, it is easier, than in French; and (sixth grade, main study school)

[I]f we could do it in the second cycle, even in the lycée, it would be good. (sixth grade, satellite school)

7.6.2 Perspectives of French-only teachers: beliefs and knowledge. The ability of French-only teachers to change their practice and become convergent pedagogy teachers will determine the future of the reform in the short and medium-term. Only when teacher education programs begin to teach convergent pedagogy and to graduate new teachers in large numbers will this dependence on changing the practice of experienced teachers diminish. Since the reform did not receive more than a passing mention in teacher education institutions in 2005, and new teachers were unable to

describe even its basic parameters (World Bank, forthcoming a), this transition period has yet to begin.

During the data collection period, French-only teachers at the main study school knew little about convergent pedagogy, even though the first grade at their own school was convergent pedagogy, and six other convergent pedagogy classes shared their courtyard. The second grade teacher told me: “For me, it’s the study of maternal languages that’s integrated in the class.” Apart from the sixth grade teacher, they had no knowledge of convergent pedagogy’s teaching methods, curriculum content, or the convergent approach to teaching French. The sixth grade teacher understood only that convergent pedagogy called for “the active method.”

When I interviewed these teachers about their perspectives on convergent pedagogy, the second and fourth grade teachers were favorable towards the reform, while the sixth grade teacher, the most experienced, was strongly opposed. The second and fourth grade teachers already used a considerable amount of Bamanankan in their teaching. This was sanctioned by their school principal: “OK, the principal even talked to me about it, if the students don’t understand enough in French, try to explain in Bamanankan” (second grade). All of these teachers will teach convergent pedagogy in the near future, unless they are able to transfer to another school, as the entire school is being converted.

7.6.2.1 French-only second grade. The second grade teacher’s interest in convergent pedagogy lay mainly in what he saw as the potential for better communication with students. He was in his second year of teaching, had participated in only forty-five days of training, and had 120 students in his class. It was very difficult

for him to teach with the French-only methods he had learned, and he frequently used Bamanankan to give directions and explain vocabulary to students. His perspective on national language teaching was as follows:

Teaching in national languages . . . well, in national languages, the students understand very fast, they understand very fast. I don't know if you've noticed yet, but when I speak in national languages, the students understand much better. It helps a little, because they understand right away, the writing lesson, the reading lesson in any case, I use the letter, f, f, f, fleur, f, f, flute. There are students who have heard this, but to express themselves, to say what a flower is, it's difficult. They don't know what a flute is. But when I speak their language, right away, they understand right away.

Even though he was scheduled to teach convergent pedagogy the following year and worked across the yard from convergent pedagogy classes, he knew little about the program: "There isn't any French, I don't think there's any French, I don't think." He was looking forward to the training, though, and planning to continue as a convergent pedagogy teacher.

7.6.2.2 French-only fourth grade. The fourth grade teacher also saw convergent pedagogy primarily as a way of improving communication with students. He had participated in one of the short-term training programs, but was now a government-paid contract teacher of considerably higher status than the second grade community-paid teacher. Although his students were in fourth grade, none of them could read or communicate even basic ideas in French (observation data showed that they could not conjugate the two most basic French verbs, to be and to have).

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As a result, this teacher used Bamanankan continuously, stymied in efforts to teach French grammar, as per the fourth grade curriculum. His reasons for supporting convergent pedagogy were simple: “[T]he students understand the books, the subjects are more easily understood, because the national language, I don’t know how to say it, but it’s easy to understand.” For him, it was a matter of classroom survival. His students could not understand even the first grade materials he brought once (and had to take home because his principal told him “they’re in fourth grade, they’ll use fourth grade materials”).

7.6.2.3 Sixth grade. The sixth grade teacher claimed that he had a methodological expertise in French-only teaching that included what he considered to be all the possible advantages of convergent pedagogy (“the active method”), and that he did not need convergent pedagogy. He ran his French-only classroom in French only and kept completely to his prepared lesson plans, which scripted teacher questions and student responses and were used year after year.

This teacher focused on teaching the rote memorization of the French passages and answers that were needed to pass the exam. He told me that his students’ results were terrible: only forty percent passed the exam, even though the math problems on the exam were exactly the same as the ones that he had used during his review sessions. He attributed the results to family negligence: “[T]here’s no supervision.”

This teacher considered national languages not only a waste of time, but a deliberate misleading of parents and students by education authorities: “[I]t’s complete deception.” He had never visited one of his convergent pedagogy colleague’s classes in the six years that the program had been operating next door. He felt that parents sent

their boys to school to leave the village and that national languages would not help them do that. For girls, he told me that it did not matter what they did or learned.

7.6.2.4 Conclusions of French-only teachers. Newer, less experienced teachers were eager to find a method of communicating with their students who were incapable of working in French. These teachers were unaware of the complexities of convergent pedagogy and unafraid: they saw convergent pedagogy as a straightforward program, allowing the use of national languages, which they speak more fluently than French (particularly in the case of the second grade teacher) and in which they will be better able to communicate content to their students. The experienced teacher was the most conservative, convinced that French was the only possible language of instruction and vowing never to teach in a classroom that used national languages.

7.7 Upper primary teachers

The opinions of upper primary teachers about convergent pedagogy are important for the school careers of convergent pedagogy graduates, but also because of their higher status in the system and the community. Admission to secondary school, determined by the upper primary cycle graduation exam (the *DEF*), divides students between those destined for agriculture and very low level civil service jobs (and teaching in community schools or public schools as a community-paid teacher), and those who have a chance at more lucrative and higher status positions.

7.7.1 Knowledge of the reform. Lower primary school teachers (of convergent pedagogy and French-only classes) received little information about convergent pedagogy; upper primary teachers received none. When I asked teachers from the main

study school what they knew about the program, which was in its sixth year of existence fewer than fifty yards from their classrooms, some of them knew the most basic principles, but none knew more. They had never observed a convergent pedagogy class and had no knowledge of the theoretical bases of the program or of its teaching methods:

OK, me personally, I haven't taken any training about convergent pedagogy.

Since we're in the second cycle, we haven't received any training in convergent pedagogy. The training is only for the first cycle; (science, main study school)

Yes, we've heard about it, but we haven't been informed about the teaching methods . . . convergent pedagogy, I think it's the combination of French and Bamanankan for the students, the way, letting them talk openly; (English, main study school)

Q: Anything else . . . ?

A: No, nothing . . . ;(math, main study school)

A: I've heard of it, but I haven't received any information about it.

Q: Nothing?

A: Well, I'm in the second cycle, so I don't know anything about it; (history, main study school)

Me, since we're in the second cycle, we're not informed, we don't know about it, it only happens in the first cycle. We're not that interested, we have other things,

other work to do, that's why we don't know about it, but we've heard about it. I understand that it consists of teaching students in their own language, different national languages, when they can express themselves like that, they give lots more importance to the national language than to French; and (math, main study school)

A: What do you know about convergent pedagogy . . . that's not an easy question. Like the others said, we think it's, it has to permit, facilitate, learning in the students by using their own language. (French, main study school)

7.7.2 Responses to convergent pedagogy. The first class of convergent pedagogy students would take the graduation exam at the end of the data collection year and the majority of them would transition to the upper primary cycle at the beginning of the following school year. I was interested in upper primary teachers' plans to accommodate these students, who would presumably have stronger academic backgrounds and quite different classroom behavior and expectations from students who had entered seventh grade in the past.

As I interviewed the upper primary teachers, I found that the lower primary teachers who assumed that upper primary teachers would not change their teaching in response to incoming convergent pedagogy graduates (see section 7.4.1) were right. Upper primary teachers did not plan to seek information about the program, let alone attempt to accommodate the incoming students:

Q: Do you think you'll [upper primary teacher] meet with staff in the first cycle to discuss with them, either the teachers or the principal, before the start of the school year?

A: To discuss what? That doesn't have anything to do with us. We're here, we wait, they'll be treated the same as the other students (science, main study school). "We'll wait for their arrival and treat them the same as the students who come from French-only classes. That's how it'll be, time will tell. (French, main study school)

I asked them again whether they would make any changes:

No, we'll just keep the same lesson planning. We haven't had any training in convergent pedagogy, so nothing will change. To work in convergent pedagogy and Bamanankan, you have to be trained. And if you haven't been trained . . . I think there's, in any case, after the first cycle, there's no more Bamanankan. They work in French. So our planning won't change; and (French, satellite school)

I agree. We think that if they're working in French at 100% and they take the exam with the others, they'll start the second cycle the same as the others.
(science teacher, main study school)

7.7.3 Response to the reform: beliefs.

7.7.3.1 Beliefs about the use of national languages as languages of instruction.

Interviewed upper primary teachers had generally negative but nuanced views of the use of national languages in education, even in the lower primary grades. Their concerns

mostly centered on the potential scholastic futures and civil service careers of convergent pedagogy graduates, although some did not support formal teaching in national languages at all. One French teacher thought: “teaching in national languages is only good for people who haven’t had the chance to go to school.”

Teachers expressed concerns about the future education of their students: “[A]fter sixth grade, you don’t see it anymore. The rest of the cycle [the primary cycle], are they going to use it . . . ?”(math teacher); and about their careers:

If students are going to work, it’s going to be in French. National languages . . . [are] not for finding work; (math teacher, main study school)

the national language in Mali is French, even in offices, at the local level, people speak French, nothing happens in Bambara or Songrai; (French teacher at satellite school)

I would chose the French-only system, because the administration does everything in French in this country, having to study another language parallel to the official language could pose a problem, even for future civil servants for the country; and (science teacher at satellite school)

. . . it’s the French who colonized us, we work with that language . . . If national languages aren’t used for work, I don’t see why they’re important. (history teacher, main study school)

Teachers also thought that national languages were insufficient for advanced studies:

“[W]hen you take a recipe like the recipe for the atomic bomb, could you have it in Bambara?” (science teacher, satellite school)

Like the parents who spoke in Chapter 6, these teachers were concerned about students’ ability to escape village life: “teaching in national languages can’t have any international use because national languages aren’t spoken, in general, outside the Malian borders So, the effect doesn’t reach far” (French teacher, main study school).

Another teacher was concerned about the impact of the use of national languages on the country’s development: “It [national languages] only permits students to communicate with their parents. It’s not going to help the nation” (history teacher, main study school).

7.7.3.2 The administration of an education program in national languages.

Teachers at this level raised concerns about the difficulties of language choice:

If they tell us now in Mali that we have to work on national languages, the first problem will be that what language are we, the Malians, going to chose? There are so many languages, that will be a problem, we’re going to spend time analyzing all that, that will make us late [in comparison with other countries]; (science teacher, satellite school)

And now, they want to introduce national languages, that will be hard. You have to chose between national languages. That will make us late, take time . . . years and years to chose; and (French teacher, main study school)

When you take the example of Dogon country⁴⁰, there are thirty dialects or more, how are you going to use national languages? It's a kind of work that's very hard, even impossible. (math teacher, satellite school)

7.7.3.3 Globalization and escape. Two teachers were concerned about the possible negative impact of national language teaching on students' chances of emigration:

We have something in mind, that's the well-being of the students of tomorrow. First requirement is to be able to communicate with the outside world, with globalization. In the practical sense, we have to see, in the practical sense, can't stop training with French (French teacher, main study school); and

everybody needs to be able to try their luck in life, here and there. Not everyone is lucky enough to find something in this country; everyone has to be ready for everything. (history teacher, main study school)

7.7.3.4 Support for national language teaching. Only one teacher directly expressed support for national languages, and that was more for nationalistic reasons than for pedagogical ones:

Our language could be an international language too. French dominates now, our language could dominate too. But on the condition that we give it more weight, more weight to that language. And later, we can make discoveries in our language. (science teacher, main study school)

Two teachers cited pedagogical reasons for using national languages:

⁴⁰ A region in central Mali (see map in Appendix C).

If you express yourself directly in national languages, the students will understand right away . . . others evolve in their own languages easily, if we did that, the students would become geniuses, but we have this handicap. Others have looked to alleviate this handicap, but not us. (math teacher, main study school)

7.7.3.5 The frustrations of teaching in French. In speaking to upper primary teachers, it was clear just how difficult it was for them to use French as a language of instruction, even with students who had graduated from French-only classes:

The problem of language, it makes teaching difficult. Because the students don't understand French, but everything is in French. If you ask students simple math questions, they can't answer because they don't understand French . . . To understand any lesson, you have to understand French, but the students don't understand. (math teacher, satellite school)

However, unlike convergent pedagogy teachers, who saw national languages as a way to resolve these issues, upper primary teachers thought that an immersion approach would be more productive: "We were obliged to speak French [when we were in school]. . . Speaking well or badly, we managed to get by in French . . . I think we need to do that." (French teacher)

7.7.3.6 Issues related to teaching convergent pedagogy graduates. Upper primary cycle teachers were concerned about the educational level of incoming convergent pedagogy students, particularly in French. Although the upper primary teachers at the main study school had never worked with convergent pedagogy students, they had taught students who attended village schools with instruction primarily in Bamanankan and then transferred to French-only classrooms at the main study school

(see Chapter 2 for a description of these programs). Teachers at the satellite school also had experience with these students. In addition, they had received their first class of convergent pedagogy students two years ago and were now preparing them for the upper primary graduation exam.

These teachers were very concerned about their students' academic level and felt that most of them would fail the exam. Most of the teachers' academic concerns were due to what they perceived as students' low level of French. Teachers felt that the convergent pedagogy graduates in their seventh grade classrooms spoke much less French than students who came from French-only programs.⁴¹

What I bought, is that convergent pedagogy in reality, students are supposed to be same as students in French-only classes, but, in reality, they didn't start French at same time, so already, they are behind; (French teacher)

[T]here are students who are there who don't understand anything. After the explanation of the lesson . . . if you ask them and they don't know, you have to explain again in Bambara; (science teacher)

[W]e have to talk frankly about convergent pedagogy, I attribute the problem directly to the problem of convergent pedagogy, in ninth grade in order to get students to understand the message, you have 90,000 problems. At least last year, there were only at least 70,000 problems at least! [laughter]. So, frankly our wish is to have a good enough percentage, but I'm sure, anyway, that the level was

⁴¹One reason for their students' poor performance may have been improper access to the upper primary cycle: there were accusations of exam malfeasance and evidence that the school's exam pass rate of 100% was not warranted.

better last year [with students from the French-only program]; and (English teacher)

Given the level, that there isn't, that could be a problem, because with convergent pedagogy, really, the level, it's always a problem, the students who are in 9th grade before were not the same as the students this year, the students this year are even worse again than the other years, even to give a French lesson in an hour, can't do it, always have to stop for little problems that could pass without mention. (French teacher)

The decision of policy makers to end the program after the first cycle of primary education influenced their views of the legitimacy of the program: "Starting when convergent pedagogy doesn't continue until university, when it's only in the first cycle of primary education, I think that's not really necessary. It's not going to have much of an impact" (science teacher, main study school).

7.7.4 Conclusions of upper primary teachers. These teachers were very concerned about the current state of Mali's education system. They saw problems as wide-ranging and due to mismanagement by education system administrators, a lack of effort by lower primary teachers, and neglect by students' families. Most of the issues they cited are really systemic issues. The teachers at the main study school made these comments to end our discussion:

We need a revolution to make people do their jobs the way they should. The new textbooks are for sale in the market [everyone's talking at once]. Everyone needs to understand they're doing harm. There's no more morality. If you don't give

money in Bamako, you can't pass the exams. School and family have to help each other. The family has to let the students study at home. Here, the parents don't care about school, the students stay out until 2 or 3 in the morning. The teacher has to do all the discipline. With mass education, quality doesn't exist anymore. Even if students have a grade of 1, you have to pass 85% of them in the first cycle. The students who have a problem, they go to second grade, they keep having problems. That's why students in seventh grade can't read. They get to ninth grade and they still can't read. 50% of students in ninth grade can't read. You'll find the same thing in high school: more than 25% can't read. They know how to cheat, in all kinds of ways. Teachers are involved too. Everyone is guilty. You have to do what needs to be done. If not, students pass and everyone suffers. How can students in ninth grade not know that sentences start with a capital letter? That's really bad. They don't know. And then they have to be corrected.

(group of upper primary teachers)

7.8 Secondary teachers

I met once with a large group of high school teachers at a school that receives graduates of the study schools. This high school had only received six convergent pedagogy graduates, but there were about fifteen graduates of experimental schools (see Chapter 2).

These teachers' knowledge of convergent pedagogy was limited to its use of national languages, but their understandings were more nuanced than those of French-only lower and upper primary teachers. They knew that national languages were used in

the lower primary grades, that students then transitioned to French, and that students took the French-only primary school graduation exam.

These teachers saw differences between the few convergent pedagogy graduates in their classes and the French only classes, although they said that neither group asked many questions in class. They said: “[They are]. . . *éveillé* in class. They understand”; “They understand lots of concepts, they are strong students, they are more *éveillé*”; and “[T]hey are more curious. They understand more than the others, they are people who inform themselves. They’re very *éveillé*.” However, these teachers were very concerned about the students’ willingness to speak French language and their abilities as French language speakers: “They don’t want to speak French, they want to speak Bambara;” and “[I]t’s not working because the students spent all their time speaking Bamanankan and not French.” Concerns about academic level applied both to convergent pedagogy and French-only graduates: “There’s a general decline in level.”

These teachers were also aware of some of the administrative difficulties related to convergent pedagogy implementation. In addition to concerns about differences between Maninkakan and Bamanankan (see Chapter 2), they cited class sizes that were significantly higher than those called for in convergent pedagogy: “The class size was 25 to 30 students Now, the class size is more than 60”; the lack of teacher training: “[T]eachers aren’t trained, they only get three weeks or something like that”; and the difficulty that parents have in working with children at home: “At home, really, there’s a problem of follow-up of these students. The parents are illiterate; they have a hard time doing it.”

This group concluded that national languages should be used throughout the education system “if it’s possible.” The last teacher to speak said: “We should do all of it in Bamanankan throughout the studies, that would be good, the students would learn fast.”

7.9 Conclusions

Convergent pedagogy expands through administrative fiat. Teachers receive no financial or material incentives to make the switch, nor are they compensated for the increased workload. The short duration and limited content of the professional development courses make it impossible for teachers to thoroughly understand or implement the complex reform. Nonetheless, as depicted above, even new convergent pedagogy teachers see themselves as creating classrooms and relationships that are significantly different from those in the French-only system.

At the main research site and the satellite school, despite the minimal technical, financial, and administrative resources allocated to the program, convergent pedagogy teachers unanimously supported the reform. All had changed their teaching: all used national languages extensively and all had changed their interactions with students. All of these teachers used at least some convergent pedagogy methods and materials.

Teachers’ level of support was correlated with the level of reform implementation in their classrooms. Both the second and the fourth grade teachers used convergent pedagogy methods more consistently and more efficiently than the sixth grade teacher, who was less convinced of the import of the reform. However, none of the teachers expressed an in-depth understanding of the complexities of the reform or a high level of

use of convergent pedagogy strategies in either opinions expressed during interviews or in their teaching. The use of Bamanankan as the language of instruction, and the changes in classroom climate brought about by teachers' perception of their role as facilitators, was sufficient to produce professionally rewarding changes in student learning. Outcomes remained far below those expected by the official curriculum, as seen during classroom observations and testing (see Chapter 4).

Given the low learning levels and high exam failure rates of the French-only system, and the sudden change that occurred through the use of a language that students understand, it seems that the partial adoption of convergent pedagogy sufficed to attract teachers by making them feel successful. Students covered curriculum much faster than French-only students and moved through the primary cycle much more successfully. As teachers began to change the way they thought about teaching, develop materials, and gain minimal proficiency in some new methods, additional professional development increased their skills. As they continued in convergent pedagogy teaching, the opportunity to follow their students and see them pass high-stakes exams in record numbers (for teachers at the convergent pedagogy satellite school) increased their adherence to the reform.

These teachers had been surrounded by the failure of others and themselves during their entire schooling career (several of them did not graduate from high school) and had taught mainly failing students through most of their careers. When the system is as centered on selecting students out and exam stakes are as high as they are in Mali, producing higher exam pass rates is a strong incentive (see Chapter 8).

For convergent pedagogy teachers, the change in language of instruction is the pivotal part of the reform. The only content area for which they expressed any knowledge of strategies was reading, where they admitted to using a combination of old and new methods. The inclusion of local content received little mention, and, although it was observed several times, was only used in ways unique to convergent pedagogy methods during occasional dialogue lessons and crafts projects.

Through observation and teacher interview data, it seems that the change in student understanding, facilitated by the change in classroom climate, was made possible by the change in language of instruction. Language of instruction may be the “make or break” reform. It would have been difficult to produce the classroom climate or use the active learning strategies that were observed on occasion if teaching were conducted in a language that students could not understand.

The poor student outcomes seen in French-only classes likely influenced the perspectives of French-only teachers. They had difficulty communicating with their students in French and saw high repetition and dropout rates among their students (see Appendix K). Observation data showed that these teachers were discouraged by their inability to communicate with their students in French.

Two of the three French-only teachers interviewed at the main study school voiced strong support for the reform. Given the controversial nature of national language teaching, as shown in Chapter 3, and the challenges for teachers associated with the program’s methods, as shown above, this widespread support may be as much an indictment of the French-only system as a vote for the new.

The French-only teacher who did not support the reform and the struggling first grade teacher who was pro-reform in rhetoric but unable to change his teaching are both older teachers who will soon retire, as will all of Mali's first generation of post-colonial teachers. This shift, which will remove teachers most affected by the colonial experience, may again reduce barriers to the adoption of national language teaching and resistance to the core principles of convergent pedagogy. The convergent pedagogy teachers cited above changed their practice enough to improve student persistence and learning, although they faced tremendous obstacles of poor students in ill health, from non-literate households (Appendix A), and a near-complete lack of materials and support. It took twenty days of training and classroom experience for them to change enough to keep their students in school and see more of them graduate and be offered places in the upper primary cycle (for the satellite school teachers; main study school teachers had that experience at the end of the data collection year). For a system that is struggling even to enroll its youngest students, a program that requires only this level of resources and has this kind of payoff seems to exemplify the kind of "promising avenue" for which Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) were searching.

CHAPTER 8

PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS AND PEDAGOGIC ADVISORS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores perspectives of principals (*directeurs d'école*, P) and pedagogic advisors (*conseillers pédagogiques*, PA) on the theory and implementation of convergent pedagogy. Although principals had substantial administrative duties, this chapter focuses on their role as teachers' immediate pedagogic supervisors. All of the principals were also teachers and parents; their perspectives in those roles are examined in chapters 6 and 7, although there is some overlap. Their varied roles affected their responses and may have broadened the number of topics on which they felt informed. In the chapter that follows this one, principals' and pedagogic advisors' perceptions of parents' and teachers' perspectives are explored, as well as teachers' perceptions of parents' perspectives. In some cases, this data supports data in earlier chapters, and in some cases it contradicts it. These contradictions further illuminate the complexity of the reform context.

The chapter is organized as follows: (a) background information on participants; (b) principals' and pedagogic advisors' knowledge of the reform and response to its technical parameters; (c) reform implementation, including outcomes and implementation challenges; (d) the future of convergent pedagogy graduates and of the program itself; and (e) conclusions.

8.2 Principals' and pedagogic supervisors' backgrounds

In order to better understand these perspectives, this section presents information about the participants' professional responsibilities and histories. For an organizational chart of the Ministry of Education that positions them within the ministerial hierarchy, see Appendix L.

8.2.1 The Malian principalship. Principals are generally former, and often current, teachers of the lower primary cycle. During the data collection period, they were appointed by regional administrators. As decentralization progresses, they are to be named by sub-regional personnel. Nominations were based on a combination of personal, political, and professional criteria, with seniority usually the most important. Although a principalship was a promotion for teachers, teachers did not necessarily want the position. The principal of the upper primary cycle recalled, when I asked him if he had wanted to be a principal: "No, the opposite: I didn't want to be one." The French-only sixth grade teacher was a former principal but had asked to return to the classroom, saying that "it bothered me, it made me lazy, it was hard to teach."

There is no pre-service preparation for principals and professional development courses are limited to those offered sporadically by donors. When teachers-turned-principals arrived at their new posts, they were expected to begin working right away, sometimes without even a transition meeting with the former principal. They were to receive official paperwork enumerating school personnel and materials in the school's possession; all information was administrative, not pedagogic (interview data).

The principal of the upper primary school, who was the most experienced of all the study principals, found his role difficult and complex: "You have a pedagogic role, a

social role and an administrative role,” and bemoaned his lack of training: “If you’re not trained, just nominated like that, how are you going to manage? What are you going to do?” Although he had been a principal for fifteen years and had supplementary administrative responsibilities (see below), he still had not participated in a single training session for principals.

In many cases, especially in smaller schools, principals continue teaching and the principalship is an additional responsibility. In all three of the lower primary cycles included in this study, principals spent time teaching. Two of them taught for the entire data collection period. Principals created time for their administrative work through absence from their teaching duties and working supplemental hours. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school attempted to provide seatwork for his class when he was planning a long absence; other principals did not. When one was absent for several weeks, traveling to a larger village for his wife to deliver a baby, his class was shuttered for the duration of his trip and major administrative issues awaited his return.

8.2.1.2 Study principals

8.2.1.2.1 French-only satellite school. This principal began teaching in 1980. He was transferred to this location in 1986, left to open a new school, and came back to this location as principal in 1998. He taught sixth grade during data collection, as he had for the last seven years. He was not interviewed (see Chapter 2).

8.2.1.2.2 Main study school, convergent pedagogy cycle. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle taught fourth grade during data collection. He taught French-only classes before coming to this school and began to teach convergent pedagogy at this

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school in 1996. He began teaching the current sixth grade class when these students were in first grade and had planned to teach them through their exam year, but was named school principal. Given the time requirements of his new position, he relinquished the class to another teacher for their exam preparation and took the fourth grade. In addition to his school-level responsibilities, he taught convergent pedagogy training courses.

8.2.1.2.3 Main study school, French-only cycle. This principal entered lower secondary school in 1962. He studied in Bamako and then in Senegal. After ninth grade, he participated in two years of teacher education and then began to teach in 1969. He began teaching in a rural area immediately outside a large urban area in northern Mali and was soon transferred to the urban area. He became a principal of an orphanage school in the north in 1974, during the Sahelian drought years. In 1976, he was transferred again, and then again in 1989. In 1989, he was posted to his current location and was appointed principal, a position he has continued to hold, with the exception of one year as assistant principal. He has been the principal of a primary cycle at the study school since 1993. In 1996, when the school was renovated, he moved his cycle to the new classrooms and office. Another principal was transferred in to direct the other primary cycle, but he remained the senior principal, responsible for the oversight of both cycles. During the data collection period, he taught sixth grade for the first two months of school, until another teacher arrived. He did not allow me to observe his teaching, saying that he was only the interim teacher.

8.2.1.2.4 Main study school, upper primary cycle. The principal entered elementary school in 1951. He left high school in 1964 for the institution that prepared upper primary teachers (*Ecole normale supérieure, ENSup*). At that time, there was a

severe shortage of teachers and other civil servants, and students were admitted to the *ENSup* prior to completion of their secondary studies. He graduated from the *ENSup* in 1967 and began teaching. From 1970 to 1974, he was posted at the main study school site for the first time. He was then transferred and stayed at his next post for 16 years. He was transferred again for one year and then came back to the main study school site in 1991. He was first named a principal in 1987 and has been a principal every year except one since then. During the data collection period, he was the principal of the entire school (*groupe scolaire*), with oversight responsibilities for both primary cycles. In addition, he was a “resident advisor,” charged with supervising fifty schools in the surrounding area, for which he received neither transportation nor time off from his other duties. He occasionally demonstrated lessons during the data collection period, particularly when he was concerned about the competence of the teacher, but was not in charge of any classes and did not teach for any extended periods.

8.2.1.2.5 Convergent pedagogy satellite school. This principal began to teach in 1966. He started teaching in the *écoles expérimentales* (early national language schools, see Chapter 2) in 1983. He came to this school when it opened as an *école expérimentale*, in 1989, and then taught the first convergent pedagogy class. During the data collection period, he taught sixth grade in addition to his administrative duties, which included supervision of the upper primary cycle at his school. He also assisted during convergent pedagogy training sessions.

8.2.2 Pedagogic advisors. Pedagogic advisors (PA) have pedagogic and administrative roles. Recent reforms associated with decentralization have attempted to reduce their administrative duties to allow more attention to pedagogic work, but they

continue to be involved in administrative tasks, such as teacher transfers. They are the most visible representatives of the education system at the school and community level.

PA are categorized as generalists, trained to work with lower primary schools, and specialists, trained to work with upper primary and secondary schools. As in the case of principals, they are appointed to their post based on a mix of personal, political, and professional criteria. One of the pedagogic advisors in the study reported that he was convinced that his “appointment as a pedagogic advisor was not by chance, as it was for many of my colleagues, but that the administration was watching me and felt I had sufficient experience for the promotion.”

PA in the study were generally former primary school teachers and often, but not always, former principals. Some of them had participated in professional training, which was most often organized and financed by the French aid agency (*Coopération française*) in the years immediately prior to data collection. Others had not had any professional training. PA supervised teachers through classroom observation and discussion and were also supposed to organize some of the weekly teacher professional development meetings (see Chapter 2).

The PA office was about forty miles from the school. Public transportation to the sites required transit through the capital and long wait times for unreliable public buses, making it difficult to make the round trip in one day. Public transport to the convergent pedagogy satellite school was only available one or two days a week. Most PA waited for the availability of scarce administration-controlled transportation, and visits were therefore rare. Most teachers reported being observed less than once a year.

8.2.2.1 Study school pedagogic advisors (PA)

8.2.2.1.1 PA1: This pedagogic advisor was a generalist. He went to his first convergent pedagogy training session in 1994 and began working as a PA in 1995. Immediately following his appointment, he became responsible for training other PA. He participated in additional convergent pedagogy training sessions with Michel Wambach in Ségou and went to France for training in subject-specific teaching methods and the teaching of French as a foreign language (the latter two training programs were developed to support French-only teaching). He had participated in the annual convergent pedagogy materials development seminar. He had been very involved in convergent pedagogy implementation and expansion at the sub-regional, regional, and national levels throughout his PA career.

8.2.2.1.2 PA2: This pedagogic advisor was nominated in 1995. He was also a generalist. He taught in primary schools from 1978 to 1983. He attended convergent pedagogy training, but never taught convergent pedagogy classes. He told me that his professional dream was to open a convergent pedagogy private school that would start with preschool.

8.2.2.1.3 PA3: This pedagogic advisor was also named in 1995. At the time, he was the school principal for a group of convergent pedagogy primary cycles.

8.2.2.1.4 PA4: He also started working as a pedagogic advisor in 1995, when he was a primary school principal.

8.3 Principal/Pedagogic advisor knowledge of and response to the background and theory of convergent pedagogy

8.3.1 Knowledge. Principals and pedagogic advisors had next to no theoretical knowledge of the reform's history or pedagogical principles, although the convergent pedagogy principal and all the PA included in this study had been involved in reform implementation for at least five years. Three had worked on the sub-regional and regional levels and one on the national level. Despite their experience, only one PA had a rough idea of the beginnings and rationale of convergent pedagogy. According to PA1, administrators in 1991 (four years after the program actually began) were concerned about students' abilities to communicate and high dropout rates and consequentially began to consider the use of national languages in instruction. None of the other PA or P expressed knowledge of the program's history.

Principals and pedagogic advisors explained the rationale for convergent pedagogy in terms of the change in language of instruction and said little about changes in teaching methods or curriculum content. Regarding language of instruction, although all of the P and PA knew that convergent pedagogy used national languages in the early grades, none of them could accurately express the reform's program of language use. PA3 understood the language progression of convergent pedagogy as follows: "[F]irst grade was to be 100% in national languages, second grade added French, third grade increased the amount of French," and, in fourth grade, students have started [using French]." Wambach (1995) provided precise instruction on the amount of French (or another L2) to be used in each year from grades 1 to 6 (see Chapter 4), but none of the

principals or pedagogic advisors had seen his texts, nor did they possess copies of the convergent pedagogy teachers' guide.

8.4 Convergent pedagogy's implementation

Almost all P/PA knowledge about the reform stemmed from their experiences with implementation.

8.4.1 Willingness to implement. All of the principals and pedagogic advisors stated that they were willing to implement the reform. PA1 said that he was "convinced there would be no problem." The principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school, who told me that he had originally been opposed to national language teaching, had decided that "convergent pedagogy is the best pedagogy," based, he said, on his observations of students. Other P and PA reported being convinced of the reform's worthiness through their observations of differences in student behavior, student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and learning.

8.4.2 Language of instruction. Principals and pedagogic advisors were favorable towards convergent pedagogy's use of national languages as languages of instruction, based primarily on their observations of language's impact on student achievement. The principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school found that: "[T]he advantage of convergent pedagogy is that the child already, in pronouncing a word . . . he understands right away." The principal of the upper primary cycle thought that teaching students "in Bambara and French together" meant "they read, they understand better."

All PA were favorable towards the use of national languages as languages of instruction. PA1 thought that national languages directly improved student learning, as

“reflection is easier in one’s own language,” and that the “use of national languages makes it easy for students to understand their lessons.” PA2 thought that “students who learn in French are much less *éveillé* than convergent pedagogy students”; he saw French-only students as “frustrated, wanting to understand but unable to.” He also thought that teaching in national languages was easier and made it easier to teach students another language, and that “if you understand your language, it’s easy to understand other things.” He also saw that the use of a foreign language as the language of instruction discouraged students and kept them from having “the courage you need to learn things.” PA3 approved of the reform primarily because he thought that beginning “instruction in national languages improves students’ performance in French.”

The principal of the upper primary cycle saw the increase in student achievement as facilitating an acceleration of national development. He was enthusiastic about the use of national languages because “you have to know your language first.” He went on to say that “the Germans, the Russians, the Americans, the English, the French, it’s the same. It’s with that [their national language] that they’ve managed.” He thought that it was much easier to learn in one’s first language, and that the use of French as the language of instruction had been a handicap to national development: “If we had started like that, a long time ago, to work in our language, we wouldn’t be like this.” He saw the use of French as the language of instruction as “a great handicap for the education system,” and the result of continued French influence in Malian politics:

[W]e couldn’t [use national languages], it was the colonization, even if a head of state thought that, they would remove him from power, yes, they were there for that, we would have had a *coup d’état*, so you had to be quiet.

He thought that it made sense to use French in the immediate post-colonial period, but that now, “it’s a little late, a little late.”

In a country with significant gender disparities in school enrollment, persistence, and achievement, PA4 thought that convergent pedagogy’s use of national languages made schooling much easier for girls, as “they are much more ready to talk in national languages.” He thought that girls were generally much more *éveillé* than boys, especially at ages six or seven, as evidenced for him by the “level of intelligence required to play their games,” but that they had a harder time in French-only classes.

None of the P or PA mentioned cultural preservation as an important outcome of the reform.

8.4.3 Methods. Convergent pedagogy’s teaching methods were poorly understood by P and PA, as by teachers (see Chapter 7). When discussing his understanding of the reform’s methods, the principal of the French-only cycle (with a convergent pedagogy first grade) at the main study school was only able to say “convergent pedagogy is a good pedagogy; it’s active.” The principal’s other conclusions were that active pedagogy was more “efficient” and that convergent pedagogy’s use of group work “makes large classes easier to teach.” Thus, for him, the reform “resolves two big problems.” The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school felt that the use of convergent pedagogy methods helped increase student confidence “because we don’t force things.”

PA had similarly limited responses to questions about program methods. PA3 could say only that convergent pedagogy “requires teachers to be examples for students.” While teaching, they “can’t reject students’ answers right away, but have to help them recognize that what they did was wrong.” He thought that teachers “have to accept

answers, and then students can figure out that they were wrong as they work and then correct it.” PA1 had concluded that convergent pedagogy’s use of active methods, as opposed to “frontal methods” improved student learning.

8.4.4 Opposition to the reform: The case of the teaching of reading. The one area where P and PA expressed theoretical opposition, although not theoretical clarity, to convergent pedagogy was in the reform’s approach to the teaching of reading. Similar to teachers who were interviewed for Chapter 7, P and PA thought that French-only methods were more effective.

As explored in Chapter 4, convergent pedagogy’s reading methods are based on students’ construction of meaning from text. The method uses tools such as student-generated text, silent sustained reading, and word walls, while French-only teaching officially uses a phonics-based approach and often uses a syllabic approach. The principal of the upper primary cycle, unwilling to judge a method he hadn’t used himself, termed convergent pedagogy’s approach “global” and defined it as “you work from a phrase or a text to end up at a letter.” He contrasted it with post-colonial French-only methods: “[I]n the syllabic method, it’s the opposite.” French-only teachers whose teaching was observed as part of this study frequently relied on their students’ ability to memorize phrases and passages through repeated teacher, individual, and choral readings, and their performance of those phrases and passages as evidence of reading (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of Moore’s [2003] theory of guided repetition). Some teachers used colonial-era “syllabic” readers, which introduce letters and then series of syllables which are later strung together in words.

The upper primary principal believed that French-only classes were also supposed to use the “global approach” during the data collection period, but there was no evidence of that in classrooms during data collection or during earlier or later classroom observations in other parts of the country (as part of World Bank missions).

The upper primary principal thought that French-only teachers could not use the global approach, as he believed that the method required the use of a language of instruction that is spoken and understood by students: “that supposes that he already knows the language.” This principal went on to say “when even the teacher who’s giving the class doesn’t understand French well, everything goes out the window,” obliging teachers to use the syllabic approach.

Only one of the convergent pedagogy P/PA found convergent pedagogy reading methods satisfactory. The others were outspoken about their willingness to let teachers circumvent the method, rare in this centralized, hierarchical education system. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school said: “The method in convergent pedagogy, I don’t appreciate it at all, really, the method is not good.” He thought that “really, the old method, the syllabic method is the one we should use,” rejecting all post-1960 reform. He concluded that “the policy here [in his school] is to do everything so kids can read The method that you use doesn’t matter.”

The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school was the only one who thought the method worked. He said that the method and all of its tools (rapid reading, silent reading, and dialogues) were “OK with me.” He did have a policy of emphasizing the teaching of reading in the context of teaching other subjects:

“Reading, to teach reading, we use history and geography too,” and may have had more success by teaching reading across the curriculum.

PA did not express detailed knowledge of reading methods, although they conducted most of the convergent pedagogy training. However, they were convinced that the methods were not appreciated by teachers and did not approve of the methods themselves. As a result, they supported teachers’ modifications, and, in some cases, dismissal, of convergent pedagogy’s approach to teaching reading.

PA2 saw reading as the most critical part of the curriculum, as “in order to learn, you have to be able to read,” but thought that teachers did not understand convergent pedagogy’s approach to teaching reading. PA2 said that “teachers who have understood use their own method: the method they want in order to get students to read; otherwise, if you just use the method they learn in [convergent pedagogy] training, you can’t teach students to read.” PA2 thought that convergent pedagogy should use phonics. He described the convergent pedagogy approach as “global: using immersion in language; students are not expected to read words they haven’t seen.” He found the convergent pedagogy method “too slow,” and said that teachers continually raised the same issue in training sessions: “[S]tudents are unable to learn to read.”

PA3 told me that convergent pedagogy “doesn’t have a standard reading methodology,” but that it only prescribes a global approach (sentence-letter), rather than the syllabic method.” He thought that “every method has its strong points,” but said that “teachers do not agree,” adding that most of them were opposed to convergent pedagogy’s approach to teaching reading. He reported that teachers continued to use their preferred teaching methods, regardless of convergent pedagogy’s prescriptions,

saying that teachers and their supervisors have decided that “it’s the results that count, and if you succeed, even with a bad method, it’s not too bad, it’s not a problem, and you have to use it.” According to him, one of the members of the original convergent pedagogy team told the training group to change their reading methods if they weren’t working.

PA4 approached the problem from an analysis of group dynamics and implementation strategy. He thought that convergent pedagogy trainers had a dogmatic approach towards the teaching of reading, but that they hid it, saying that “there’s no subject in convergent pedagogy called reading.” The use of sight words, the class memory, and word walls were integrated into a broader “language arts” block of the curriculum, thus creating a method without a detailed definition or strategy. In French-only classes, literacy instruction is separated into numerous, well-defined, areas of instruction such as reading aloud, spelling, grammar, dictation, and copying with questions. PA4 saw this lack of definition as causing many problems of misunderstanding among teachers.

The larger network of PA frequently discussed the issue, concluding that the method does not work, and results in students who cannot read. During every vacation meeting period, PA4 told me that he and the teachers in his group come to the same conclusion: the global method doesn’t work. At the same time, he admitted that they did not really understand the details of convergent pedagogy’s methods, and, of course, they did not have the prescribed materials, nor did they develop their own (see below).

8.4.5 Student behavior. Similar to the observations of parents and teachers noted in chapters 6 and 7, P and PA found that convergent pedagogy students were more

outgoing and relaxed than French-only students. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school thought that students were generally well behaved but “too extroverted” at times: “[T]hey are good, they are good, but they are too extroverted. You don’t find many timid kids.” The principal of the upper primary level said the following, commenting on the behavior of his own child, as well convergent pedagogy students: “[T]hey are more “*éveillé*, they have a taste for learning, they love learning, you can see that they are pushed to read, even books, they want to read and write, all the time they are writing.”

Principals thought that these differences were linked primarily to the use of national languages of instruction and the classroom atmosphere produced by the change in language of instruction. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school concluded that “in French-only, the teacher speaks French, so the kids don’t understand, so they’re afraid of the teacher, they’re a little scared.” His impression of convergent pedagogy student behavior was that “the kids in convergent pedagogy bother us more; in comparison with French-only . . . the kids understand more, so they’re relaxed. They’re *éveillé*, too *éveillé*. They’re not scared of the teacher.” The principal of the French-only cycle at the convergent pedagogy school thought that students “don’t hesitate, they say what they think, they don’t hesitate to ask questions.” The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school felt that the use of students’ first language made them more willing to correct teachers and ask questions: “because teaching is done from the beginning in their first language.” In addition, students are not timid because “they can express themselves freely in their own language.”

PA also concluded that convergent pedagogy resulted in changed student behavior. PA2 found that “students and teachers are relaxed and easy-going in convergent pedagogy.” He thought that this was due to the use of national languages, “because they can make themselves understood more easily.” He also found that students “in the two programs are different. Convergent pedagogy students have an openness towards things.” He thought convergent pedagogy students were more willing, defined as being “ready to work anytime, motivated, courageous.” He thought that the use of French as the language of instruction made students in French-only classes “closed off,” as they could not make themselves understood and were thus unwilling and unable to try to respond.

All principals and pedagogic advisors used the word *éveillé*, defined by PA2 as “understanding, being at the center of your own education, being active and participating,” to describe differences between convergent pedagogy and French-only students (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of *éveillé*). PA3 observed that “convergent pedagogy kids are ten times as *éveillé* as French-only kids,” and linked this to group work: “[They] work in groups. They are used to working in groups, they have a secretary, do their research, then reporters report back, they have plenary sessions.” He thought that this “trains the kids to work,” as they all participate, and that students generally developed a “collective, collaborative spirit that would remain with them into adulthood.” He saw attitudes of convergent pedagogy teachers towards their students as facilitating “students’ willingness to copy their teacher, to love them, and to be ready to work.” On the negative side, he thought that the method created some “competition between students, and that convergent pedagogy students could be aggressive among

themselves.” PA4 also thought convergent pedagogy students were much more active and much more *éveillé* than students in French-only classes. He saw their level of activity as linked to their ability to understand and participate in instruction. He remembered bringing a group to observe a convergent pedagogy class: “[T]hey couldn’t believe their eyes: all the students were participating.”

Another behavior-related outcome, mentioned by two of the principals, was that convergent pedagogy students had an increased interest in learning. One linked it directly to the use of national languages. The principal of the French-only cycle at the convergent pedagogy school observed that convergent pedagogy students were much more interested in learning than students in French-only classes, as evidenced by their studying at home: “[T]hey don’t hesitate to be interested in what they did in class when they get home, from their own initiative” and, as compared to students in French-only classes: “[W]hen they [French-only students] put their slates down, the slates sleep there until the next morning. It’s only the convergent pedagogy kids. Because they can say in national languages what they’ve learned in class.” The principal of the upper primary cycle saw convergent pedagogy students as much more interested in learning: “[T]hey have a taste for learning, they love learning.”

For some principals, convergent pedagogy produced classes that were difficult to control. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school was one who had problems managing his students, saying “we have students who are too difficult and they’re not timid. They’re not timid because they can express themselves freely in their language.” As a result, he allowed and participated in the corporal punishment of students, including those in the upper primary cycle, although it is expressly forbidden in

all Malian classrooms, telling me “without it, really, it’s difficult.” The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school also allowed the use of corporal punishment, even though he knew it was prohibited. When challenged, the principal responded that the implementation context was too much of a constraint: “Here in Africa, when we let the kids go, it’s difficult. Total liberty, we can’t manage it They need some force, some threats. Advice, etc. doesn’t work.”

Other forms of discipline, according to this principal, were ineffective: “[T]hey don’t care about advice and other things like that.” For order to be maintained, “they have to be scared.” This was in direct contradiction of convergent pedagogy’s aim to create a collaborative classroom and school environment, and an indication of teachers’ inability to master new methods of classroom management during the short training sessions (see below).

8.4.6 Student-teacher interaction. With the exception of the classroom management issues discussed above, principals perceived the changed student-teacher interaction in convergent pedagogy as positive. As the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle in the main study school said: “Over there [in the French-only school], they insist too much on respect, it’s exaggerated. If you ask a question, the teacher just continues.” Changed student-teacher interaction did make teaching more demanding. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school remarked that students:

come and tell you [the teacher] you’ve made a mistake. . . . If it was another class, you wouldn’t have that. The kids would see it, but they would be quiet about it. But the convergent pedagogy kids, everything the kids think, they say.

PA concurred that student-teacher relationships were stronger in convergent pedagogy classrooms. PA1 found that convergent pedagogy students “live with their teacher, kids always come with their teachers, they want to stay with the teacher.” He reported: “[I]f their teachers don’t come to school, the convergent pedagogy students go to their houses to see what’s happening.” He contrasted this with the behavior of students in French-only classes who “are happy when their teacher is sick,” even reminiscing that in his own schooling he and his classmates “used to hope that the teacher would get sick.” He thought that there was a “kind of affection between the teacher and other students.” He linked these changes directly to the use of national languages as languages of instruction, as “children can easily approach and talk to their teachers; they are less scared of the teacher and more comfortable in class; the things the teachers said are easily understood.”

PA2 thought that convergent pedagogy students always had very good relationships with their teachers. He said that there weren’t “any barriers between teachers and their students; they are like babies and their mothers.” He contrasted this with student-teacher relationships in French-only classes, where “there are barriers, teachers are always teachers, students are always students. The hierarchy is always there.” In French-only classes, he said, “students are afraid to speak to their teachers, because they have to speak in French. Students can’t express themselves and relationships are difficult. There is no communication, students are shy, and there are no openings towards each other.”

PA3 found that students “like to ask lots of questions, lots more than children in the French-only classes, and, if you don’t know what you’re doing, they will call you to

order.” PA4 concluded that “in teaching, if there’s no communication between teachers and students or students and students, it can’t work.” For these supervisors, national languages created a classroom environment that allowed students and teachers to interact in ways more conducive to learning than French-only classroom interactions.

PA3 was the only one who spoke of differences between less and more experienced teachers. He saw younger teachers as more skilled in working as facilitators to help students with their work, and thought that experienced French-only teachers had a harder time limiting their classroom role.

8.4.7 Student-student interaction. Principals and pedagogic advisors found that convergent pedagogy methods and language use changed interactions between students in ways that promoted collaboration. PA3 thought that convergent pedagogy did well at fostering supportive student-student relationships, as “teachers empower students to select their own groups and their own responsibilities within groups.”

PA1 had observed that relationships between students in convergent pedagogy classes were different from those in French-only classes. He thought that many of the differences were linked to convergent pedagogy’s methods, as students became used to working in groups with their peers. These differences carried over to relationships outside of class. PA2 thought that student-student relationships in convergent pedagogy classes were “especially good,” as students “get along well, talk to each other, and understand each other; they are able to communicate well.”

8.4.8 Student achievement. Principals and pedagogic advisors based their assessments of student achievement partially on their observations of students in and out of class and partially on their experiences with their own children (see Chapter 6). All of

them except the upper primary principal had concluded that convergent pedagogy students outperformed French-only students in language, and particularly in math. The upper primary principal had not yet had convergent pedagogy students in his classes and was uncertain how well students would do, but thought it was essential to try something new: “I don’t know what will happen with that [convergent pedagogy], but . . . with the French-only method that we have, it’s not working.” At the satellite school, the principal told me: “Students learn much better in Bamanankan . . . In each commune, we get [the prize for] the best girl and boy.” The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main school thought that “in comparison with the French-only, they are doing very well.” In particular, he thought that “in French-only, the kids . . . have big problems with reading, but in convergent pedagogy, the kids read everything and they understand everything.”

Differences in mathematics curricula and learning were clear and easily cited, with first grade the most common example. PA1 explained that students in French-only classes can’t even do 25% of what convergent pedagogy students can do. The first grade convergent pedagogy mathematics curriculum calls for students to learn to count from one to one hundred and to add, subtract, multiply and divide. In French-only first grade classes, children learn to count from one to twenty and to add.

PA1 thought that math was more understandable for children in convergent pedagogy because the convergent pedagogy curriculum is “already linked to the everyday life of children [through language and project-based work], the four operations, it’s integrated, it uses the lived experiences of children, and transfers them directly to class.”

This PA also thought that convergent pedagogy students were more imaginative, creative, and reflective than French-only students. According to him, older convergent pedagogy students could “figure out texts, analyze them, make speeches, and create text: their production is more advanced [than that of French-only students].”

PA2 thought that “in school results, you can see the differences clearly.” He found that convergent pedagogy students could understand topics in more depth than students in French-only classes, because they could understand the instruction, which was not the case in French-only classes.

PA3 and PA4 felt that “convergent pedagogy kids are way ahead,” and cited their experiences with their own children (see Chapter 6). In addition, PA4’s classroom observations revealed that French-only first graders learned to count from one to twenty and do addition, while convergent pedagogy students counted from one to more than one thousand and also learned all four basic mathematical operations.

8.4.9 Transition to upper primary. Principals and pedagogic advisors did not think that convergent pedagogy students would struggle with the transition to the upper primary cycle. The principal of the upper primary cycle thought that convergent pedagogy students would “do well” and that “they’ll be better prepared [for the transition] than the kids who come from the French-only classes.”

However, the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school was concerned about graduates’ French levels. In his case, exam pass rates of 100% were reportedly due to improper exam administration, and so his upper primary teachers had to teach students who were less prepared than those who passed the exam through merit.⁴² He was also

⁴² Students at the main study school also reported exam malfeasance, and almost half of the seventh grade class had failed the previous year, due, according to one student, to their inability to read.

concerned about weaker students' inability to work by themselves, without the assistance of others, as made possible in the lower grades by convergent pedagogy's emphasis on group work: "And when they get to the second cycle, there's no more group work."

Despite students' future immersion in French-only teaching, principals thought that they would continue the behaviors they had learned and practiced in their convergent pedagogy classrooms. They thought they would continue to be "ready to discuss anything" (principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school), and that the students would not change:

[T]hey'll stay the same. They'll bother the teachers with questions, without being nervous, everything that they don't understand, they'll ask. Whereas in French-only, the kids will just say yes, sir, yes, sir. In convergent pedagogy, they say they didn't understand. (principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school)

Regarding relationships between convergent pedagogy students and French-only students at the upper primary level, PA1 thought that "convergent pedagogy students feel themselves to be more advanced; there is some teasing between kids, a result of the convergent pedagogy students knowing what they're doing."

Despite principals' considerable *de facto* independence in rural schools, and their demonstrated willingness to allow teachers to improvise teaching methods in the case of reading, as reported in Chapter 7, none of them planned any measures to facilitate students' transition to the upper primary cycle. Principals unanimously thought that upper primary teachers would not do anything to change their teaching in response to the reform, and they had no plans to do anything to encourage them to do so. This inaction

extended to a complete lack of effort even to inform upper primary teachers of basic parameters of the reform. Principals' only response was: "[T]here's nothing they're going to change. There's nothing that's going to change, even the lessons won't change" (principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school).

8.5 Implementation challenges: the implementation context

Principals and pedagogic advisors cited many reasons for implementation difficulties. Many of them were rooted in upper level administrative decisions, including the program's expansion strategy, double-shifting, teacher hiring strategies, and the convergent pedagogy teacher preparation program. Others were linked to the demands that the reform made of teachers.

8.5.1 Expansion. As discussed in Chapter 4, program expansion is dependent on administrative decisions that do not involve school level personnel. When schools are selected for conversion to convergent pedagogy schools, only teachers who will teach convergent pedagogy classes participate in training sessions, and only as their grade level is reached. In the first year, only the first grade teacher participates in training; in the second year, the first and second grade teachers participate; and so forth. The principals responsible for the supervision of these teachers do not necessarily participate, although they are occasionally invited on what seems like an *ad hoc* basis. None of the upper primary personnel who received lower primary graduates were included in training sessions.

The principal of the upper primary cycle at the main study school, who was charged with oversight of the entire school, had never attended convergent pedagogy

training, had no written information on the program, and had no knowledge of its methods besides the use of national languages. His understanding of the program was limited to “when I see it and I analyze it like that, I think it’s good.” When I asked him what he thought of the methods, his response was “I don’t know, because I never went to the training.” One exception was the principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school who had participated the year before, as his cycle was being converted to a convergent pedagogy cycle. However, this was five years after the program was introduced to his school, where he was responsible for the oversight of the two primary cycles.

8.5.2 Double-shifting. Since convergent pedagogy students must cover the French-only curriculum as well as their own, double-shifting (see Chapter 2) has an even more significant impact on convergent pedagogy classes. Teachers must cover the convergent pedagogy and French-only curricula in four hours of daily instructional time (and often much less, see Chapter 2). The lower primary school principal noted that “it’s impossible, impossible to teach everything.” As a result, teaching of the French-only curriculum was exam-driven, with the fifth and especially the sixth grade classes taking on more of a French-only atmosphere of rote memorization and copying.

8.5.3 Teacher hiring strategies. PA1 saw several causes of teachers’ struggles to implement the reform, and thought that the employment of “people who were not trained as teachers” was the most serious one. In this, he was referring to the group of contractual teachers who had been hired by sub-regional and regional administrative offices after completing very short-term, fifteen to ninety days, teacher education programs. Those who taught convergent pedagogy classes were also supposed to attend

convergent pedagogy sessions, as convergent pedagogy was not integrated in any significant way into any of Mali's pre-service teacher education programs (see Chapter 2). Contractual teachers, and this group in particular, were frequently accused by civil service teachers and the educational administration of being less competent than civil service teachers, although two recent (and very controversial in Mali) studies showed that learning outcomes among students of contractual teachers may actually be higher than learning outcomes among students of civil service teachers (CONFEMEN, 2004 and CEPEC, 2005).

8.5.4 Teacher education for convergent pedagogy teachers. As discussed in Chapter 4 and above, teachers learned to teach convergent pedagogy through a series of three, four week training programs. They began teaching convergent pedagogy classes after participating in the first session and attended the next two sessions over subsequent vacation periods. The teacher training provided for the transition to convergent pedagogy teaching was seen as "extremely insufficient! Insufficient, really insufficient" (principal of convergent pedagogy cycle at main study school). The core convergent pedagogy subject, Techniques of Expression and Communication (TEC), posed particular problems for this principal, and I also observed teachers' struggles with TEC. The principal of the French-only cycle also emphasized the importance of training: "But what we need to insist on is the teacher training."

Regarding teachers' transition from French-only to convergent pedagogy teaching, the principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school said: "Many do, many do [make the transition]. When they go [to training], that changes them."

However, during the data collection period, it was clear to the principal that the first grade teacher in the French-only primary cycle of the main study school had not been able to do so, although he was teaching a convergent pedagogy first grade as part of the cycle's conversion. He was in his 38th year of teaching, and 37 of those years had been spent in French-only classrooms. He continued to teach in French and to use French-only methods, including French-only reading textbooks. His principal thought his inability to change was due to his age and his experience in French-only classrooms, but also to his refusal to accept the reform.

The consequence of the teacher's inability to change was that the school principal was required to spend time with him in his classroom, tutoring him in convergent pedagogy methods. This work was in addition to his own classroom teaching and administrative responsibilities. As he told me: "All the time, I'm going to talk to him in class. I'd like to go every day, but now I have my class here and every day the parents come. It's hard."

Only one PA commented on teacher education for convergent pedagogy. PA2 thought that the inadequacy of teacher education increased teacher frustration, saying that "at the same time, [they] see that everything they learned was true, but they can't do it. They weren't fully trained; they have to do both [learn to teach it and teach it] at the same time."

8.5.5 The demands that the reform places on teachers. PA2 thought that teaching in national languages was easier for teachers, as they were more comfortable working in their first language. However, principals and pedagogic advisors concluded that convergent pedagogy teaching was more intellectually and physically demanding than

French-only teaching. They saw program implementation as dependent on teacher dedication and commitment: “The requirements of convergent pedagogy are that, when a teacher is completely devoted to it, in reality, he can’t fail” (PA2), and “if you’re not committed, you can’t do it” (PA1). PA2 thought it took time for that commitment to build: teachers “had to apply the method to be convinced [of its value].”

Motivation and commitment had to be intrinsic: there were no financial incentives for teaching the reform and few systemic incentives. As shown in Chapter 4, materials that the developers of convergent pedagogy considered indispensable were frequently unavailable, or delivered late in the school year. Textbooks were rare. Teacher education, as shown above and in Chapter 4, was insufficient and of poor quality, and teachers received no additional compensation for teaching the reform. Not all of the pedagogic advisors and principals were happy with the work of their teachers: “[T]eachers don’t give it their all, as I did” (PA1).

Principals and pedagogic advisors thought that new instructional methods were difficult to implement. Problems with the teaching of reading were detailed above. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school spoke of the difficulties of implementing group work: “The strongest work together and it doesn’t work well for everyone. If there’s a group of ten kids, there are two or three or even four who don’t do anything, they only watch.”

Another implementation challenge was the management of the student-teacher interactions that principals and pedagogic advisors spoke positively about in section 8.4.6. Convergent pedagogy classroom interactions demand more of teachers. According to the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school, when students are

taught in their first language, they can express themselves in class, requiring teachers to be prepared to answer questions on a wide range of topics. The principal found that convergent pedagogy methods “created a certain atmosphere in the class . . . students don’t feel threatened, students say what they think.” He thought teachers were required to prepare their lessons with more attention, as students were not afraid to call attention to mistakes. He also found that the use of national languages increased student confidence to the point where students questioned teachers and pointed out mistakes in front of their classes. In his experience, teachers had to work harder to ensure that they were not “caught” by their students.

8.6 The future of convergent pedagogy: graduates and program

8.6.1 Future of convergent pedagogy graduates. Principals and pedagogic advisors thought that convergent pedagogy graduates would do well in higher education and in their post-school lives. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school thought graduates would do better in literature than in science, as they spent more time on language development than on other subjects throughout the primary cycle (this is a curricular distortion that is supposed to be corrected in the post-data collection curriculum reform, see Chapter 2). He did think that they could do well in science, “where they could investigate hypotheses,” and would generally shine in occupations where they would be required to “speak out in front of others.” He thought students’ abilities to work in groups and speak confidently in public would continue even after graduation: “And the older they get, it will be the same thing. They’re not timid. And when they get older, it will always be the same thing.”

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Other principals and pedagogic advisors thought that convergent pedagogy graduates would be better prepared than French-only graduates for their post-school lives because the program “is the best way to integrate school with life” (PA 1). He thought that was due to convergent pedagogy’s emphasis on objectives and competencies. He saw this as making students “able to handle a lot of things,” and that convergent pedagogy’s emphasis on organizing instruction around projects taught students “all kinds of reflection, of analysis: that is what life is.”

PA2 thought that convergent pedagogy students would “manage better” following sixth grade graduation than would French-only students, as “there is less dropout and students speak and write both languages.” He thought that students’ ability to work in both languages would make it easier for graduates to immediately begin productive activities.

As discussed in Chapter 1, an important population-level outcome of schooling is the ability of graduates to interact with representatives of the administration and public services, such as health clinics and agricultural extension personnel (Levine et al, 2001). This increases education-related benefits such as lower infant mortality and higher agricultural productivity (see Chapter 1). Although this wasn’t specifically part of this study, PA1 noted that he thought convergent pedagogy graduates would easily work with other adults: “[S]ince teachers are adults and the convergent pedagogy kids are used to doing certain things with them, it makes it easier for them to be around other adults.” He also recounted an experience with the Minister in charge when convergent pedagogy began: the Minister told a group of convergent pedagogy students that he would bring slates for them. When he returned without them, the students reminded him that he had

said he would bring them and asked the Minister where they were. This kind of questioning of authority is rare in Malian society (see Chapter 6).

8.6.2 The future of convergent pedagogy. Principals and pedagogic advisors were optimistic about convergent pedagogy's future, despite the reluctance of many parents to enroll their children. PA1 said that he thought that convergent pedagogy was "good" and that he and the other pedagogic advisors "would continue with it." Principals and pedagogic advisors thought that parents' opinions would change over time, as the program expanded and its successes became better known (and they have, see Canvin, 2003). PA1 thought that the administration would publish convergent pedagogy's exam pass rates, and that "people would see the differences in the percentages of students passing, and they will be convinced." He saw this difference in results as making a significant impact on other actors' attitudes towards the reform: "[N]ow, people are more positive, with the results: they've understood that it's not only national languages, starting in second grade, kids advance, the amount of French increases, they do science and other subjects; you have to give them the tools to learn other subjects." He concluded, "convergent pedagogy is starting to win, little by little," although he also thought that the central administration needed to begin and maintain extensive information campaigns to educate parents about the reform.

In considering constraints to expansion, PA2 felt that the focus on developing the program in rural areas had made rural parents less confident in its legitimacy. These parents looked to Bamako as an example. When they saw that the program hardly existed in the capital, they decided that it was yet another program that the elite had decided to foist upon the poor, while continuing to chose French-only instruction for their

own children. He thought that it was only fair to say that administrators did this in order to avoid the implementation problems inherent in trying to start programs in Bamako, but that it gave rural parents a bad impression of the program. He also thought that the continued perception by the public of the program as experimental caused it to be categorized with other experimental programs such as ruralization that had been abandoned as failures.

Given convergent pedagogy students' high exam pass rates, he thought these should be used to publicize the program's success. PA3 thought that there would always be those who were reluctant to participate in educational reform, regardless of outcomes, but that providing more information would diminish their number. He saw some resistance as due to convergent pedagogy's slow expansion at the time of data collection: "[W]ith the numbers still low, some people do not understand." PA1's understanding was that most of the central administration was favorable towards the reform, and he told me that he "had heard some people say that they waited too long to introduce national languages: if convergent pedagogy hadn't existed, they would have had to invent it."

Principals and pedagogic advisors were so favorable towards convergent pedagogy that they thought it should continue through the second cycle of primary school, and, for some, through tertiary education, as a way to increase the program's legitimacy and student learning. The principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school said: "And there, our pedagogy would be saved. But, if it's in the middle of the path, somewhere along the way, we give up convergent pedagogy and only teach in French, we'll ask ourselves what the point is." This principal also thought that the teaching of national languages should be expanded, with students learning multiple

national languages, so that they “can be useful all over the country”

Despite this philosophical approval of the program’s expansion into the upper grades, neither principals nor pedagogic advisors attempted to alter instruction to accommodate incoming convergent pedagogy graduates, or even to inform upper primary teachers of the basic outlines of the reform. Although the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school despaired that “the students who come, no one speaks French, they all speak Bambara,” he and his colleagues did not do anything to try to improve their French, only “We give them a lot of advice we encourage them to speak French.”

8.6.3 Furthering implementation. P and PA did not plan to use their supervisory power to implement any aspects of the reform beyond the limits already sanctioned by the central administration, i.e., convergent pedagogy classrooms. This included those aspects that they felt had the potential to improve student achievement in French-only classrooms and the upper primary cycle. The principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school did not think that the use of national languages should ever be sanctioned in French-only classrooms, even though teachers in his cycle used them frequently. He acknowledged that “teachers feel obliged to use national languages to transmit a message, to make themselves understood,” but was opposed because “to better learn a language, you have to speak the language.”

Despite their unwillingness to make changes themselves, three of the PA had recommendations for the central administration. These were mostly related to the teaching of reading. PA1 thought that convergent pedagogy students needed sufficient, and better designed, materials in class. He also thought that it was important for students to have access to learning materials, particularly written materials, outside school hours.

PA2 thought that trainers needed to “revise methods of teaching reading, the administration should have the same orientation for everyone involved (principals, pedagogic advisors, and teachers), and should also ensure that everyone uses the same methods.” In addition, he thought it was important to provide more documentation, as “students need to read all the time.” PA3 thought that teachers needed to be pushed to read more about the method, as “they’re usually happy to stick with what they do in class” and that reading materials should be more readily available to students. He also thought that restrictions on class size would make it easier to implement the program, as would design changes in classroom furniture, to “make it easier to form different kinds and sizes of work groups.”

Principals and pedagogic advisors felt that convergent pedagogy training courses should be lengthened, with the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school saying that training should be more active and should focus more on the teaching of subjects beyond language.

8.7 Conclusions: Designing reform to maximize administrative acceptance

For the principals and pedagogic advisors interviewed for this chapter, convergent pedagogy’s impact on student achievement, classroom life, and teacher professional satisfaction were sufficient to convince them to accept the reform. They did this despite logistical challenges resulting from insufficient teacher education and materials, and deeper concerns linked to the reform’s legitimacy, their idea of Real School, and parental resistance. However, positive statements about the reform did not lead to more than surface implementation at the lower primary level or to any attempts to expand what they

considered the positive aspects of the reform to French-only or upper primary classes. Constrained by a history of centralization and bolstered by a lack of accountability for student outcomes, the possibility of acting at the school or regional level to improve student achievement had not occurred to these actors.

In principals' and pedagogic advisors' vision of convergent pedagogy, the language of instruction reform was more important than changing teaching methodologies. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is the most controversial and visible part of instruction. Changes in teaching and curriculum content, although (or perhaps because) those are principals' and pedagogic advisors' areas of expertise, were close to ignored in reform implementation. Insufficiently trained, lacking materials, and unconvinced of the validity of the reform's approach to teaching reading, principals and pedagogic advisors supported teachers' reversion to French-only approaches to reading instruction. Teaching in other content areas received no attention at all.

This may have been because teachers thought French-only approaches were more effective, but, given the levels of student achievement in French-only classes and the shallow approach to reform implementation, was more likely due to preconceptions about effective practice, the importance of maintaining an appearance of expertise, and a continued lack of accountability for student outcomes. Instead of encouraging teachers to follow central reform policy and deepen their understanding of convergent pedagogy's approach to reading instruction, pedagogic advisors and principals supported teachers in their maintenance of what they saw as more legitimate French-only methods. In addition, convergent pedagogy's implementation failures, *i.e.* the lack of program materials and the short and often *ad hoc* nature of teacher training programs, diminished supervisors'

perceptions of the program's legitimacy.

Using pedagogic advisors and principals who are ill-informed themselves of the program's methods to direct training classes for new teachers is unlikely to produce skilled teachers. As a result, although teachers may be able to make the larger, visible, easy-to-explain, and high payoff changes such as using national languages and changing student-teacher and student-student interaction patterns, they will not move away from French-only subject matter teaching methods without additional support. Teachers seem to feel they have no choice but to turn back to methods they know well, and supervisors feel they have no choice but to support them. In order for students to succeed in the upper primary cycle, they have to have strong subject matter knowledge, especially in French. If reform implementation does not increase its focus on teaching content, particularly French, it seems unlikely that current students will succeed at the same rates as graduates interviewed for Chapter 5.

It would be easy to assign blame for the reform's shortcomings to overcrowded classrooms, double-shift teaching, and a lack of materials, and, indeed, these were raised many times throughout interviews for this study. However, none of the P or PA were working to mitigate these issues: a principal took over two months to divide a classroom into double shifts; an experienced principal/principal only rarely and poorly used convergent pedagogy instructional strategies; no one was willing to sanction teachers who were constantly late or absent; and existing materials were ineffectively used. It is inescapable that these actors lacked a sense of accountability to students and parents and had very low expectations for student achievement. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school was satisfied if 60% of students in each class passed: "At the

end of the year, if 60% don't have the required note, the teacher has poorly taught." He planned for a repetition rate of 40%, twice the national rate, which itself is among the highest in the world.

These failures are those of the education system as a whole, but they are likely to have more impact on convergent pedagogy than on French-only classrooms. French-only teachers have the advantage of experience in the method, beginning with their own schooling experiences (see Lortie, 1975/2002) and are more easily able to maintain the pretense of Real School, the focus of everyone's attention, regardless of student learning. In the interviews cited above, principals' and pedagogic advisors' rhetorical support of the reform appears in stark contrast to their unwillingness to extend and deepen its implementation, even to the level of literacy instruction, the reform's purported focus.

CHAPTER 9

CROSS-ACTOR PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter completes the “perspectives” series by examining cross-actor data. Chapters 6 and 7 examined parents’ and teachers’ knowledge of and reactions to the reform. This section examines administrators’ perceptions of teachers’ and parents’ perspectives, and teachers’ perceptions of parents’ perspectives. Their words illuminate ways in which the groups communicate and the action, or lack thereof, that administrators take to further implementation. These data enrich our understanding of key areas discussed in earlier chapters: (a) rationales for enrollment; (b) knowledge of and responses to core aspects of the reform; (c) student placement issues; (d) perceptions of reform outcomes; and (e) reform implementation.

Teachers and administrators (principals and pedagogic advisors) speak in the following pages; parents did not discuss the perspectives of others in the implementation network. In some cases, groups agreed, and in others they contradicted each other, as each set of actors attempted to validate its participation. The chapter concludes with a wider discussion on the implications of these perspectives for convergent pedagogy implementation.

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9.2 Rationales for enrollment

Chapter 6 examined data on parents' rationales for enrolling their children in school. All interviewed parents expected successfully schooled children to leave their homes and seek economic opportunities elsewhere. Some hoped for their children to become civil servants; others were open to alternative career paths. The desire for economic escape was universal. Schooling was the mechanism by which parents purposefully separated their children from their communities, almost fifty years after an occupying colonial power officially stopped attempting to do the same.

Administrators who spoke to this issue had the same perception of parental hopes. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school reported that parents of his students wanted their children to be civil servants, "or at least not to work the ground. Maybe civil servants is too much, but in any case, they don't want them to farm. It's the same thing all over Mali. They go to school so they won't farm." The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school linked opposition to convergent pedagogy (discussed in Chapter 6 and below) to parents' enrollment goals. He thought that "civil servants want their children to become civil servants, or that they have skills, a trade, in the public or private sector," and said that parents did not think that convergent pedagogy could lead to that non-village occupational track. For those in rural areas, he saw parents as hoping only that students found work through which they could support themselves and that these parents were consequently more supportive of the program.

The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school stated that parents counted on the school failure of some of their children to support family production activities and continue village traditions. This was similar to expectations intimated by

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parents in Chapter 6, and directly expressed by one parent and one teacher. The principal thought that parents expected these expelled and failed students to come back to the village. For him, parents saw these students as “. . . the ones who will help the village by paying taxes, building things, these kids are the ones who marry in the village, neither the girls nor the boys who make it to higher education [post-primary] marry in their village.” He thought that parents saw it as good if children can “make it,” but that “they count on the other ones to help the village.”

9.3 Knowledge of and reactions to the reform

9.3.1 Parents' knowledge of the reform. Parents rarely came to school during data collection. When they did, they spoke with principals more often than teachers. Most observed discussions were linked to student enrollment, repetition, and/or dropout. I never observed a discussion about classroom life or student learning. Either those conversations occurred in more social settings, or teachers and administrators drew their conclusions from their own preconceptions, their personal experience, and/or their observations of parental behavior.

There were wide differences of opinion regarding parents' knowledge of convergent pedagogy. One of the actors most responsible for informing parents was the most convinced that they had been informed. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school claimed that parents were very knowledgeable about differences between programs. Conversely, the principal of the upper primary cycle thought that “the parents here, the parents don't even know the differences between the two . . .”, a statement supported by the data presented in Chapter 6.

The second grade teacher in the convergent pedagogy cycle felt that parents were uninvolved in and unknowledgeable about their children's schooling. In this passage, he speaks of parents' inaction, their lack of understanding of the programs, their lack of knowledge even of their children's grade in school, their willingness to take their children out of school to help with agricultural work, and the long-term nature of this lack of understanding:

Since I've been here, I have yet to see any concrete action taken by parents for their children at school. I tell you, in fourth grade, I've seen parents, their children are in fourth grade, come here and ask what class their children are in. They don't even know, they don't even know what class they're in. All the more that they don't know what the kids are doing at school. That's why, I permit myself to talk about the bad behavior of parents here. There are times here, for example during the period of the mango harvest, there are parents who come into class and take their kids out to pick mangoes. We have to deal with things like that. I can't say anything. That's what they're used to doing, ever since the beginning of the school.

In this statement, he acknowledges the difficulties that the school has in communicating information about schooling, and, for him, parents' inappropriate decisions that child agricultural labor is more valuable than schooling. Observation data showed that parents frequently pulled children out of school during the intense agricultural work periods that occurred while school was in session (both planting and harvesting occur during the school year). It should be noted here that teachers and principals also used student labor to help them harvest their fields, during school hours and after school, and this teacher

had his second grade girls carry his water (see Chapter 7).

9.3.2 Parents' response to the reform. Pedagogic advisors 1, 2, and 4 felt that parents in rural areas were more interested than urban parents in the use of national languages: "because they had attended functional literacy classes, rural communities saw the importance of national languages, and they are used much more often there" (PA1). For PA2: "parents who are less intellectual have been in literacy classes and have seen what they can do." PA4 commented that

functional literacy [programs, conducted in national languages] has a lot of advantages: people are able to do everything for themselves, without needing anyone to help them. Even if elders want to write a letter today, they write in national languages, they are comfortable and are very pleased.

The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school concluded that parents of convergent pedagogy students were very pleased that their children were learning in Bamanankan: "Lots of people are happy with that, very happy with that." He hypothesized that their satisfaction was due to the increased achievement of convergent pedagogy students: "Students in French-only classes can't write their names in first grade, but students in convergent pedagogy can write their names, their parents' names, and lots of other words. In the French-only classes, that's hard to find." This was similar to interview findings, as reported in Chapter 6.

In contrast, the second grade teacher at the same school reported that he had discussed convergent pedagogy with parents who were "reticent, uneasy, they don't even know what convergent pedagogy is," and had concluded that parents thought that learning in Bamanankan was of little value. He told me that when he talked "about

learning Bamanankan, they want to know why you would bother about it.” He tried to explain the “convergent” part of convergent pedagogy, as many parents thought convergent pedagogy classes were Bamanankan-only and were consequently reluctant to enroll their children.

This teacher concluded that parents’ limited view of the utility of national language teaching was a legacy of literacy programs and experimental schools. This was a significantly different conclusion than that of administrators, who thought that experience with literacy programs increased participants’ beliefs in the legitimacy and value of national language learning. Instead, parents viewed convergent pedagogy as a form of low-status, village level, functional literacy program for children.

The comments of the second grade convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school reflected the Real School concerns that were discussed in Chapter 3: “If you talk to them, they want to put their kids in the French-only classes. Because they can’t understand that they speak Bamanankan at home and we do it at school.” He thought that using Bamanankan as a language of schooling reduced parents’ estimation of the status and legitimacy of that schooling: “The parents, the ones whose children are in [the French-only pedagogy cycle], they think that their children are worth more than the children who are here [the convergent pedagogy cycle].”

It is important to note that, as parents themselves, administrators did not enroll all of their children in convergent pedagogy, despite their avowed support of the program (see Chapter 8). Perhaps expressing his own ambivalence, PA3 (see Chapter 8) stated that convergent pedagogy students are the children of parents who are willing “to go ahead and enroll them in a program that offers only uncertain outcomes.” Among school

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principals, only the principal of the upper primary cycle at the main study school said that he had and would continue to enroll all his young children in the program. Others acknowledged having children in both programs.

9.3.2.1 The importance of social position and class. Administrators spoke of three groups of parents who were less likely to send their children to convergent pedagogy classes and/or to be favorable towards the reform: civil servants, intellectuals, and urban residents. There was considerable overlap in group membership, but they spoke of them separately.

Pedagogic advisors saw civil servants, particularly non-teachers in urban areas, as the source of most parental opposition to convergent pedagogy. They thought that some members of this group were concerned about job transfers in a centralized administration, while others had concerns about the legitimacy and status of national languages. PA1 said that civil servants “continue to be a little skeptical: they are worried about transfers, and so don’t decide right away,” and PA4 agreed: “most civil servant parents are a little reluctant . . . favorable towards national languages, but there are some concerns” about transfers.

“Intellectuals,” a term generally used for higher ranking civil servants in professions requiring advanced study⁴³ were considered another major source of opposition. This was seen as important, as lower-status families were guided by their opinions. PA1 reported that “intellectuals are more reluctant to send their children to convergent pedagogy,” based, he said, on his personal inquiries. To him, much resistance

⁴³ For example, secondary and tertiary professors, doctors, lawyers, and judges were often called intellectuals; customs or police officers seldom entered the category.

among poorer parents was due to the fact that they did not see the children of more prominent community members in convergent pedagogy.

PA3 felt that the expansion of convergent pedagogy was constrained by parents' impression that elite parents did not send their children to convergent pedagogy schools. For him, poorer, more rural parents felt that intellectual parents were telling them that convergent pedagogy was a good thing, while continuing to send their own children to French-only classes. In his home region, convergent pedagogy students were generally the poorest students.⁴⁴

PA1 saw intellectual parents as more concerned with the potential payoff of schooling: "worried that their children won't be competitive with other children." Not knowing that convergent pedagogy included a transition to French, these parents, who planned for their children's tertiary education, were "worried about sending their children to higher levels of education, as they thought that national language instruction won't help them be competitive in the university system." He also thought that "parents think that kids already know their national language and they don't need to learn it in school."

The rural/urban division was also used to classify parents' responses to the reform, and their understanding of schooling more generally. Most but not all civil servants and intellectuals live in urban areas, but, of course, there are many urban parents who do not belong to either of these categories. PA1 found that urban parents were more reluctant than rural parents. He felt that some of them were opposed to the program, for Real School reasons, saying "children speak national languages at home, why should they be spoken to in the same language at school?" He ascribed this to what he saw as a more dominant role of French in urban settings, saying: "in town, people ask what the goal is,

⁴⁴ This should be considered when examining learning and exam pass rate data.

what's going to come afterwards, can kids learn the same things they learn in French, can the same results be obtained in national languages as in French,” and thought that urban parents were reluctant because they saw the early use of national languages as putting children behind peers schooled only in French. PA3 thought that rural parents “ignore everything that has to do with schooling. Parents can't understand the reform because they are too ignorant about education; all they do is bring their kids to school,” and so were not opposed.

9.3.2.2 The legacy of colonialism. The principal of the upper primary cycle and one of the pedagogic advisors blamed a continued “colonization of the spirit” for parents’ reluctance to enroll their children in convergent pedagogy: “people . . . don’t understand. They are dominated in their spirit, that [French-only pedagogy] is all they see. You’ll have to wait for later generations, maybe in ten years, in twenty years, so they understand.” He remembered his days at school: “I started school in ’51, nine years before Independence. I told myself that everything was France . . .” He also said that it was very hard for parents to overcome their desire for their children to learn French: “Because colonized in your spirit, they see only the French.” PA2 agreed: “people are taken with ideas of colonizers: parents send children to school so that they become bureaucrats and they need to speak French well.”

9.3.3 Teachers. Although principals and pedagogic advisors spent much more of their professional lives interacting with teachers than with parents, they were much less expansive on teachers’ perspectives of the reform. This may have been because their interactions with teachers were more social than professional, even in the school setting,

or because these were not topics they discussed amid the daily work of reviewing lesson plans and tending to administrative issues.

9.3.3.1 Knowledge and response. Three pedagogic advisors spoke of teachers' perspectives on convergent pedagogy. PA2 found that convergent pedagogy teachers 'were reluctant before they began, as they weren't well-enough informed.' He thought that "teachers are starting to understand, but not all of them do." PA4 found that most teachers "were reluctant, maybe because they didn't know and were used to teaching in French . . ." However, he thought that most teachers who became convergent pedagogy teachers were now fully involved in teaching the reform and had changed their attitudes and behavior. He cited Haidara and Diallo's 1999 socio-linguistic study and his own follow-up study, as saying that there was lingering reluctance among teachers, but no more outright opposition. PA4 thought that "teachers know that things aren't the same" regarding student outcomes in convergent pedagogy classes, and thus had positive attitudes towards the reform.

PA1 thought that teachers, once they were past an initial reluctance, due to their knowledge of the Guinean experience⁴⁵, were pleased to expand their knowledge of national languages through convergent pedagogy training and teaching. He thought teachers were more positive than parents: "they are a little bit specialized; they have a pedagogic vision of the thing, and see it's easier for kids to learn."

⁴⁵ Sekou Touré, the first president and brutal dictator of Guinea, established a national language program with political goals. The program did not use the first languages of students, there were few learning materials, and teachers received no preparation. The program was despised by most of the population, and when the regime fell in 1984, national language textbooks were burned in the streets and the program was disbanded. During this period, many families fled the country or sent their children into exile to other "francophone" countries like Mali, enrolling them in French-only programs.

In addition, this pedagogic advisor felt that central-level mandates had a strong influence on teacher practice. PA1 said that he “couldn’t tell you [what teachers thought of the reform], but that they did what was required, as they were designated for a task.”

9.4 The allocation of power between home and school: student placement issues

In Mali’s colonially-derived, limited-access education system, all formal power rests with the administration. Teachers’ and students’ unions have had, and continue to have, tremendous actual power, closing the system for months at a time, but they have been unable to create local structures of control; all of their appeals are to the administration. Families, especially poor and rural families, have the least power. Although there are regional and national parents’ groups (*Associations des Parents d’Elèves*, APE) that may influence policy, particularly as the country democratizes, they have little impact at the school level. The primary role of the APE at the study school sites was to finance the needs of the administration, as expressed by the administration.

One of the manifestations of this power structure was the inability of parents to influence their children’s school placement. In the sections below, administrators and teachers discuss placement issues, including contradictions between administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of process, but not of outcome.

9.4.1 Higher level administration. As described in Chapter 2, convergent pedagogy expands through administrative fiat. Just as school-level administrators determine where children will be enrolled, higher level administrators determine the choices that parents, teachers, and principals have about the programs where they enroll their children, teach their classes, and manage their schools. The second grade

convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school described one parent's frustrations, as his wishes for his child were thwarted by administrative decisions:

But there's the case, of, for example, [the postal worker]. His child was recruited for [the convergent pedagogy cycle], but he refused and had him put in [the French-only cycle]. I did everything to talk with him, but he wouldn't let me, so I let it go. Because I knew that his child would have a better time here than in [French-only] in first grade, but he didn't understand. But God does things; his child went to [the French-only cycle] and didn't pass. And now, this year, first grade in [the French-only cycle] is convergent pedagogy."

This parent no longer had the option of enrolling his child in the French-only program if he wished to stay at the main study school, as it was being converted into an convergent pedagogy-only school. Although the teacher saw it as positive that the parent no longer had a choice about enrollment, the parent's reaction is unknown.

Similarly, the sixth grade French-only teacher at the main study school did not want to teach convergent pedagogy and said that he would not. However, he was not free to leave and seek employment elsewhere; he was dependent on the administration to grant a transfer to a French-only school.

9.4.2 Administrators: Pedagogic advisors. PA thought that parents attempted to influence the placement of their children. As pedagogic advisors were based in an urban area and spent most of their time at more urban schools, this may have been a reflection of the higher socioeconomic and educational status of these parents. PA2 reported that school principals had difficulties with parents when it was time to divide children between French-only and convergent pedagogy classes. He said that principals tried to

educate parents about differences between the programs and were sometimes successful, but that, at other times, principals had to insist and “put the rest of the children in convergent pedagogy classes.” PA3 also said that parents were allowed to decide where their children would be enrolled. In his experience, however, French-only classes filled up quickly. When there were no more spaces, parents were obliged to send their children to convergent pedagogy classes.

One of the pedagogic advisors thought that, in some cases, children were able to influence their enrollment decisions. The children “see their friends do things freely, would like to be with them, and insist to their parents that they be enrolled [in convergent pedagogy].” This was supported by the statements of graduates, parents, and teachers reported in earlier chapters.

9.4.3 Administrators: Principals. The principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school concurred with parents cited in Chapter 6 who said that the school made decisions about program enrollment. When asked if parents ever requested that their children be placed in one school or the other, he told me: “No. The parents are there, they do what we say.” He did comment that parents from a town closer to Bamako might request that their children be transferred to French-only classes, but reiterated that parents in his school did not. At the same time, he had not had any requests for transfers to convergent pedagogy. He thought that “some would like that,” but said no one had asked.

9.4.4 Teachers. Teachers’ views on parental involvement in placement varied, but the ones who spoke about it concurred with pedagogic advisors and contradicted the principal cited above. Several reported witnessing parents’ attempts to influence

children's placement. One teacher reported that this occurred frequently, and that parental status had an impact on the outcome:

Because often, I see that there's influence, but those are the situations that I don't know about it. But there are [other] parents who talk to the principal and say that they don't want their kids in convergent pedagogy. But the principal says that there's nothing he can do about it.

The second grade convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school thought that some parents were unhappy with convergent pedagogy. They would have preferred to have their children placed in French-only classes, but were unsuccessful in persuading the school principal to move them. When I asked him if he had heard of any parents of first graders who had tried to move their children, he said "No, no, but they talk about it. They've said that they're not happy, they say that to the principal, because they don't want to bring their children here."

9.5 Parents' perspectives on reform outcomes

Teachers and administrators spoke out about parents' perspectives on student behavior, student learning, and exam pass rates. There was more direct conversation about behavior than about the other areas, just as parents themselves were more forthcoming about their impressions of student behavior in Chapter 6 than about other reform outcomes.

9.5.1 Changing student/child behavior: administrators' perspectives on parents' expectations and experiences. As described in previous chapters, convergent pedagogy students develop classroom behavior that is markedly different from that of unschooled

children, and, according to teachers and administrators, also different from that of children who attend French-only classes. Traditional expectations of child behavior are clear: “. . . at home, according to our customs, children are not authorized to say certain things: what they think. There are requirements; children are obliged to follow directions” (sixth grade convergent pedagogy teacher). When I was collecting data for pre-dissertation research, I was taught the Bambara proverb: “children learn from adults and not the other way around.” Castle (1997), in her examination of the health education component of Save The Children’s community school project, found that “As summarized by one interviewee: ‘children cannot simply say what they want, when they want, in front of adults’” (pg. 89).

Convergent pedagogy was designed to teach students to question authority and to work independently, with teachers acting as facilitators (see chapters 2 and 7), and they do (see chapters 7 and 8). Although this behavior contradicted the expectations described above, principals claimed that parents were open to changes in their children:

Q: Do the parents complain?

A: They don’t complain. They don’t complain at all. At home, the children ask their parents questions directly, they aren’t scared.

Q: But traditionally, children don’t behave like that, do they?

A: No, not at all, not at all. They’re [parents] even happy, they’re happy. The parents come and tell me, ‘my children talk to me, they’re not scared. Convergent pedagogy is very good.’ Everyone comes to school and tells me that.

(convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school)

This principal used his own experience to inform his view of other parents' opinions: "my children talk to me, they're not scared. Convergent pedagogy is very good." He told me that some parents complained that they were tired of answering all of their convergent pedagogy student's questions, but that no one had yet withdrawn their child, nor did he expect them to (although this may have been a result of parental-administration relationships, see above).

The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school stated that parents were happy about behavioral changes: "The parents are very happy, and, for that, many villagers from other villages around send their kids here." The principal thought that parents did not mind that students asked so many questions, preferring that to children who "if something's their fault, they never admit it. They're afraid of being beaten . . ." He had even seen students reprimand their parents if they made mistakes in French, but reported that parents did not seem to object.

The principal of the French-only cycle at the main study school had a different perspective: he said that parents did not complain about children's behavior because "they know that it's something that the State has decided to implement and they tell themselves that surely the State won't bring anything that isn't good . . ." He did say that parents reported that their children talked much more about school, and that they could see a positive transformation in their children's lives and behavior early in first grade, but it was unclear if he had actually heard this from parents.

Pedagogic advisors, who have more extended contact with a larger group of parents, also believed that parents noticed and responded positively to behavioral changes. PA2 believed that convergent pedagogy students continue this different

behavior outside class and that parents were beginning to notice the differences between the methods. He thought that parents were also observing differences in “. . . intellectual capacity.” In his own household, he found that children enrolled in convergent pedagogy were much more *éveillé* than the others, asking many questions about everything they saw around them: “why that, why are you doing that?” As he had children enrolled in both types of instruction, he had “observed many instances of children working differently and behaving differently in everyday life.”

Parents who were interviewed for Chapter 6 did not indicate that they saw differences in children’s behavior between children in convergent pedagogy classes and children in French-only classes. The only behavioral differences that they discussed were those between schooled and unschooled children. It is unclear why this is so. It may have been that differences between schooled and unschooled children were so striking that they overshadowed differences between French-only and convergent pedagogy students, or that parents did not categorize children by the programs they attended.

9.5.2 Administrators’ perceptions of parents’ perspectives on student learning and exam pass rates. The principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school felt that parents strongly supported convergent pedagogy for its impact on student achievement and exam pass rates. In speaking of students who traveled considerable distances to attend the satellite school, he told me that their home villages had French-only schools, but that parents had “abandoned the schools to come here,” as his school was the only convergent pedagogy school in the area. He thought that parents chose his school because of the use of convergent pedagogy and especially the 100% exam pass rate: “the exams and the convergent pedagogy. The exams above all.” According to him, three

parents had transferred their children from the main study school, in a more accessible area with more services, to the remote satellite school, for their exam year.

PA1 agreed that some parents chose convergent pedagogy because they could see the program's impact on student learning, as did the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school: "Lots of people are happy with that [student writing ability], very happy with that. The students in French-only can't write their names . . ."

By the end of the first convergent pedagogy year, according to PA1, some parents could see differences between French-only and convergent pedagogy students. He reported that some parents pulled their children out of second grade in French-only classes and enrolled them in first grade in convergent pedagogy, when the program became available in their area. PA1 thought that small business people were particularly happy with convergent pedagogy outcomes, concluding that they were pleased because their convergent pedagogy-educated children advanced quickly in math.

9.6 Major issues in implementation

9.6.1 Information and communication: Administrators' perceptions of parents' experiences. More than anything else, teachers, most principals, and administrators perceived the lack of information about the reform as the major source of parental resistance. This is similar to Haidara's (1999) findings about teachers. According to his conclusions, interviewed teachers were opposed to the reform for reasons linked to their lack of knowledge of the elements of the reform, particularly the emphasis on the transition to instruction in French.

Most of the main study school parents cited in Chapter 6 claimed they had received little or no information about the existence of convergent pedagogy at their children's school. Similarly, as expressed by one teacher: "The parents are just not informed, even the intellectuals. I'm sorry! Even those who have been to school, they don't know anything about convergent pedagogy, about what it is" (second grade convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school).

Pedagogic advisors interacted with a greater number of parents than principals, in a wider variety of settings. They did not think that most parents were well-informed about the reform, nor favorable towards it. PA1 recalled that it was difficult to enroll students in the beginning of the first convergent pedagogy year. French-only classes had more than seventy students, while convergent pedagogy teachers and principals struggled to reach class sizes of forty. After classes began, some parents withdrew their children from convergent pedagogy classes. PA1 thought they did this because "there wasn't enough information at the beginning; convergent pedagogy was the concern of the school only, even though parents should have been closely involved with this change." He thought that parents did not receive sufficient information, and that "when people don't have the same level of information, they can't understand things in the same way."

PA2 had reached similar conclusions: parents weren't convinced that convergent pedagogy was useful, mainly due to the lack of information campaigns: "parents don't understand and they weren't well-enough informed." He thought that parents still did not understand the fundamentals of the program, seven years after the first classes opened in his area. Parents continued to think that convergent pedagogy students only learned in national languages, which they considered useless, as "children don't go to school to

learn national languages; they know that already.” Parents in his area “only become happy when they see that the children are learning French.” PA2 also thought parental reluctance was due to parents’ preference for the familiar: “if there are two kinds of classes, parents will chose French-only; one problem is that people don’t like new things right away . . .”

PA3 uncovered a different reason for parental and, to him, teacher opposition: knowledge of the disastrous, politically driven and technically unsound, national language experience in Guinea (see footnote earlier in this chapter). He saw information campaigns as a solution, saying that parents “think that everything is done in national languages. If people are informed, they will be more likely to accept convergent pedagogy.”

In striking contrast, the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school, on the other hand, claimed that parents were “very well-informed” about the differences between the two cycles. He claimed that the programs had been discussed at the *APE* meeting that occurred prior to the beginning of school, and that parents understood the foundations of the program.

It is possible that many parents, particularly those who lived in one of the school’s six feeder communities, may have missed the meeting. Others, although this group would be small, may not have understood the language of the meeting, which was likely Bamanankan mixed with Maninkakan. Others may not have understood the educational terms that were used to describe the program, given their general distance from schooling. It is also possible that the principal felt that I wanted to hear that parents had been informed. However, it is clear that whatever information was transmitted was

insufficient, or directed to an overly limited number of parents, and that this issue was not limited to the study schools (as per pedagogic advisors' comments). There were no additional information sessions during the data collection period. Principals met periodically with the APE leadership, but discussions focused on administrative, not pedagogic, issues.

9.6.1.2 Information and communication: teachers' perceptions of parents' experiences. The second grade convergent pedagogy teacher at the main study school thought the reform would best be advanced by helping parents understand its benefits:

. . . if you talk to the parents, you explain what you do here, you compare the students in second grade convergent pedagogy with the others, you put a problem on the blackboard, the parents will understand that the convergent pedagogy students know more than the others.

He saw school-parent communication as having improved slightly at the beginning of this school year: "at the back-to-school this year, I heard the voice of my principal one night. He was able to describe a little what convergent pedagogy is."

The second grade convergent pedagogy teacher reported that some parents were informed about the positive aspects of the method: "when you talk with certain ones, you see that they understand." For the others, however, he thought that only a widespread information campaign could change their views:

They [system administrators] should have done a wide information dissemination campaign when convergent pedagogy started, starting with the lowest levels, to inform people that this new pedagogy was different from functional literacy . . . I

attribute the problem to a lack of information. That's the problem. They haven't received the information, that's all . . . It's nothing more than that.

9.6.2 Inadequate teacher preparation. In Chapters 7 and 8, teachers and school principals spoke about the inadequacy of the length of convergent pedagogy teacher preparation courses. PA2 felt that this created problems beyond that of teachers being unable to competently teach the reform; he thought that inadequate preparation created teacher frustration. He felt that the program introduced teachers to the reform and showed them its potential impact on student learning, but did not teach them how to teach and manage a convergent pedagogy classroom: "at the same time, [they] see that everything they learned was true, but they can't do it. They weren't fully trained; they have to do both [learn to teach it and teach it] at the same time."

9.6.3 The importance of time and scope. Three PA thought that the recent introduction of the reform, its concentration in rural areas, and its slow expansion reduced the program's legitimacy, and consequently were important factors in parental reluctance to enroll their children. Even after fifteen years, few parents, particularly influential parents living in more urban areas, had experienced the program or were aware of the substance of the reform.

PA3 reported that parents' opinions had begun to change as they saw increases in students' grades and achievement. He thought that

people [who were initially opposed] will change, some have already changed, even before seeing the exam results; they can tell the children are doing better.

Those who were initially opposed have already come, said they didn't understand, now they've seen the differences in children.

PA2 thought that parental reluctance was beginning to diminish because “parents can see the differences, they are comparing the [convergent pedagogy] kids with the kids in French-only classes, and they can see that they are different in behavior, intellectual capacity, willingness to do things.”

PA4 had determined that “parents are very reluctant at the beginning.” He cited Haidara and Diallo (1999), which he thought concluded that “five or six years after the beginning of convergent pedagogy, no parents had said that they were opposed to national languages” (the parents questioned were in areas where the reform was initially introduced). He followed his reading of this study with his own study of parents and teachers and came to the same conclusions. Most opposition had been due to “an important change in not very long” and parents were becoming more favorable as they increased their understanding of the reform. He found some reluctance, as opposed to definite opposition, and concluded that most of it was due to fear, concluding that “if things were explained better, people would understand.” He also found that outcomes were important to participants in his study: “if evaluations are conclusive, people will change.” This was similar to findings in another area of the country (still Bamanankan speaking, however) reported in Canvin (2003).

9.8 Conclusions

9.8.1 Congruence? Cross-actor data showed similarities between cross-actor perspectives and individual actor perspectives as examined in Chapters 5-8. This held true regardless of actors’ places in the administrative hierarchy and related distance from parents, on all topics but two. Teachers and administrators portrayed themselves as

aware of parental expectations of schooling and perceptions of convergent pedagogy. In some cases, their understandings were accurate. In the case of program enrollment, contrasting evidence presented in earlier chapters showed that they were overly optimistic about parents' willingness to enroll their children in convergent pedagogy. Additionally, the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main study school seemed more concerned with defending his work of informing parents about the reform, than aware of the ineffectiveness of his approach.

Understanding the areas of congruence and incongruence between parents, teachers, administrators', and cross-actor perspectives is important for understanding parental behavior and the nuances of teaching practice. Like non-civil service parents, civil service teachers and administrators were unconvinced of the value of convergent pedagogy. Only one of them enrolled all of his children in reform classrooms. Others divided their children between programs, as did some parents.

Although eight of nine interviewed teachers proclaimed their belief in the reform and/or their willingness to teach it, none implemented it deeply or consistently. Convergent pedagogy teachers used national languages, but did not pay careful attention to the teaching of national languages (sixth grade, main study school). They designed work for groups, but did not analyze student learning (fourth grade, main study school). They said that they used "differentiated pedagogy," but they let up to twenty students per lesson remain silent (second grade, main study school).

Congruence, or the lack thereof, between parents' perspectives and those of other actors could be a factor in the production of this kind of partial implementation. Parents and teachers live together in relatively isolated communities. In some cases, teachers are

dependent on villagers for assistance with housing, food, household work, and agricultural production. Teachers who come from other areas are dependent on villagers to teach them the essentials of agricultural production in their new communities. In all cases, they live together in social environments. As a result, teachers may be influenced by perceptions of hostility towards the reform, just as parents were reportedly influenced by the actions of “intellectuals.”

For example, both parents and administrators believed that parents enroll their children to give them an opportunity for economic escape. They saw French knowledge as important for that escape. Consequently, the transition to French may have been made earlier than planned by the designers of the reform, and national language instruction in the later grades may be curtailed. Similarly, exam pass rates are a priority for all actors. As classes approach their exam year, teaching becomes more like French-only teaching, as teachers prepare their students for the exam in ways that they feel have been validated by experience.

Similarly, parents reported being open to behavioral changes in their convergent pedagogy students, and teachers and administrators agreed. This may have been part of the reason for the chaotic classrooms and student-teacher interaction that was sometimes relaxed in a way that was seemingly purposeless: teachers received positive reinforcement from parents (and children) who were happy that their children were not scared to come to school. Learning, largely invisible and unremarked upon by parents, was less important to teachers than the development of positive child-adult interaction, despite the risks it posed to teacher authority (see Chapter 7).

Of the aspects of the reform that were intended to attract actors to convergent pedagogy (changes in the exam, an early transition to French, and low repetition rates), only increases in exam pass rates were perceived by parents in Chapter 6 and by administrators here as important for increasing parental interest in the program. The organization of the transition to French was not mentioned; neither was the reduction in repetition. Both of these received less attention from teachers and administrators. The transition to French as enacted in classrooms had little in common with the transition as outlined in Wambach's writings (1995 and 2001). Teachers and school-level administrators were content to allow higher level administrators to mechanically reduce their repetition rates (see Chapter 7), rather than working to increase students' grades through remedial sessions or homework.

The most striking case of incongruence in perspectives between parents, the larger group of administrators, and one school-level administrator was the case of the principal of the convergent pedagogy cycle at the main school and the dissemination of information to parents. The principal, the administrator most responsible for informing parents, and the one whose actions had the greatest influence on parental behavior (parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school had no choices about school enrollment) was the only one who was convinced they had been informed.

His colleagues flatly contradicted his assertion. None of them thought that parents were knowledgeable about the program. None of the parents interviewed for Chapter 6 professed understanding more than the visible and basic idea that the program used national languages. At most, a few knew that students began instruction in Bamanankan and later transitioned to French. Changes in teaching methods and the

inclusion of local content in curriculum were not discussed by either side as an area of parental knowledge, although they would certainly be considered a part of being “well-informed” about the reform.

In the case of language of instruction, administrators were much more positive about parents’ views on the use of national languages as languages of instruction than parents themselves. They asserted that parents were aware of convergent pedagogy outcomes and consequently convinced of the program’s benefits. In Chapter 6, parents expressed a variety of perspectives, but all saw the learning of French as the priority for their children’s classroom time. Parents who were open to instruction in national languages hoped that it would enhance their children’s learning of French (and increase their understanding of their cultural roots, but that was seen as a secondary benefit). The use of Bamanankan was seen as a way to improve children’s early understanding, and to make them more comfortable in the classroom. There were also parents who were categorically opposed to the use of national languages, a perspective which was not cited by administrators.

The only teacher (the second grade teacher at the convergent pedagogy satellite school) who spoke about parents’ views was much more negative than administrators. His conclusions were much more in line with the evidence presented in Chapter 6. As he was the least-educated teacher and the only one who had grown up in the village where he taught, parents may have been more comfortable expressing their misgivings to him than to administrators.

The understandings of this second grade teacher seem to challenge the assumption of other teachers and administrators that information campaigns were the solution to

parental reticence regarding convergent pedagogy. In parent interviews, there were some parents who just ‘did not want to talk about national language instruction.’ The sixth grade French-only teacher at the main study school did not want to talk about it either. These actors believed strongly in the importance of maintaining French as a marker of Real School, and felt that student difficulties resulted from causes other than the language of instruction. The use of national languages was a step they were unwilling to consider.

9.8.2 Information and communication and actors’ distance from schooling. The validity of claims that information campaigns would change parental attitudes about convergent pedagogy and particularly language of instruction was unknowable at the time of data collection, as no one interviewed for this study had conducted such a campaign. Teachers and principals could have organized classroom demonstrations, information sessions, and regular conferences between parents and teachers, but none of them had considered individual or school-level action. As examined in Chapter 7, this inaction extended even to intraschool personnel: principals and lower primary teachers did not plan even to inform upper primary teachers of the principles and potential consequences of the reform. Despite teachers’ and administrators’ avowed support of convergent pedagogy, there was no consideration of providing assistance with the modification of lesson plans and teacher-student interaction that would be necessary for students, and the system, to truly reap the benefits of the reform.

This lack of information provision was symptomatic of all actors’ distance from schooling. Although there were historical and contextual reasons for parental distance (see Chapter 6), the actions of teachers and principals indicated that they also felt distance. Teachers and administrators did not take steps to involve parents, but, perhaps

more importantly for student learning, they did not take steps to involve themselves. Many of them could have been capable convergent pedagogy teachers, but they did not consistently use program methods. All of them could have come on time every day, or most days, but none of them felt accountable for their actions, and no one in the school environment felt any urgency about instruction. All of them knew that instructional time should not be used for agricultural activities, but it was common and accepted practice.

9.8.3 Cross-actor consequences. Given the limited access to schooling in Mali, relatively few children live in areas with more than one programmatic choice. However, parents are able to choose whether to enroll their children at all. Many of them chose to keep their children at home, where they can provide agricultural labor for their family fields while not learning to read. The decision of teachers and administrators not to invest in informing parents about convergent pedagogy's benefits, and the administration's decision to convert schools without parental input may make children's enrollment more tenuous. Wealthier urban parents may switch schools or move their children to private schools, but rural and poorer parents have few options and may withdraw their children.

Teachers who are not consulted, prepared, or supported at the school-level may continue to produce convergent pedagogy rhetoric, as did teachers interviewed for the study, but continue to use French-only methods and curricula, even if they use national languages to varying degrees. Others may simply refuse and be transferred. As there are no sanctions for gross teacher misconduct (profiting from student labor, consistent unexcused absences from work, exam malfeasance), it seems unlikely that the system would be capable of responding to teacher refusal to teach the reform. The unwillingness

of school-level administrators to contribute to parental knowledge and support implementing teachers increase risks that convergent pedagogy will see further dilution in implementation.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

10.1 Introduction

Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world, with correspondingly low education sector indicators. Despite enrollment rates that have increased rapidly since 1990, net enrollment in SY2002-03 was estimated at only 44% (UNESCO, 2005). Grade repetition averaged 19% the same year (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005). About 75% of Malian children are schooled in a language they do not speak or understand and are taught by teachers who use copying, memorization, and recall as their primary teaching techniques (World Bank, 2006). As such, the ability of the Malian government and the international donor community to achieve short- and medium-term national and international development goals is uncertain.

In order to address these challenges, a small group of educators developed convergent pedagogy in the mid-1980s. The reform calls for the controversial use of national languages as languages of instruction, complex and unfamiliar teaching methods, and low status, locally-based curriculum material. The first classes opened in SY1987-88.

The group's ambitions were unprecedented in the region, and they struggled for thirteen years with very limited resources. However, due to their classroom-level success and political organization, the program became national policy twelve years after the first classes opened. A year later, the World Bank provided funds for rapid expansion. The

number of convergent pedagogy classrooms increased from 300 in SY1990-91 to 2,056 in SY2003-04 (World Bank, 2004b).

Unfortunately for the reformers, the political climate worsened with the change of government in 2002. Program leaders were transferred and sidelined. When World Bank funds ran out, the program was left with thousands of classrooms and teachers who were convergent pedagogy novices and no funds for their support. At the time of submission of this dissertation, the program's future remained in doubt.

In classrooms observed for this study, the quality of program implementation was very low. However, there were glimmers of success. Each convergent pedagogy teacher and class created "convergent pedagogy moments," when teaching methods, student-teacher interaction, and use of materials were consistent with the program's philosophy. In all convergent pedagogy classrooms, teachers used national languages for instruction, not only for student direction. Student-teacher relationships were consistently more interactive than in French-only classrooms and more students participated in lessons. There were also many instances of French-only teaching conducted in national languages and others of French-only teaching conducted in French. Materials and teacher support were uniformly minimal.

Regardless, changes in teacher practice in convergent pedagogy classrooms have resulted in improved student outcomes. Repeated evaluations of student learning have shown that convergent pedagogy students outperform French-only students on tests of French and mathematics (see *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* 1998, 1999, and 2003; Wambach, 2001; and data from this study reported in Chapter 2). Repetition and dropout rates are lower among convergent pedagogy students, increasing access to education in

their communities (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003, 2004, 2005). Other evaluations have found that convergent pedagogy students are more creative, participate more in class, and work more collaboratively (Wambach, 2001; World Bank forthcoming a). Although no large-scale studies have been done on outcomes in non-educational areas, graduates interviewed for this study delayed childbearing, likely reducing their lifetime fertility rates (see Chapter 5).

As discussed in Chapter 3, numerous studies have examined the educational benefits of schooling children in languages they speak and understand. There is also a substantial literature about the failures of African education systems and education reforms. This study took a different path, looking at the lived experiences of participants in the implementation of reform. It showed how powerful ideas can produce results in a challenging implementation context.

In exploring implementation, the study focused on the perspectives of a range of actors, examining their reactions to the reform's theoretical bases and implementation realities. Each group had a unique role to play and thus unique perspectives. Together, they illustrated the complex environment faced by reforms that aim to achieve radical classroom-level change. This concluding chapter (a) analyzes key conclusions and implications for implementation, (b) discusses the feasibility of this kind of reform in the region, and (c) proposes directions for future research.

10.2 Key conclusions and implications

This section presents the study's most important conclusions. They are divided into three categories: (a) glimmers of success, (b) barriers to implementation, and (c) the

impact of systemic challenges. The first category discusses reasons for convergent pedagogy's partial successes in its challenging implementation environment. It focuses on the observed interplay between changes in teaching and changes in learning, in which teachers were motivated to further change their practice by the visible impact of initial changes on student learning. The category also includes discussion of the ways in which parents' evolving rationales for schooling and their isolation from the substance of their children's classroom experiences, while not desirable, created space for reform implementation. Next, this section considers barriers to deep reform implementation, including parents' belief that economic escape, their primary reason for school enrollment, required instruction in French; the continuing controversy over the use of national languages as languages of instruction, and the tenacity of actors' vision of Real School (Metz, 1990). Finally, the section discusses the impact of limited systemic capacity on the implementation and legitimacy of convergent pedagogy.

Each conclusion is followed by corresponding implications for implementation. It should be noted that implications are focused on the findings of this study and do not attempt to provide comprehensive solutions to Mali's systemic challenges, such as the political context, limited capacity for system management, and lack of incentives and accountability for school-level results. Responses to these issues are proposed throughout the government and donor literature (see CIDA, 2000; *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*, 2003; World Bank, 2004b; USAID 2002 for examples).

10.2.1 Glimmers of success: Learning about implementing complex reform in challenging contexts. Convergent pedagogy calls for complete change in language of instruction, teaching methods, instructional materials, and curriculum content. Its

implementation would be challenging for any education system. However, the persistence of Malian educators, the compromises they made, and the power of the reform itself resulted in significant changes in classroom climate and some improvement in student learning in the study schools. Slowly evolving parental rationales for enrollment and parents' continued distance from schooling also contributed to reform implementation.

10.2.1.1 The power of high-impact reform: Change in language of instruction and classroom climate were achieved with minimal teacher support. The experience of convergent pedagogy at the study schools showed that reforms built around important ideas can be sufficiently powerful to motivate teachers and other personnel to implement them, even if they are controversial.

Convergent pedagogy teachers received no information about the reform during their pre-service preparation. When they were “converted” into convergent pedagogy teachers, they participated in a twenty day preparation course that did not include practice teaching. Teachers received minimal classroom materials and no school-level support.

As a result, change in teacher practice as documented in this study was less substantial than planned by program developers. Undoubtedly, student outcomes would have been better under different conditions. Nonetheless, teachers were willing to teach the reform and excited about its results. They used national languages and changed their interactions with students.

Implications for implementation. Convergent pedagogy is a reform in which teachers can see results with minimal changes to their practice, and then deepen their implementation for additional success. Currently, teachers are learning to use national

languages and experimenting with new teaching methods. Even in these initial stages, the use of national languages has wide-ranging impact. When teachers' first language is the language of instruction, their interactions with students benefit from their increased linguistic competency. The use of national languages in their classrooms make teachers more able to easily interact with students and parents. This does not mean that convergent pedagogy should be implemented with minimal support; rather, that initial implementation is rapidly achievable and that positive results quickly reinforce teachers' interest.

10.2.1.2 Change in language of instruction catalyzed changes in classroom climate and student learning. The introduction of Bamanankan as a language of instruction facilitated changes in teacher-student interaction, which then led to changes in classroom climate. This occurred even though the depth of implementation in this area of the reform was minimal. Teachers used Bamanankan throughout the school day, but did not respect grade by grade guidelines for the balance between languages. In the sixth grade class, almost all instruction was in French. Bamanankan was used only for occasional explanations and for student directions. Teachers did not conduct language development activities, such as discussions of grammatical structures, the structures of text, or the composition of words (see Chapter 4). This is similar to findings in Doumbia (2000) that convergent pedagogy teachers did not structure approaches to teaching Bamanankan.

However, the use of Bamanankan still had a substantial impact on students' ability to understand instruction and develop relationships with teachers. These outcomes changed their relationships with teachers and created a more positive classroom

environment, providing motivation for teachers to continue to try to implement the reform.

Implications for implementation. The changes in classroom climate and student learning that were documented in preceding chapters were primarily made possible by the change in language of instruction. The kinds of classroom participation, engagement in academic content, and active learning that were observed in convergent pedagogy classrooms did not occur in French-only classrooms. This was the case even during the limited time allotted in those classrooms for student participation. In French-only classrooms, student after student was silent when teachers asked questions, and then, when called upon, student after student was unable to answer simple, direct questions. The transition to more participatory methods may not be possible without changing the language of instruction.

10.2.1.3 Improvements in classroom climate and student learning catalyzed teacher motivation. More relaxed and interactive student-teacher relationships and visibly improved student learning were the driving force behind teachers' advocacy of the reform. As Muskin (1999) found in Save the Children community schools, teachers using Bamanankan were more likely to joke with students and to welcome and answer student questions. Although these interactions created some risk for teachers, their new ability to communicate with students and facilitate student understanding catalyzed their motivation to implement the reform. Teachers spoke of students' increased learning and persistence, changed student-teacher relationships, and increased professionalism as important for their belief in the reform.

Implications for implementation. The change in classroom climate produced by improvements in student-teacher relationships shows the importance of continuing and emphasizing this aspect of the reform. However, the chaotic classrooms that were observed during data collection show that teachers continue to need assistance in managing this new kind of classroom. Teachers needed support beyond that provided in the theoretical convergent pedagogy teacher preparation course. Providing preparation that includes practice teaching, continuing support for reflective practice, and strengthening leadership from principals would help to address this issue.

In addition, discussion between parents and school-level actors about expectations for student behavior could help support student development at home and school. Although parents interviewed for the study stated that they did not see behavioral differences between convergent pedagogy students and French-only students, teachers reported that some parents were aware and concerned. The apparent acceptance by parents of student behavior that contradicts traditional norms may not be universal and may not continue if reform implementation deepens.

10.2.1.4 Elements of reform design and compromises made by reform designers were key in persuading parents, teachers, and administrators to support the reform. Early in the development of convergent pedagogy, educators decided (a) to introduce French early in the primary cycle, even though the bilingual literature shows that longer-term emphasis on students' first language produces better outcomes (Cummins, 1979; Thomas and Collier, 1997); (b) maintain the familiar structure of the French-only classroom; (c) change the structure of the sixth grade graduation exam; and (d) appeal to

teacher professionalism (see Chapter 3). These decisions were key in producing acceptance of the reforms, across actors.

First, data reported in earlier chapters showed the importance of maintaining the appearance of Real School (Metz, 1990). As discussed in Chapter 6 and below, parents' expectations of schooling have slowly evolved since the colonial era. Although learning is gaining some traction as a goal of schooling, credentialing, and access to French, seen as the language of status and power, continues to be its primary purpose.

Parents saw the teaching of French as the purpose of schooling and the key to exam success. As they were unaware of changes in classroom environments, change in language of instruction was the critical difference for them between French-only and convergent pedagogy schooling. Increased exam pass rates of convergent pedagogy students were critical for the motivation of parents, teachers, and administrators (pre-dissertation data, 2000; Canvin, 2003) to support and implement this controversial and complex reform. This was particularly important at the convergent pedagogy satellite school, as no convergent pedagogy students at the main study school had yet taken the exam.

To increase the probability that convergent pedagogy students would do well on the exam (and to respond to the changed curriculum and consequently changed expectations for achievement), exam content was changed to include convergent pedagogy subjects. Strong performance on this part of the exam counteracts weaknesses on the French-only sections (see Appendix B for details). In SY2002-03, the data collection year, 100% of students at the convergent pedagogy satellite school passed the exam. Forty percent of students at the French-only school passed. Despite allegations of

cheating on the exam at the convergent pedagogy satellite school (see Chapter 1), increased exam pass rates had led to the transfer of students to the school and were a source of pride among teachers and both schools' principals.

Last, reform designers appealed to teacher professionalism through giving teachers the flexibility to design their lesson plans in accordance with the needs of individual students in their classes, adjust their class schedules as needed, and making teachers' roles less authoritarian to create more constructive teacher-student interaction.

Implications for implementation. Due to the results of the outcome of these design decisions, the early transition to French is likely to continue. As seen in the bilingual education literature (see Cummins, 1979 and Thomas and Collier, 1997 for examples), this is likely to reduce student learning and have a long-term negative impact on students' cognitive development. In addition, convergent pedagogy methods will continue to be increasingly overshadowed by French-only methods as students approach the exam. The importance of exam results means that cheating on exams, by students and administrators, is likely to continue.

Additionally, the early introduction of French broadens the number of years of primary school during which comparative French-only and convergent pedagogy observations and evaluations of French learning can be conducted. As discussed below, these evaluations continue to be a preoccupation of the government and donors. It also makes it easier for supervisory personnel to work in regions that use languages of instruction that are not their own.

The appeal to teacher professionalism has improved classroom environments and student learning, as described below, but has also increased teachers' workloads and

sense of risk in the classroom. In response to increased workload, many teachers are not using convergent pedagogy approaches very often, reverting to copying and memorization. Increased risk was accepted by teachers in the study, who were willing to respond to student questions and corrections as part of creating the changed classroom environment.

10.2.1.5 Evolving tensions and contradictions in parents' rationales for enrolling their children in school created space for change in language of instruction. The primary purpose of schooling among the study school parents was the economic escape described in preceding chapters, particularly Chapter 3. Parents also had other, accompanying, ambitions for their children, including learning, becoming “modern,” and the ability to contribute to community and national development. With restrictions on civil service hiring making it more difficult for graduates to obtain civil service positions and the expansion of the non-agricultural labor market, parents were interested in schooling's potential to help their children access different career paths. Many parents, particularly those at the convergent pedagogy satellite school with more exposure to national language instruction and positive exam experiences, were willing to view national languages as a positive contributor to that end.

In addition, parents reported that changes in childrearing linked to modernization made their role more challenging and increased the importance of schooling in teaching children behavioral norms. Some parents supported national language instruction for cultural and social reasons. The use of national languages was seen by some parents as helping them achieve these different goals. All parents continued, however, to stress the importance of French as the priority language of instruction.

Implications for implementation. As Mali develops, the labor market will continue to diversify and hiring criteria will continue to evolve, with qualifications becoming increasingly important as the pool of graduates expands. This bodes well for the future of convergent pedagogy, but change will be slow and exam results will remain most important in the meantime. In addition, with parents stressing the importance of culturally acceptable behavior, practioners may need to place desired convergent pedagogy behaviors, such as questioning and independent learning, within the context of traditional behavioral patterns. This is a tension inherent in the reform: a desire to reshape student behavior while respecting and including local communication strategies (such as storytelling and response) and content.

10.2.1.6 Space for reform implementation may have been increased by limiting access to schooling and by parents' distance from schooling. Although no one could argue for intentionally creating these conditions, they may have created space for the reform to begin and grow. Parents interviewed for this study saw their choices about schooling as (a) whether to enroll their children at all and (b) whether to enroll them in public school or Koranic school. Parents at the main study school were not aware that the school had two different programs, nor were they given the opportunity to chose between them. Parents at the convergent pedagogy satellite school had no choice of programs, but were pleased that their children could be enrolled in any kind of school, as their village had been without schooling during their childhoods. Both sets of parents were satisfied that the school year had not been disrupted by strikes, and were less concerned about events inside classrooms. This, combined with a lack of information from school personnel about the substance of schooling, may have limited parental

concerns and pressure to transfer students to French-only classes, as pedagogic advisors had observed in urban areas with more school choice.

Implications for implementation. As Mali's political climate stabilizes, education access increases, and convergent pedagogy students advance through the exam classes, parents will become more aware of differences between convergent pedagogy and the French-only program. At this point, they may be reassured by exam results, if they are sufficiently well-known, or may attempt to transfer or withdraw their children. Continuing public awareness campaigns were cited by teachers, principals, and pedagogic advisors as an important way of increasing parental knowledge (particularly of the transition to French) and reducing opposition.

10.2.2 Barriers to deep implementation of convergent pedagogy. Although teachers made important changes in their practice with the use of national languages and some adoption of convergent pedagogy methods and content, barriers to further implementation and expansion remained substantial. One set of barriers was linked to parents' continued belief in economic escape as the predominant rationale for school enrollment. Others were linked to the isolation of all actors from schooling; the complex nature of the reform; and the lack of accountability at all levels of the system for student learning.

10.2.2.1 Parents continued to see economic escape as the purpose of schooling. As discussed in earlier chapters, public schooling in Mali was established by the French colonial regime, with the goal of educating low level civil servants for the colonial regime and furthering the regime's *mission civilisatrice*. While some parents refused to

send their children to school, others needed the access to the cash economy that civil service positions provided.

More than forty years after the end of colonialism, study school parents' views of schooling's purposes had changed only slightly. These changes are discussed above as factors contributing to the reform's success thus far.

However, most parents interviewed for this study continued to see economic escape, defined as departure from home in pursuit of paid employment elsewhere, as the key purpose of schooling. A minority of parents did not want all of their children to leave, and others counted on school failure to keep some children in their communities. However, the goal of successful schooling was departure.

The civil service remained the employer of choice. However, parents were aware of restrictions on civil service hiring and willing to consider other career options for their children. This important labor market change had produced some interest in learning, not only credentialing, as an outcome of schooling and contributed to some parents' acceptance of the use of national languages in the early grades.

Implications for implementation. Given parents' current emphasis on economic escape, convergent pedagogy's early transition to French and teachers' over-emphasis on French as the graduation exam approaches are likely to continue. The minimal inclusion of local content in the curriculum may be linked to difficulties that teachers have in linking it to their own, and, possibly, community expectations of schooling.

10.2.2.2 There was continued, multi-faceted, doubt among parents and some teachers about the validity of the use of national languages as languages of instruction. Parents' concerns about the use of national languages stem from Mali's colonial legacy,

from the signals sent by economic and social elites who choose French-only schools, economic concerns for children's future, lack of knowledge of the structure of the reform and its transition to French, and their focus on credentialing instead of student learning.

Teachers who were opposed to the use of national languages were concerned about students' academic and economic futures, saying that Bamanankan is insufficiently complex to use for advanced instruction and that French remains Mali's official language.

Implications for implementation. Although reform designers were aware of these issues when they first introduced national languages as languages of instruction, they have depended on parents' insufficient knowledge of schooling, lack of choice in schooling and focus on exam results to mitigate their uncertainty. Regarding teachers, they counted on the reform's intrinsic motivations and teachers' willingness to respect mandated policy decisions. As knowledge and choice increase as access to education expands, parents' increased experience with and knowledge of exam results will be even more important. Some parents may withdraw their children from school or transfer them to schools that continue to be French-only.

Teachers may have similar reactions. In the case of the sixth grade French-only teacher at the main study school who said that he would never teach convergent pedagogy, he may ask to be transferred or to become a principal once again. At the upper primary level, reactions may depend on the ability of those who teach the reform and those who support them to deepen implementation and allay their concerns about students' ability to succeed in upper primary classes.

10.2.2.3 The use of national languages as languages of instruction overshadowed other aspects of convergent pedagogy. The use of Bamanankan as a language of instruction was the most implemented aspect of the reform at the study schools. It was technically easier for teachers to change their language use than their teaching methods or to include local content.

Changes in methods received no attention from parents and little from teachers or administrators. There were two exceptions: teachers did change their relationships with students and some teachers were sufficiently aware of convergent pedagogy teaching methods to decide not to use them.

The inclusion of local content in the curriculum received no attention from parents or administrators. Although teachers were observed incorporating local content, it was primarily used in stand-alone crafts projects and not as an integral part of lessons. Writing exercises in convergent pedagogy and French-only classrooms were “Malianized” to include traditional names and familiar activities, but there was no use of student names, familiar place names, or other locally unique features in either.

Implications for implementation. The switch to the use of Bamanankan as a language of instruction was the component of the reform with the most impact on teaching and learning. Without additional teacher education and support, the distribution of materials, and the introduction of accountability and incentives for student learning, it is unlikely that reform implementation will deepen.

10.2.2.4 The reactions of civil servants, “intellectuals,” and economic elites to the reform have an important influence on the views of other actors. Although the first convergent pedagogy classrooms were in Ségou, expansion initially focused on semi-

rural and rural areas with limited alternative access to education, and particularly avoided the capital. This limited resistance, but also decreased the reform's legitimacy, with some parents seeing it as a lower status program. This was reinforced by the observation that civil servants were not enrolling their children, and by the reality that education sector personnel associated with the study schools continued to enroll at least some of their children in the French-only program.

This reduced the reform's legitimacy for parents, who reasoned that if elite, urban, and "intellectual" parents did not enroll their children, it did not make sense for them to enroll theirs. Thus, while rural expansion was a deliberate strategy to reduce the political and practical tensions of implementing reform in Bamako, the strategy had the unintended effect of reducing legitimacy. In addition, as there are civil servants in every area of the country (at least teachers and agricultural extension personnel), any reluctance on their part is highly visible.

Implications for implementation. It is critical that convergent pedagogy avoid the comparison to ruralization, in which parents thought their children were receiving an education designed to reduce their possibilities of economic escape, while elites continued to benefit from the French-only system. As was shown by the early community school experience, parents were interested in community schools primarily as a way to gain access to the formal school system, particularly the credentialing exam. Continued expansion of convergent pedagogy in urban areas, endorsement by high profile public figures, and the publicized enrollment of the children of elites are strategies that could influence the opinions of rural and semi-rural parents.

10.2.2.5 Teacher knowledge and advocacy was insufficient for deep implementation. Convergent pedagogy principals and teachers unanimously expressed basic knowledge and rhetorical support of the reform (one teacher initially said that ‘method did not matter,’ but went on to specify several ways in which it did). With the exception of the sixth grade teacher at the main study school, there were “convergent pedagogy moments” in each classroom, where method, language, and interaction came together to produce a lesson or part of a lesson which illustrated the potential of the reform.

This knowledge and support did not produce consistent classroom teaching. Teachers used national languages in their classrooms, facilitated changed student-teacher interaction, and were aware of convergent pedagogy methods and activities. Two of them occasionally incorporated local content, to a greater extent than was found in French-only classrooms. However, none of the study classrooms implemented the reform beyond this superficial level.

In particular, teachers did not use convergent pedagogy reading methods (see below), the core of the reform, or individualized instruction. The latter never occurred during observations for this study, even though teachers (convergent pedagogy and French-only) claimed to practice it. With large class sizes, differentiated group work would facilitate wide participation, but teachers only rarely used any group work.

However, the level of teachers’ rhetorical support for the reform was linked to their classroom level implementation. At the main study school, the two teachers (second and fourth grade) who were most able to express the goals, methods, and advantages of the reform used convergent pedagogy methods more often than the sixth grade teacher.

Rhetorical support may indicate a willingness to attempt deeper implementation, although, even in these cases, implementation was very inconsistent.

Implications for implementation. Despite minimal resources, teams of teacher educators and materials development staff worked on the program during the experimental phase. Carefully chosen experienced and reliable educators gave up their vacation and other personal time to work on the program for low fees in difficult conditions.

As the program expanded, it no longer had sufficient staff to train the needed number of teachers, nor could it rely on the willingness of large numbers of sector personnel to make personal sacrifices. Teachers who are minimally trained and experienced in convergent pedagogy are now working as teacher educators. In some cases, employment is based on decisions about which staff should receive *per diems* and not according to professional profiles (World Bank mission, 2005). Under these conditions, the program has been diluted to the point where its benefits have been reduced and its attraction, even for those who have most benefited from it, graduates, is waning (see CEPEC, 2005; Chapter 5).

There are solutions to this issue, primarily the development of reflective teacher practice, where groups of teacher work together at the school level, assisted by documentation, planned meetings from support staff, and, above all, the development of learning communities among teachers. School hours are organized to provide time for teacher professional development: there is no school on Wednesdays, and, in some cases, Thursday afternoons. This time is designated for professional development (this does not apply to teachers of double-shift classes) but I did not observe any sessions during the

data collection period. However, the current lack of a system of incentives and accountability, at all levels, makes the development of these supporting activities unlikely.

10.2.2.6 Even in the centralized and hierarchical Malian education system, policy was separated in important ways from teacher and administrator action. Mali's education system remains highly centralized, despite policy changes in the sector's ten year reform policy (*Programme décennal de l'éducation*, PRODEC) that call for decentralization. Policy directives are issued at the national level, which are then reissued and/or implemented by progressively lower levels of administration.

This centralization seemed more a basis for inaction than for action. For example, in this study, teachers and administrators used the strictures of administrative policy as the basis for their decisions not to visit convergent pedagogy classrooms or attempt to gain knowledge about convergent pedagogy methods, but not as a basis for respecting working hours.

In the case of convergent pedagogy, teachers and administrators openly and collaboratively avoided reading instruction methodologies. This choice was reportedly made because convergent pedagogy methods were ineffective, although teachers and administrators had never observed them in use or thoroughly implemented the methods themselves. There was also no evidence that French-only methods were effective.

There may have been other reasons for teachers' and administrators' decisions: inadequate preparation which did not demonstrate the benefits of the method; the magnitude of difference between the French-only methods to which they were accustomed and convergent pedagogy methods; the lack of convergent pedagogy

materials, and their lack of accountability for student outcomes. In the case of principals and pedagogic advisors, their increased status in the pedagogical hierarchy was based on their ability to use French-only methods.

Implications for implementation. Convergent pedagogy is primarily a literacy program. Convergent pedagogy strategies may be inherently less effective than approaches that combine direct skills instruction with the reading and writing of whole texts and a focus on the construction of meaning. Wambach (2001) does call for the use of direct instruction, particularly in the early grades, but his writings and later work by Malian educators put more emphasis on “whole language” activities (Wambach, 2001; *Ministère de l'Éducation de Nationale*, 2001). Debates about “whole language” and phonics-based approaches continue (see Adams, 1990; Chall, 1983; Vacca, 1996) but there seems to be some agreement that “balanced” approaches are most effective (IRA and NAEYC, 1997; Snow, Burns and Griffen, 1998).

In response to concerns about convergent pedagogy methods, principals and pedagogic advisors at the study schools did not work to comprehensively change convergent pedagogy methods, either for teachers at their schools or more widely. Rather, implementation devolved to an unfocused and ineffective mix of methods. Given the central place of literacy in the lower primary curriculum for French-only and convergent pedagogy students, reconsideration of the reform’s approach to teaching reading, as it is presented to teachers and other sector personnel, a deepening of teacher preparation, and provisions for teacher support are essential if this issue is to be addressed.

10.2.2.7 The façade of Real School continues, expressed in the isolation of all actors from the substance of schooling. The Real School (Metz, 1990) metaphor, in which educators work according to a script regardless of its appropriateness for their students, captures the essence of schooling in Mali. This study illustrated the multiple ways in which all actors were isolated from members of the same group and from different groups, and, particularly, from the substance of schooling.

Parental distance was evident in parents' lack of understanding of the substance of their children's educational programs. Convergent pedagogy was in its sixth year of implementation at the main study school and ninth year of implementation at the convergent pedagogy satellite school. Regardless, few parents at either site could describe even the basic outlines of the language of instruction aspect of the reform, and none were aware of changes in teaching methods and curriculum content. They were satisfied when schools were open.

A tradition of parent-school separation and current separating institutional mechanisms, such as the use of a colonial language of instruction and parents' associations (*Associations des Parents d'Elèves*, APE) that excluded the participation of sector personnel, were major factors in the maintenance of home-school distance. Two additional factors were the relative newness of both large-scale access to schooling, and of the possibility of a school year unmarked by civil unrest.

Teachers were isolated from each other. Teachers of French-only classes that were soon to be converted to convergent pedagogy classes did not observe convergent pedagogy classes or discuss the method with convergent pedagogy teachers. Teachers of upper primary classes who would receive convergent pedagogy graduates did not observe

convergent pedagogy classes, did not plan to, and did not plan any changes to their teaching when convergent pedagogy students arrived. Administrators did not talk to each other about pedagogic issues, with the exception of convergent pedagogy's reading methods, nor did they facilitate contact between teachers or between teachers and parents.

Although this study attempted to determine reasons for isolation among sector personnel, the issue is unresolved. Convergent pedagogy and French-only teachers stated that their days were not structured to allow for professional interaction and that they had not been directed to observe other classes. French-only teachers stated that they had not been told to attend training, or otherwise become implicated in convergent pedagogy and thus had not. However, there is no evidence that disciplinary action would be taken if they took the initiative to visit other classes, and teachers had ample time for non-professional interaction.

Other reasons for distance among sector personnel may have been related to larger sectoral issues: the exclusion of local level staff from policy decisions that directly affected their professional lives, a centralized employment system that left performance delinked from salary and promotion, a lack of other performance-related incentives or accountability, and the tradition of a selective education system designed to exclude students, keeping sector personnel from becoming invested in student success. This remains unclear and is an important avenue for further research.

The only exception to this isolation was the nascent network among convergent pedagogy practitioners. In the initial stage of reform implementation, teacher preparation and materials development seminars brought together groups of educators from around the country, who worked together for weeks at a time. Cross-hierarchical networks were

created, and teachers met others who worked in the same area. At the time of data collection, groups of teachers and administrators met during twenty-day convergent pedagogy training sessions, generally held during the long vacation. In addition, there was some competition between French-only and convergent pedagogy educators around exam pass rates, strengthening bonds between convergent pedagogy teachers and principals.

Implications for implementation. The professional isolation of teachers and actors, as evidenced by their stated lack of collegial discussion and support, had serious consequences for implementation. Teachers' isolation meant that new convergent pedagogy teachers did not benefit from collegial support, experienced teachers did not support colleagues, and students who transitioned to the upper primary cycle arrived in an environment where teachers claimed to have no interest in or plans to support their previous knowledge. Parents' isolation kept teachers from learning about student backgrounds, using parents as classroom resources, or developing collaborative approaches to educating their children in their communities.

This isolation also diminished the status and legitimacy of the reform, as neither parents nor higher level teachers understood the reform's principles or goals and were left to conclude that it was a national language teaching program. Higher level teachers had higher status in their communities than lower primary teachers and were more likely to influence parents' opinions.

Additionally, the isolation of teachers from principals produced a climate where teachers did not respect administrative or professional norms. Instructional time was greatly diminished by teacher absences and reduced in quality by teachers' use of class

time to complete administrative tasks. Principals did not discipline teachers, and were frequently absent and late themselves.

In the case of parents, the designers of convergent pedagogy included several features to reduce home-school distance. First, the reform dramatically lowered repetition and dropout rates, partly by administratively restricting repetition within grade cycles (grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6). These changes, combined with much higher exam pass rates, will gradually make schooling a much more common experience for parents. Second and third, the use of national languages as languages of instruction and the inclusion of local content was planned to reduce home-school distance. Convergent pedagogy calls for parents to become active participants in the classroom, telling stories and speaking with children about community history, current events, and daily activities.

However, at the time of submission of this study, most of this potential for increasing parental participation remained just that. Teachers, principals (with one exception), and pedagogic advisors were aware that parents were unknowledgeable about the reform, and thought information was key for parental support,⁴⁶ but did not act. Parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher associations, and parent classroom volunteers did not exist in convergent pedagogy classrooms any more than in French-only classrooms.

Instead of improving implementation, nascent networks of convergent pedagogy teachers and teachers/administrators have done the opposite. Teachers and administrators collaborated to avoid convergent pedagogy reading methodology. Administrators

⁴⁶Sector personnel were convinced that additional information would convince parents of the value of the reform, but interview data was inconclusive. Some parents, particularly those of students who were in French-only classes at the time of data collection, stated that they were not interested in the use of national languages as languages of instruction, regardless of potentially positive outcomes.

discussed the issue during training courses and agreed to collaborate in using French-only methods. Similar to ways in which social networks at the school level reinforce behavior like teacher lateness and absenteeism, these networks reinforce norms of practice that are not based on effectiveness in improving student learning.

10.2.2.8 The emphasis of funders and policymakers on comparing French-only and convergent pedagogy results reduces pressure on convergent pedagogy practitioners to realize the potential of the reform. A number of studies have found that educating children in their first language produces better student learning outcomes than immersing students in a language that is not spoken or understood by students or their communities (see Chapter 3). Repeated tests of Malian students have confirmed that this is true in Mali.

However, funders, policymakers, and other sector personnel continue to focus on comparative outcomes, delaying expansion and diverting resources from deepening implementation. Convergent pedagogy teachers and principals are pleased when their students outperform French-only students, and do not focus on further improving learning outcomes. As teaching methods and language of instruction make it difficult for French-only students to understand even basic classroom directions such as “sit down” and “stand up,” convergent pedagogy students are able to outperform them without approaching developed country levels of student performance.

Implications for implementation. As a result of this emphasis on comparison, pressure on convergent pedagogy practitioners is reduced. There are no demands for further improvements in performance. Parents, administrators, and donors are so accustomed to widespread student failure that any improvement is commended. More

helpful evaluations would compare student performance to national standards and evaluate contributing implementation conditions.

10.2.3 The impact of systemic challenges. As discussed in preceding chapters, Mali's education sector has some of the worst enrollment and completion rates in the world. Although convergent pedagogy has its own system of professional development and a separate textbook series, it relies on the larger education system for initial teacher preparation, the procurement of teaching and learning materials, the evaluation of student learning outcomes through centralized examinations, and funds for all other activities. The inability of the system to effectively conduct any of these activities, or carry out basic support activities such as statistics and budgeting, reduces the reform's legitimacy and adds another layer of difficulty to the barriers described in section 10.2.2. In addition, the isolation of actors described in the above section is worsened by a sector-wide lack of parent-school communication.

10.2.3.1 Convergent pedagogy classrooms suffer more from systemic failures than French-only classrooms. Many of the implementation challenges reported in preceding pages are issues for the education system as a whole. However, in some cases they have more impact on convergent pedagogy than on French-only classrooms. Both systems suffer from poor planning and administration, a lack of materials and supplies, and a dearth of textbooks (*Ministère de l'Education Nationale*, 2005; World Bank, forthcoming a). Almost all Malian students come from non-literate households and are of poor health and nutritional status (UNDP, 2005). The problems of corruption and lack of accountability mentioned in earlier chapters deeply affect both systems.

At the classroom level, French-only teachers have the advantage of experience with their method, beginning with their own schooling journeys (see Lortie, 1975/2002). Working within the familiar, they are more easily able to create an image of Real School (Metz, 1990) despite the systemic context. Within the study school communities, actors' image of schooling has always been an image of French-only schooling.

In addition, French-only teaching is lower risk than convergent pedagogy teaching. Unlike in convergent pedagogy classrooms, French-only teachers are the sole sources of knowledge in French-only classrooms. Students do not question teachers about instructional content. Teaching largely consists of presenting material for copying, memorization, and recall. Minimal preparation is required, as instruction is not intended to respond to the interests or needs of their students (recall the second grade lesson on the importance of sobriety in section 7.2.1.4).

Implications for implementation. The sources noted in the introduction to this section have extensive recommendations for solutions to these systemic issues. Delays in procurement caused by donor decisions to require International Competitive Bidding (ICB) for national language textbooks (due to a perceived lack of national capacity), delays in delivery caused by corrupt and lengthy customs and in-country procedures, and a lack of depth in teacher preparation caused by insufficient resources and a lack of reflection on teacher needs are implementation obstacles that are particularly important for convergent pedagogy. There are many potential approaches to these issues, including (a) privatized textbook and materials delivery, with payment upon the presentation of signed receipts; (b) the provision of locally developed and printed materials; (c) the organization of teacher professional development courses and projects based upon

teachers' expressed and observed needs; and (d) the development of more effective incentive and accountability systems.

10.2.3.2 Systemic failures reduce the legitimacy of convergent pedagogy. The legitimacy of French-only schooling is well-established, but that of convergent pedagogy is not. Part of establishing legitimacy is ensuring that reform is well-implemented. The lack of materials, teacher preparation, and other evidence of government commitment to the reform increased suspicions that it was one in a series of failed experiments. When parents see professionally printed national language textbooks in their children's classrooms, instruction in national languages gains legitimacy. When they do not, they assume the reform is temporary and not a government priority (Haidara, personal communication, 2005). When teachers are supported and provided with materials, they feel that their work is being taken seriously and are motivated to extend their implementation. Decisions to limit teacher preparation and materials contributed to the development of teachers who were unable to thoroughly implement the reform, or to reflect on their practice in order to grow professionally.

Implications for implementation. Attention to highly visible inputs, such as classroom conditions and textbooks and learning materials would likely have an effect on parents' perceptions of the program's legitimacy. Attention to teacher professional development and the provision of materials for teachers would affect teachers' motivation to deepen their teaching of the reform. See the preceding section for promising approaches.

10.2.3.3 A lack of emphasis on informing parents and non-convergent pedagogy teachers about schooling options and the substance of the reform increased their uncertainty and reduced their ability to either be involved in their children's schooling or to deeply implement the reform, respectively. The lack of public awareness campaigns about the purposes and content of convergent pedagogy was repeatedly cited by teachers and administrators as a factor reducing parents' understanding of and thus belief in the reform. Upper and lower primary non-convergent pedagogy teachers were also unaware of even the basic outlines of the reform. As the use of Bamanankan was the only aspect that was visible to uninformed outside observers, parents and non-convergent pedagogy teachers saw the reform as a national language reform. Although the use of a language that parents spoke made it possible for them to assist children with schoolwork and talk to teachers about the substance of their children's schooling, the study schools did not encourage these interactions.

Implications for implementation. Parents were no more involved in their convergent pedagogy children's schooling than in their French-only children's schooling. Many non-convergent pedagogy teachers were opposed to the reform, as they did not know that students transitioned to French. Principals, pedagogic advisors, and other sector personnel could organize information sessions at the school-level, and teachers could institute class meetings for the parents of their students. There is no tradition of this in the French-only system, so school-level personnel would need guidance for these activities.

10.2.4 Conclusions. Convergent pedagogy has begun to change teachers' and parents' ideas about Real School. This has not happened through the development of

community-school links, although that was initially a major goal of the reform. This study showed that parents remain almost completely isolated from schooling. Rather, it has happened because the reform itself consists of powerful ideas that create intrinsic incentives for teacher motivation. This occurs in spite of a fractured implementation network, the isolation of all actors, and a near complete lack of systemic support.

There is little communication between school-level actors and parents about either the purposes or the processes of schooling in general and convergent pedagogy in particular. Pedagogic advisors and principals offer rhetorical support, but do not act to deepen implementation nor to apply its successes to other parts of the education system. Despite this, the reform has been remarkably resilient, surviving and expanding in spite of long periods of government and donor neglect, parental disinterest in new models of schooling, and a lack of support from administrators at all levels.

This dissertation's exploration of convergent pedagogy implementation shows that the "big bang" reform of using students' first languages as languages of instruction had enough impact to motivate teachers to change their practice, even in this difficult context of minimal support and no extrinsic incentives. For teachers who were concerned about student learning, the use of a language that students understood provided immediate satisfaction. For teachers who were more concerned about classroom management, the use of a language of instruction that students understood made it much easier to conduct instruction and manage large classes. However, the reform has not developed sufficient incentives for principals or pedagogic advisors to change their practice. It is a classroom-focused reform and these administrators are not accountable, internally or externally, for classroom-level results.

10.3 Wider implications for reform

Implementation contexts vary among former French colonies in the region. Similarities include a colonial history, the tradition of French-only schooling, the separation of parents from schooling, and the use of schooling to separate children from communities. Differences include political conditions, ethnic groups, differences in numbers of national languages, geographical barriers to development, and the levels of development of countries' education sectors. This section discusses wider reform issues, which should be considered within the details of individual country contexts.

The experience of convergent pedagogy reform thus far shows other reformers how important it is to pay attention to key incentive structures that operate at the local level. In Mali, sixth grade is the terminal year of schooling unless students pass the graduation exam. Reform designers' ability to change this exam, and perhaps consequently increase the pass rates of convergent pedagogy students, was the critical element in reform acceptance among some parents, some teachers, and some administrators. As the principal of the convergent pedagogy satellite school said: "It doesn't mean that those kids are better than the others; it's because the first day of the exam tests the kids in the convergent pedagogy subjects. If there are holes on the French-only side, the convergent pedagogy side makes up for it." Nevertheless, increased pass rates were a source of pride and acceptance.

Next, the study showed the extent to which parents, teachers, and principals are isolated from centralized policy development and each other. There are no support networks between teachers, and principals' role in pedagogic support is completely

neglected. Developing support networks at the school level is a priority for increasing the quality of instruction.

In addition, in the case of convergent pedagogy, as in the case of Education For All (EFA) policies more generally, dialogue and financing stays at the central level.⁴⁷ Central level politicians and administrators develop plans for implementation, but do not involve local level personnel and do not differentiate policies according to diverse local needs. Teachers and principals are the first line in student recruitment and retention, and need a wider role in the development of local policies.

In the wider context, the power of the students' union (in Mali, the *Association des Elèves et Etudiants Maliens*, AEEM), makes it difficult for governments to reallocate resources to primary education. Attempts have met with violence, resulting in school closures and long-term instability in the system. In addition, AEEM action has contributed to a reduction in pressure for school reform, by limiting parents to a hope that their children will be able to attend school.

Operating systems (including procurement, budget management, statistics, and information systems) in the region are poorly organized and staffed. Personnel are not well trained and there is frequent turnover as political appointments change. In Mali, the most recent round of policy development, the *Programme Décennal de l'Education* (PRODEC) required extensive donor-government negotiations, took more than five years, and cost millions of dollars for studies, consultations, study trips, and other inputs. There is no tradition of evolving policy at the local level; rather, policy reform is seen as a large-scale, very occasional occurrence. As a result, policy decisions are organic and

⁴⁷ There may be regional and local "consultations," but deliberations are conducted at the central level and policies are created for nationwide implementation.

hidden, such as the teachers' refusal to use convergent pedagogy reading methodologies. There are more reactions against policy, such as a refusal to open school on time, than coherent policy decisions based upon a desire to improve student outcomes.

Another factor increasing the complexity of reform in Mali and other countries in the region is donors, who struggle for influence over various parts of the sector and impose a variety of conditionalities and procedural requirements on the sector. Donors bring their national perspectives on policy options to policy deliberations (see Anderson-Levitt, 2002, for a discussion of differences between teaching first grade in France and in the United States, Cummings, 2003, for a discussion in differences in educational philosophies in the "six core nations," and World Bank, forthcoming a, for a discussion of the frequent disconnect between institutional policies and donor projects). In addition, donors disagree over financing approaches, with some preferring financial mechanisms like budget support and others supporting more traditional, project-based approaches.

Mali and other countries in the region have made some progress over the past fifteen years. Scholarships for secondary school students have been reduced, ministries have been reorganized for greater efficiency, and community school and contractual teacher policies have increased access to education and reduced costs. However, activities remain bogged down in technical, political, and administrative difficulties. Staff are transferred and fired for political reasons, procurement systems are still inefficient, curriculum development is progressing only very slowly with poor results, textbook delivery is extremely problematic, and the minister appointed in 2002 has opposed the expansion of convergent pedagogy, transferred key staff, and curtailed funding. Numerous study tours have been organized by governments and donors, but no

other countries in the region have yet attempted similar reforms. However, interest in the use of national languages as languages of instruction continues to increase. A new program opened in Senegal in SY2002-03 and is expanding, and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) recently released a policy statement calling for the use of national languages in all African countries' primary education systems (ADEA, 2005).

The factors that contributed to success in Mali, however partial, are also variably present in other countries in the region: large numbers of speakers of one or more regional languages, decades of experience with adult literacy classes in national languages, and a gradual but persistent transition to democracy.

In addition, the availability of donor resources for "quality" issues in the sector is expanding, as is donor interest in language of instruction issues. Neighboring countries with similar profiles have developed small scale reforms of their own, but nothing of the scope of convergent pedagogy, either in depth of reform complexity, or in ambition to expand nationally, nor of this persistence, with a reform team continuing to work after more than fifteen years on improving quality and accelerating expansion. The failure in Guinea continues to have repercussions, even though that program was politically motivated, did not necessarily use students' first languages, and was much more poorly implemented than convergent pedagogy.

Convergent pedagogy remains fragile, dependent on the coordinated interest of a range of actors, none of whom, other than the core implementation group, has shown consistent support. However, the reform has survived and grown for seventeen years, and there were 3,915 convergent pedagogy classrooms with 167,920 students at the start

of SY2005-06 (World Bank, 2006). Just as it is difficult to define implementation—can a reform be considered implemented if it is only a shadow of what was planned?—, it is also difficult to know when reforms reach the stage of “no return.” After more than a decade of “experimental status,” convergent pedagogy advocates decided to aim for vast expansion as a survival strategy. The reform remains a story in progress, but it shows us that feasible reform does not have to equal minor reform. Slow progress towards a big idea can change classrooms, inspire actors, and change the directions of students’ lives.

10.4 Wider Implications for Educational Research

This dissertation has implications for educational research in four main areas: (a) bilingual education and second language learning; (b) teacher change; (c) school choice and parents’ attitudes towards education reform; and (d) educational reform more generally.

10.4.1 Bilingual education and second language learning. This findings of this dissertation are important for the field of bilingual education and second language learning, particularly for countries in which students share some of the same characteristics as Malian students: high rates of family poverty, low rates of family literacy, and little to no exposure to print or schooling before entering first grade.

The dissertation shows the advantages for student learning of beginning instruction in students’ first language (L1) or a language closely related to students’ first language, in the case of the study school students (most students spoke Kita Maninkakan as their first language and instruction was in Bamanankan). Although this is well known in the literature, and was supported, for most countries, by Lockheed and Verspoor

(1991) in their influential recommendations for education development, as well as in work by Cummins (1998) and others (see Chapter 3), it remains contested by national and international policy makers. This dissertation showed that the use of students' L1 did not only improve student understanding, but also enhanced teachers' feelings of professionalism and motivation to implement reform.

Next, the use of students' L1 improved teacher-student interaction and communication, making students feel more comfortable in their classrooms and reducing repetition and dropout. This could have important repercussions for countries like Mali, where schooling is an unfamiliar experience for first grade entrants. Given the tenuous nature of schooling and children's input into enrollment decisions, making the classroom experience more positive may increase students' eventual educational attainment. With primary education sub-systems overwhelmed by high dropout and repetition rates, access to schooling is reduced. Convergent pedagogy represents a very promising approach to diminishing these barriers to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These outcomes have significant implications for secondary and tertiary sub-systems, which are now faced with educating more students from different backgrounds.

In addition, the findings of this dissertation respond to many of the issues cited in Chapter 3 as common reasons for opposition to bilingual education, including concerns about (a) ethnic tensions, (b) costs associated with producing materials in a range of languages, and (c) the importance of official languages for nation-building.

10.4.1.1 Ethnic tensions. The program always planned to work in multiple languages: the pedagogic base of the reform is the use of student's first languages. After the disastrous experience in Guinea, where languages were used for political reasons, it

was critical that policy makers base language choice on technical issues. Although some related languages such as Bamanankan and Kita Maninkakan, as well as many Dogon languages, were grouped to reduce cost and complexity, most students learned in their own language.

10.4.1.2 Costs. The costs associated with producing convergent pedagogy materials in eleven languages were found to be more than offset by the lowered repetition and dropout rates of convergent pedagogy students. World Bank (2004) found that the cost of educating a graduate of the lower primary cycle was 27% lower for convergent pedagogy students than for French-only students. Although the study did not specifically address this issue, Vawda and Patrinos (1998) found that the costs of materials diminish once the initial costs of developing textbooks are absorbed. Larger print runs created by the expansion of the program and repeated printing as the program continues will reduce costs per student.

10.4.1.3 Nation-building. The issue of the importance of French for nation-building is addressed by convergent pedagogy's emphasis on French learning. Through this emphasis, parents and teachers, when they are knowledgeable about the reform, are reassured that their children will have access to the economic and communal benefits of French knowledge. It remains important for national and local policy makers and sector personnel to communicate the structure of the reform to parents and teachers, so that they understand that students will learn French throughout the primary cycle.

The convergent pedagogy implementation team has been unable thus far to resolve other issues discussed in Chapter 3, including problems of (a) children of

transferable civil servants, (b) children in multilingual environments, and (c) teacher and material shortages.

10.4.1.4 Children of civil servants and children in multilingual environments.

These issues were less acute for children up to and during the data collection period, as many of these children were urban and parents were more likely to have the option of placing them in French-only classes if they thought that multiple postings and/or exposure to numerous languages was affecting their language development. The issue was already important for the attitudes of other parents, who were influenced by the actions of the civil service elite. As the program expands, this will become a more urgent issue, particularly if the pedagogic advisors' intimations of uncertainty among elite parents become more concrete and widespread. Reform designers plan to make language decisions at the school level, but this process has not yet begun.

10.4.1.5 Teacher and materials shortages. The problems of teacher and materials shortages are addressed earlier in this chapter. Convergent pedagogy has been largely unable to solve issues related to systemic capacity. There are potential solutions, but the sector has not been able to implement them (see Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001 for solutions specific to bilingual education programs).

Dissertation findings were less applicable to arguments cited in Dutcher (1997), given the school-centered approach of the dissertation. Her research addressed issues of language learning from pre-school to adulthood, in and out of school, and was less focused on in-school issues specific to the primary grades. However, her reference to the argument that "children have learned a language once they can speak it" was refuted by ninth graders at the main study school. Most of these students could conduct a

conversation in French, but the principal estimated that 50% could not read, and demonstrated this by calling several students over who could not read a line of simple text.

10.4.1.6 “Value-added:” Combining changes in language with changes in methods. One area in bilingual education that has not been explored by educational research thus far is the “value-added” of changes in teaching methods and the inclusion of local content for bilingual education programs. Other programs in the region (see Chapter 3) have changed languages of instruction (LOI), but none has attempted convergent pedagogy’s ambitious changes in methods and content. It seems that the use of more participative methods in combination with the use of students’ L1 should increase student learning more than the use of students’ L1 alone, but this area has not been researched. It also seems that the use of these methods would be impossible without a change in LOI, at least with as much impact on student learning, but again, that is an under-researched area in this context.

10.4.2 Teacher change. The second area of research for which the findings of this dissertation have important implications is teacher change.

10.4.2.1 Considering the power of reform content. First, change in teacher practice was possible not because of the success of Mali’s teacher support system, but because of the power of reform content. Most literature about teacher change is about the ways in which professional development should be organized in order to produce different kinds of teachers or change in the practice of experienced teachers. Reflective practice (Schon, 1987; Harris, 1998), coaching/mentoring (Driscoll et al, 1985; Ojanen, 1993), the development of school clusters (Wheeler et al; 1991; Wheeler, 1998), and

teacher research (Rearick, 1997) are examples of this approach to professional development. Several of these have been attempted in Mali and other countries in the region: school clusters in Mali (USAID, 2004; other examples in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Namibia), mentoring and reflective practice in Guinean pre-service teacher education (World Bank, 1997), and teacher research in Guinean professional development programs (Schwille and Dembélé, 1997).

These approaches focus on the implementation structures of professional development. They do not focus on the importance, for teachers, of the types of change desired. In the case of convergent pedagogy, it was the strength of the reform's ideas, not the effectiveness or ingenuity of its teacher support system, that produced the observed changes in teacher practice. In fact, the reform was almost obliged to rest on its ideas alone, because there was no teacher support beyond an initial, theoretical, insufficient preparation course. Partial implementation occurred in spite of the approach to teacher support.

In addition, this reform was not designed in response to an expressed felt need of teachers, but rather in response to the concerns of a small group of educators that the system was not serving its students. Although teachers were unable to communicate with students and were surrounded by student failure, they were accustomed to those circumstances and did not see them as problematic (World Bank mission observations, 1994-2005, dissertation data). For those who did, they would not have considered changing the essential parameter of schooling, language of instruction, without administrative instruction. Convergent pedagogy represents a different approach to teacher change, one in which the content of the change has been prioritized over the

structure of the change. It has been far more successful than the ongoing professional development that is supposed to occur every Wednesday afternoon in every school in Mali, attended by principals and pedagogic advisors on a rotating basis, and which I never observed.

10.4.2.2 Considering the importance of intrinsic motivation in a context of minimal support. This dissertation found that powerful reform content that produces intrinsic rewards for teachers can motivate teachers to change, even in contexts of minimal support. Teachers were able to quickly implement the use of students' L1 as a language of instruction in their classrooms. In turn, student-teacher communication, the classroom environment, and student understanding improved, which then motivated teachers to continue implementing the reform.

Without the intrinsic motivation provided by powerful content, convergent pedagogy would have become yet another failed reform. With intrinsic incentives, it has survived in a context of no teacher support and very low general capacity. The fact that implementation was so limited shows the importance of long-term school-level support, but this case argues that even minimal staff development can be enough to get teachers started and, indeed, that "belief can follow action" (McDonough and Wheeler, 1998; McLaughlin, 1987). Change in language of instruction is a radical reform. Even though implementation is incremental and iterative, as is the case in most education reform, the idea itself is a strong and important one, and that is what motivated teachers to adopt it.

10.4.3 School choice in Mali and parents' attitudes towards education reform.

This dissertation has implications for research in a third area: school choice and research regarding parents' views on education reform.

10.4.3.1. School choice. School choice has become an important topic in many countries. Research in the United States has begun to address related issues, particularly with the advent of charter schools. In this section, I will look at one recent study in the United States in order to illustrate ways in which findings about school choice in Mali could illuminate these issues in other parts of the world. Bell (2004) found that parents made rational choices about their children's schooling, but that those choices were not necessarily those assumed by policy makers. Their choices were rational for them, based on their cultural understandings of their children, schools, and communities. Parents in her study were as likely to chose failing schools as successful schools, because their knowledge was different, and shaped by social and historical factors.

Similarly, parental choice at the study schools was affected by parental ways of reasoning that were not fully understood by those who are working to expand convergent pedagogy. Parents were aware of regional and global labor market forces, but balanced their own issues of protecting local production and family life in choosing which children to send to school. Rather than choosing which public school they wanted their children to attend, study school parents chose whether to enroll children in a public educational program at all. The direct (such as school fees, student materials) and indirect costs (such as the loss of student labor) of schooling were a deterrent, particularly for families with multiple children, which was the case of almost all study school families. Parents who did decide to enroll their children next faced the decision of whether to enroll them in a Koranic/madrassa program or in a public school program. This again depended on their perceptions of family needs, with some parents preferring to divide children between programs to maximize family-level benefits (see Chapter 6).

This first set of choices did not lead to a second set regarding which type of public schooling children would attend. The only school in the study that housed both convergent pedagogy and French-only programs was the main study school. Principals did not allow parents to choose their children's placement, and, even if they had, parents' knowledge of public schooling was very limited. At the same time, study school parents did not attempt to understand differences between the programs; most parents at the main study school did not know that their school offered French-only and convergent pedagogy programs.

These parents were distanced from schooling by history, a lack of institutional mechanisms to promote parent-school interaction and cultural and linguistic constraints. The almost complete lack of communication between study school personnel and parents kept parents from even the basic knowledge that their school hosted two very different programs. As such, as in the case of the Gaston students described by Bell (*ibid.*), these parents did not make the choices that policy makers thought they would make. However, like the Gaston parents, study school parents were satisfied with their children's school placement: for them, their children's access to education was sufficient. Their interest in programmatic choice was overwhelmed by the newness of their access to education, regardless of its quality. Experience with vocational/ruralization reforms, further discussed below, demonstrated that parents will withdraw their children and choose not to enroll others if they do not see school as responding to family needs.

10.4.3.2. Parental attitudes towards education reform. The second area for which study findings have wider implications for educational research is parental attitudes towards education reform. Parents at the study school demonstrated not only their

knowledge of national economic opportunities, as discussed in Foster (1965) and King and Martin (2002), but also their knowledge of regional and international opportunities. Study school parents were knowledgeable about increasing globalization and children's chances of moving internationally to find employment.

As such, most of them were not opposed to the use of national languages as languages of education, as Haidara (undated) found in Ségou, but they did not want national languages to be used instead of French. Parents wanted their children to learn French, a language which continues to be seen as important for higher status and higher paid employment. Parental concerns about exam pass rates, for which they saw the learning of French as essential, were due to their concern that children had at least a credential to leave their communities and then survive economically.

Convergent pedagogy has gained a level of acceptance through its ability to distance itself from the ruralization efforts of the 1960s and 1970s. It is promoted as a way to improve the learning of French, and the introduction of French early in the primary cycle is important for parents' acceptance. Students take a different exam than French-only students, but receive an identical credential, and at a higher rate than French-only students. The importance of this is underlined by the community school experience: parents were interested in community schools, but also wanted children to have access to the credentials of the public school system. They saw village level schools as a first step, but, in the case of the study schools, they then transferred their children to public schools. In some of the Save the Children schools opened with USAID support in the 1990s, parents were initially satisfied with their community-level school, but then lobbied for the

development of programs which would allow their children to enter the public system and take the graduation exam.

Bergmann (2002) discusses many of the issues associated with ruralization, particularly that parents considered the reforms as reducing their children's academic and professional potential. He emphasizes the importance of offering identical, credentialing opportunities in all schools, and suggests that alternative curricula are possible for rural schools only if they lead to credentials identical to those obtainable at urban schools. Forty years after Foster's (1965) study, King and Martin (2002), cited in Bergmann (*ibid.*), found that "students would chose schools according to their perception of future opportunities in the labor market" (p. 5). This study had similar findings, for parents. However, study findings also suggest that labor market changes are increasing interest in learning, suggesting that parents' interest in the reform could be increased by experience and exposure to reform outcomes, both of which would be enhanced by a school-led effort to disseminate information to parents and involve them in classroom life.

Convergent pedagogy's inclusion of local content, as implemented in the study schools, was minimal. Designers stayed far away from the practical skills of the vocalization/ruralization curricula described in Foster (1965), and teachers did little to include local content at all, perhaps due to concerns about its legitimacy in "Real School" (Metz, 1990).

In environments where enrollment is so tenuous, and for policy makers who are faced with international pressure to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) it is critical to understand and address the concerns of parents when designing

educational reform. For parents who are unconvinced of the value of schooling, even of a well-established program (French-only), the introduction of a new program which they see as inherently having lower status could cause withdrawal from school, as was the case during the ruralization reforms. In fact, enrollment in Mali did not take off until the mid-1990s, when the government signaled its firm commitment to expanding the system of formal education. As convergent pedagogy expands and parents who show evidence of being more resistant (i.e. civil service parents and elites) are less able to choose French-only schooling, information on parental perceptions of the reform and reasons for school choice will become even more important.

10.4.4 Educational reform. The fourth area for which dissertation findings have wider implications is educational reform more generally. As seen in Mali and other countries in the region, the former French colonies in West and Central Africa have been unable to move out of a post-colonial period. They continue to use French as the sole language of instruction for the vast majority of their students, use instructional methods that date to the nineteenth century or earlier, have not developed national or regional capacity for the design and/or publishing of educational materials, and have not developed systems of teacher education that prepare teachers to meet the needs of the students struggling to learn in their classrooms.

Donors have funded a wide range of responses to these issues, but there has been no large-scale governmental commitment to move systems beyond their post-colonial (and extremely ineffective) status. If the research cited in chapters 2 and 3 about the benefits of education is correct, this continuing failure has had tremendous impact on the health and economic well-being of these populations.

In thinking about convergent pedagogy and its wider importance, it may be worth considering whether it represents a new kind of schooling, one that enshrines one of the values of the post-colonial model (the learning of French), but one that builds on modern educational theories, beginning with an emphasis on the importance of student understanding and including constructivism, the importance of problem solving and critical thinking, and greater teacher professionalism, among others. At the same time, convergent pedagogy responds to a core value of Malian culture: respect for local values and connections with familiar content, that is not found in French-only instruction.

William Cummings (2003) discusses the theoretical bases of education systems in what he calls the “six core nations.” According to him, each of these nations has core ideals about the purpose of schooling and has designed its education system in response. These ideals were determined by considering the ideal person in the particular society, and he sees core educational reform as occurring when society begins to reconsider its ideal. The post-colonial elite in French West Africa has long consisted of French speakers, trained in French-only methods and university-educated in France. As the Malian democracy matures and the country settles into a stable post-colonial system, convergent pedagogy may represent the development of a new kind of ideal, graduates who are comfortable in their own communities and also capable of succeeding in a globalizing world. It will take a breakthrough in educational thinking to push systems in the region out of their post-colonial stasis. Convergent pedagogy, if it survives the current environment of reduced funding and political support, is currently the region’s best example of a new kind of educational opportunity.

10.5 Directions for future research

In considering existing research and the findings and conclusions of this study, there are a number of areas which merit further examination. These fall into three categories: (a) school-level research; (b) research on post-school outcomes; and (c) parental and community-level research.

10.5.1 School-level research. The following topics need further attention:

- (a) transitions to convergent pedagogy teaching and the development of convergent pedagogy skills among teachers, in order to strengthen teacher preparation and support;
- (b) the development of classroom climate in convergent pedagogy classrooms and the impact of changed student-teacher interaction on student outcomes (little is known in this context about the ways in which non-traditional teacher behavior influences student behavior and learning);
- (c) evaluations of student learning in convergent pedagogy and French-only classes, to determine and address student and teacher strengths and weaknesses (evaluations thus far have looked only comparatively at general student performance);
- (d) the experiences of girls in convergent pedagogy classes as compared to those in French-only classes, including class participation, classroom roles, and learning outcomes (girls' enrollment continues to lag behind that of boys);
- (e) the impact of the use of Bamanankan or other more widely used national languages on the schooling experiences and outcomes of students who do not speak that language as their first language (differentiated research examining the impact for students who speak related languages such as Kita Maninkakan and unrelated languages such as Peul, very

common in multilingual areas and among children of transferred civil servants, would be the most useful);

- (f) the difficulties of teachers teaching in national languages that are not their own (i.e. the experiences of Kita Malinké teachers teaching in Bamanankan); and
- (g) factors causing the isolation of teachers and principals within schools, and the development of mitigating strategies (see section 10.2.2.7).

10.5.2 Research on post-graduation outcomes. The following studies would be useful:

- (a) analysis of the quantitative impact of convergent pedagogy on the numbers, gender, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic status of students transitioning to upper primary, secondary, and tertiary education;
- (b) examinations of the experiences and results of students as they transition to upper primary and then to secondary school, particularly for students from areas and families with no previous experience at these levels of education;
- (c) research on long-term outcomes for convergent pedagogy graduates, in order to determine how well the program corresponds to national policy goals. It would be particularly useful to examine the economic productivity (with particular attention to the measurement of productivity for those who are not in the salaried or paid work force and those who do not directly or indirectly produce commodities) and life choices of dropouts and graduates, and to compare those outcomes with outcomes of graduates of the French-only program; and

(d) research on long-term outcomes for convergent pedagogy graduates, examining their community and political involvement, and comparing it with that of French-only graduates.

10.5.3 Research regarding parents and community members. This type of research could include:

- (a) continued research on evolving perspectives on the purposes of schooling, to determine whether behavior shaped by convergent pedagogy instruction is acceptable to a larger, multi-ethnic sample of parents, over time (as reform implementation deepens and behavioral changes presumably become more apparent) and including parents who do not currently school their children;
- (b) research on the attitudes of parents who do not send their children to school regarding the use of national languages as languages of education; and
- (c) research on the impact on community life of increased school success among convergent pedagogy students.

10.6 Conclusions

The Malian and Belgian group that designed convergent pedagogy was very optimistic. They designed a reform that was controversial, complex, and logistically demanding, and set out to implement it in a country with some of the worst education, social, and economic indicators in the world. Eighteen years later, their reform is national policy, a World Bank project has supported its expansion, and teachers have created classrooms unlike any others in the region. Student outcomes have improved and opportunities for rural children and girls to continue their schooling at the upper primary level have

expanded.

This reform has succeeded to this extent because, after decades of unchanged teacher practice (see World Bank, 1973 and World Bank, forthcoming a), the team developed a developmental reform in which teachers could grow. Teachers observed and interviewed for this study were able to make changes in language of instruction during their first days of teaching convergent pedagogy, with the minimal preparation that is the maximum that the system can provide. Within their first year of convergent pedagogy teaching, study school teachers were able to change teacher-student interactions in their classrooms. Teachers with several years of experience showed that they were able to use a variety of convergent pedagogy methods, even if their administrative responsibilities limited their available teaching time.

In this way, convergent pedagogy is dramatically different from reforms that have a static end point; reforms that aim to have teachers do something in a particular way that has been pre-defined based on outsider perspectives about conditions in large numbers of classrooms. The power of convergent pedagogy ideas provided built-in rewards for teachers: incentives that the system within which they work has been unable to provide. As countries struggle to reach Education For All, radical reform should not be discounted as impossible. On the contrary, radical reform may be the only way to achieve EFA's also optimistic goals.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MALI: SELECTED DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Table A.1
Mali Selected Development Indicators

Indicator	Value
Rank on Human Development Index (2005)	174/177
Life expectancy at birth (years) (2003)	48
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and above) (2003)	19
GDP per capita (PPP US\$)	994
Population living on less than \$2/day (%)	91
Children underweight for age (% under age 5) (1995-2003)	33
Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	248
Population with sustainable access to an improved water source (%)	48

(all data from UNDP Human Development Report, 2005)

APPENDIX B

SIXTH GRADE GRADUATION EXAM (CERTIFICAT DE FIN D'ETUDES DU PREMIER CYCLE D'ENSEIGNEMENT FONDAMENTAL, CFEPCEF)

This exam is given to all students at the end of their sixth grade year. Convergent pedagogy students take the convergent pedagogy exam and the French-only exam. Scores on the two exams are weighted and combined to determine the final score. The exam structure is as follows:

Table B. 1
Convergent Pedagogy Exam

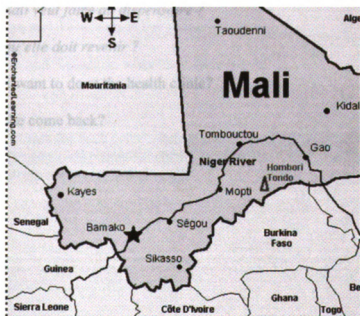
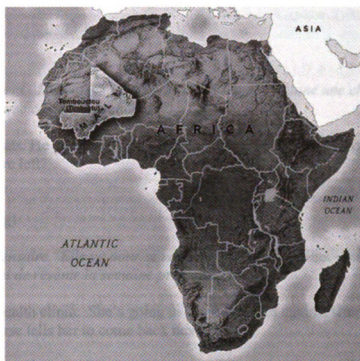
Exam Language	Subject	Weight
National languages :	<i>Compréhension à l'audition</i> (listening comprehension)	2
	<i>Rédaction</i> (writing)	1
French :	<i>Texte documentaire et exercices</i> (reading text and responding)	2
	<i>Compréhension à l'audition</i> (listening comprehension)	1
	<i>Reconstitution de texte</i> (reconstitution of text)	1

Table B. 2
French-Only Exam

Exam Language	Subject	Weight
French :	<i>Rédaction</i> (writing)	1
	<i>Calcul</i> (math)	1
	<i>Dictée et question qui complète</i> (dictation and questions)	1

(Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2002)

APPENDIX C
MAPS OF AFRICA AND MALI



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APPENDIX D

STUDENT TESTS

4th grade

Calcul (Math)

$$582-267=$$

Abou a cinq chèvres. Il donne deux chèvres à son frère. Il donne une chèvre à son cousin. Il reste avec combien de chèvres ?

Abou has five goats. He gives two to his brother. He gives one to his cousin. How many goats does he have left?

Lecture (Reading)

Sali part au dispensaire. Elle va pour se vacciner contre le tétanos. Quand elle arrive, l'infirmière lui dit de revenir la semaine prochaine.

Sali goes to the health clinic. She's going to get vaccinated against tetanus. When she gets there, the nurse tells her to come back next week.

Questions de compréhension (Comprehension questions)

1. *Qu'est-ce que Sali veut faire au dispensaire ?*

2. *Quand est-ce qu'elle doit revenir ?*

1. What does Sali want to do at the health clinic?

2. When should she come back?

Sixth grade

Calcul (Math):

$$598 \times 103$$

Mamadou va au marché avec un somme de 2.000 francs. Il achète 2 kilos de viande à 800 francs le kilo. Il achète 7 œufs à 50 francs chacun. Combien d'argent lui reste-il ?

Mamadou goes to the market with 2000 francs. He buys two kilos of meat at 800 francs each. He buys seven eggs at 50 francs each. How much money does he have left?

Lecture (Reading):

Amina et Takadi partent au champ d'arachide le samedi matin. Elles travaillent toute la journée. Le soir, elles reviennent à la maison. Elles se lavent et mangent le repas du soir. Leur maman avait préparé un très bon repas.

Amina and Takadi go to their peanut field Saturday morning. They work all day. At night, they go home. They wash and eat dinner. Their mother cooked a good dinner.

Questions de compréhension (Comprehension questions) :

- 1. Quand est-ce qu'Amina et Takadi sont parties au champ ?*
 - 2. Qu'est-ce que Amina et Takadi font quand elles reviennent du champ ?*
1. When did Amina and Takadi go to the peanut field?
 2. What did Amina and Takadi do when they went home?

Scoring

Students received points for each correct computation, even if the final result was incorrect. They also received points for partial reading answers, with half points subtracted for spelling and grammatical errors.

APPENDIX E

EDUCATION SECTOR AND STUDENT LEARNING INDICATORS

Table E.1
Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), 1990-2003

School Year	Girls	Boys	Average
1990/1991	20	34	27
1991/1992	21	36	29
1992/1993	25	41	33
1993/1994	28	45	36
1994/1995	31	47	39
1995/1996	33	51	42
1996/1997	37	57	47
1997/1998	40	60	50
1998/1999*	46	60	56
1999/2000	50	72	61
2000/2001	50	73	61
2001/2002	53	75	64
2002/2003	56	78	67
2003-2004	60	81	71

* does not include new madrassa students

** prior to 1998, students in community schools supported by Save the Children are not included

(Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2005)

Table E.2
Repetition Rates, SY 1993-94 to SY2002-03 (between school years)

School Year	Girls	Boys
1993/1994	31	30
1994/1995	19	19
1995/1996	17	16
1996/1997	18	18
1997/1998	21	20
1998/1999	19	18
1999/2000	20	18
2000/2001	17	16
2001/2002	20	20
2002/2003	20	19

(Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2005)

Table E.3
Adult Literacy Rate

Year	Adult Literacy Rate
1985	16
1990	19
1995	22
2000	19
2001	19
Sub-Saharan Africa average	64
Low income country average	64

(Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2005)

Table E.4
CPEPCEF Pass Rates: Convergent Pedagogy and French-only Students

Year	Convergent Pedagogy	French-only
1994/1995	57%	41%
1995/1996	38%	42%
1996/1997	76%	54%
1997/1998	50%	37%
1998/1999	72%	48%
1999/2000	79%	49%
2000/2001*	69%	52%
2004/2005	79%	61%

*centralized data for SY2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 is not available

(Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2003 and World Bank, 2006)

Table E.5
Exam Pass Rates for the Académie d'Education (Regional Education Office) of the Study Schools, SY2001-02

Exam	Pass Rate
CPEPCEF	68%
DEF	60%
Bac (school 1)	43%
Bac (school 2)	51%

(Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2002)

Table E.6

Repetition Rates for the *Académie d'Éducation* (Regional Education Office) of the Study Schools, SY2001-02

Grade	Repetition Rate
First	11%
Sixth	28%
Average for grades 1-6	20%

(Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2002)

APPENDIX F

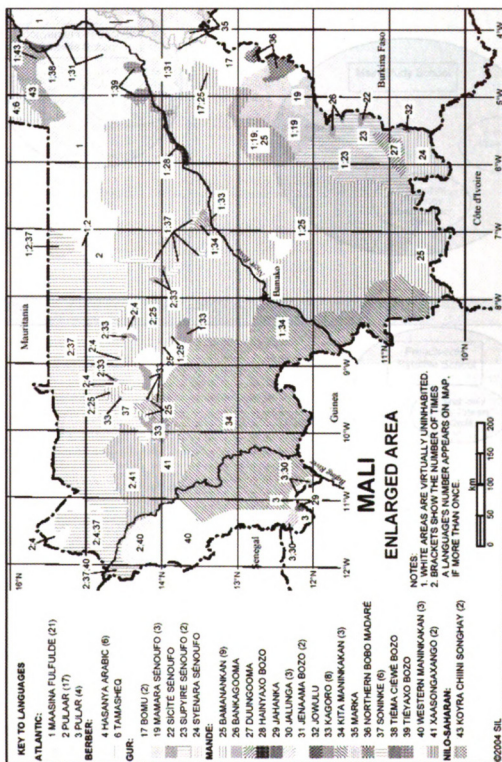
FEEDER SCHOOLS AND DISTANCES

Table F.1
Feeder Schools for the Main Study School

Village	Travel Distance From the Main Study School
A	7 km (has a community school to 3 rd grade)
B	7 km (has a community school to 3 rd grade)
C	2 km
D	3 km
E	4.5 km
F	5 km (has a community school to 3 rd grade)

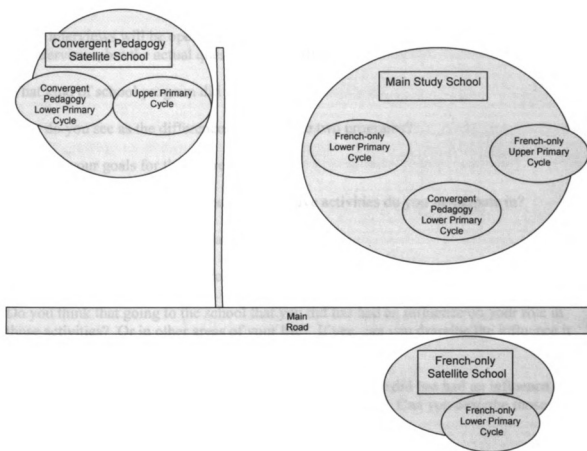
APPENDIX G

LANGUAGE MAP



APPENDIX H

STUDY SCHOOL LOCATIONS



APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDE

Interview Guide for Graduates

These interviews will be open-ended. The themes below are the themes that will guide the interviews, but the actual questions may differ.

What kind of school program did you attend?

What do you see as the differences between the two programs?

What are your goals for the future?

What kinds of community or other collaborative activities do you participate in?

What roles do you play in those activities?

What kinds of things affect the roles you play in those activities?

Do you think that going to the school that you did has had an influence on your role in those activities? Or in other areas of your life? If yes, can you describe the influence it has had? If no, why do you think it hasn't mattered?

Do you think that attending the particular program that you did has had an influence on your role in those activities? Or in other areas of your life? Can you describe those differences?

Do you have children of your own?

Are they in school? Why or why not?

Did you chose which program to send them to? If yes, why did you chose the program that you did? If not, which program would you have preferred that they attend?

Interview Guide for Parents

These interviews will be open-ended. The themes below are the themes that will guide the interviews, but the actual questions may differ.

Please describe your family (number of members, occupations, ages).

What kind of program does your child attend?

Did you chose that program or did the school?

If you chose, why did you pick that program?

Are you satisfied with the placement? If not, did you do anything to try to change it?
What happened?

What do you see as the differences between the programs?

Has your child's behavior at home changed since she or he started attending school (other than the growing-up changes that you would expect whether or not she or he was in school)?

If yes, in what ways?

Do you see any differences between your child's behavior and that of children who don't go to school? Can you describe them?

Do you see any differences between your child's behavior and that of children or who attend the other program? Can you describe them?

Are you happy with your child's behavior? Do you think it's appropriate for your community? Do you think it will help your child later in life?

What kinds of community or collaborative activities (including age-graded) do children in your community engage in?

What roles do your children play in those activities?

What determines their roles?

Have the objectives of these activities changed over time?

Is there anything you would like to add about the impact of schooling on your child's behavior at home or in the community?

Interview Guide for Community Members

These interviews will be open-ended. The themes below will guide the interviews, but the actual questions may differ.

Why do you think parents in this community send children to school?

Has that changed over time? Why or why not?

What kinds of collaborative, communal, or political activities or organizations do unmarried community members participate in? At what ages?

What are the different roles in those activities (president, treasurer, member, etc)?

What determines those roles?

What or who determines who occupies each role?

Does school attendance make a difference in who does what in those activities?

Does the kind of school attended make a difference in who does what in those activities?

Why? Is the kind of teaching important? If yes, what about the teaching (language, other) makes a difference?

Do you see differences in the ways that children who go to school behave at home? If yes, can you describe those differences?

Do you see differences in the ways that children who go to different school programs behave at home? If yes, can you describe those differences?

What do you think about those differences?

Interview Guide for Teachers

These interviews will be open-ended. The themes below are the themes that will guide the interviews, but the actual questions may differ.

What grade do you teach?

What instructional program do you use in your classroom?

If you use the convergent pedagogy program, how has your teaching changed since you switched to this program (teaching strategies, groupings of students, kinds of materials, etc)?

What are the differences you see between your classroom and classrooms using the other program?

Focusing on student behavior, do you see any differences between your students and students from classrooms using the other program? If yes, can you describe those differences? Do you see them as positive or negative?

Do you see students behaving differently in other school settings (playground, physical education, flag assembly)?

Do you see or have you heard about differences in students' out-of-school behavior? If yes, what have you seen or heard? What do you think about that? What do you think the reasons are for that?

What about after these students graduate? Do you see or have you heard about differences in students' out-of-school behavior? If yes, what have you seen or heard? What do you think about that? What do you think the reasons are for that?

Do you think that school has a role to play in community life? If yes, how would you describe that role? How do you see the fit between what students learn and how they act at school and what they are expected to do in the community?

Why do you think that the parents of your students send their children to school? How well do you think the school is doing in helping them to meet those objectives? What could be changed?

Interview Guide for School Principals

These interviews will be open-ended. The themes below are the themes that will guide the interviews, but the actual questions may differ.

What kinds of issues are involved in administering a school with convergent pedagogy and traditional programs (student placement, teacher placement, relationships with parents, etc.)?

In your observations of classrooms and students and your discussions with teachers and parents, does anything stand out to you as different about student learning between those who attend the c.p. program and those who attend the traditional program?

Have you seen or been told of differences in student behavior in classrooms, between students who attend the two programs? If yes, what?

Have you seen or been told of differences in student behavior in community or family life, between students who attend the two programs? If yes, what?

What do you think about these differences? Do you see them as positive or negative? What kinds of impact, if any, do you think they'll have on the students' families or communities? Do you think they'll have an impact in other areas?

Have you seen or been told about differences in the lives of students from the two programs after they graduated? If yes, what?

What role do you think school should play in community life? Do you see differences in the ways in which the two programs fulfill that role?

What do you think the role of the school is in the development of the country? Do you think that one program or the other is more likely to fulfill that role? Why or why not?

Interview Guide for Pedagogic Advisors

When you talk with teachers, principals, parents, and others involved with the education sector, what do you hear about differences between convergent pedagogy students and French-only students?

Have you seen or heard about behavioral differences between the two groups of students? If so, which? What do you think about this? Do you think that they are positive or negative? Do you think they will have an impact on the family or community life of graduates? How will that happen? Do you think they will have an impact on other areas of students' lives?

Have you seen or heard about differences between the two groups of students after they graduate from school? If so, which?

What role do you think the school should play in community life? Do you see differences between the two programs relating to this?

What role do you think the school should play in national development? Do you see differences between the two programs relating to this? Why or why not?

Classroom Observation Guide

Teachers and students were be observed during scheduled class time. Observations focus on student-student and student-teacher interaction, as well as the organization of schoolwork and other aspects of classroom management. Classes were observed for as little as one lesson or for as long as an entire school week. Ethnographic field notes were taken during the observations, and many of them were also be audio and/or video taped.

APPENDIX J

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TABLE

Table J. 1
Classroom Observation Table
(number of observations)

School and cycle	Grade Observed			
	Second	Fourth	Sixth	Upper primary
Main study school (French-only)	10	8	9	
Main study school (convergent pedagogy)	9	6	13	
Main study school (upper primary)				4
Convergent pedagogy satellite school	3	2	3	
Convergent pedagogy satellite school (upper primary)				3
French-only satellite school	3			

*Variation was due to teacher absences and use of class time for activities other than instruction (testing, grading, administrative tasks). Less time was spent at the convergent pedagogy satellite school due to the late opening of school, distance, and security concerns, and less time was spent at the French-only satellite school due to ethical concerns and the eventual opening of the second grade French-only class at the main study school.

APPENDIX K
EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

Fourth Grade, Convergent Pedagogy

calcul

$$\begin{array}{r} 1) \\ 2 \quad \begin{array}{r} 670 \\ + 313 \\ \hline 983 \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 433 \\ - 174 \\ \hline 259 \end{array} \end{array}$$

2 + $\frac{3}{2}$ = $\frac{8}{2}$
 3) - Aminata va au marché - Elle donne
 à chaque mangrove 3 mangroves - Elle donne
 une mangrove à son frère - Il reste
 avec 2 Cambre mangroves
 4) Dalo va au marché - Elle donne à son frère
 100 F
 Chaque mangrove coûte 50 F - Elle donne
 200 F à la vendeuse - Cambre mangroves
 lui reste - t - il ?

$$\begin{array}{r} \times 50 \text{ F} \\ 200 \\ \hline 10000 \\ 0 \\ \hline 10500 \end{array}$$

Mourra embleme um breust dans la cause
 « y embleme des valeurs » . Le diabolique

Mourra kamare . Ra les si je
calme

$$\begin{array}{r} 1670 + 373 = 1670 \\ 2433 - 174 = 2433 \\ \hline 4800 \end{array}$$

2) Am... ..

3) Am... .. va au marche elle
 a dit... .. am... .. elle donne... ..
 une am... .. form... .. il rest...
 elle... .. am... .. des mangues?

$$\begin{array}{r} \times 7 \\ 2 \\ \hline 14 \end{array}$$

4) Jo... .. va au marche elle dit... ..
 mangues

chaque mangue... .. 50f... ..
 200f... .. la vendeuse... ..
 livre... .. - la ?

$$\begin{array}{r} 200 \\ 50f \\ \hline 150 \end{array}$$

Fourth Grade, French-Only

920

Jaloro au marche 10 ketros
manque la que manque alle
se koro 10 donne 200 koro la
vendus 10 koro 100 argent lui
utire rente 10?

Amimato au marche 10 ketros
trats manque 10 Elle donne une
manque 100 Elle 10 Elle rete
avec 10 koro 100 manque

Minimaton: or de grandeur

78	72732720	799
64	490409	507570
274	666	900990

224

reponse

Calul

ibrase 50 ^F	Prolet	repones	
	Solut	reajlita	operaul
	ibrase		50
4	50-3=	150 ^F	-200
		150 ^F	=150 ^F
	Solut	reajlita	operaul
	3	3-1=2	50
2	-1	-1	*3
	2	=2	=150 ^F
			200
			-150
			=50

4 Moussa a entendu le bruit
 4 lecture Moussa a entendu le bruit des chiens
 4 se reveille Mon papa

Sixth Grade, Convergent Pedagogy

à Djoulafonds
Djoulafonds

3

$$\begin{array}{r} 1478 \\ \times 23 \\ \hline 4434 \\ + 29560 \\ \hline 33994 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 375,2 \\ + 22,35 \\ \hline 397,55 \end{array}$$

4) Solution

prix d'archa est

$$75 + 730 = 805$$

d'argent lui restait-il

$$1000 - 805 = 195$$

Résultat

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline 805 \\ \hline 195 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

operation

$$\begin{array}{r} 75 \quad 1000 \\ + 730 \quad 205 \\ \hline 805 \quad 1195 \end{array}$$

5) Solution

en forme est

$$7 + 9 = 16$$

toles met il et

$$16 \times 3 = 48$$

Résultat

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline 16 \\ \hline 48 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

operation

$$\begin{array}{r} 7 \\ + 9 \\ \hline 16 \\ \times 3 \\ \hline 48 \end{array}$$

Questions Compréhension

Réponse

4

1) Elle achète des bonbons pour les petits frères et sœurs qu'elle ont laissés à la maison.

2) Awa et Esitan vont à Bamako pour visiter la grande sœur d'Awa.

Sixth Grade, French-Only

4) Kara va au marché avec un billet de 1000F. Elle achète deux trais manques à 75F la manque

Elle a acheté deux Los de Samas à 130F le Los. Combien d'argent lui reste-t-il ? $1000F - 75F \cdot 2 - 130F \cdot 2 =$

$$225F = 775F = 645F$$

5) Abdou construit une maison le toit de maison est en forme de rectangle, avec 9m

de longueur et 7 m de largeur. Il met des tôles sur son toit. Chaque tôle couvre 3 mètres carrés. Combien de tôles met-il ?

$$3 \times 7 = 21$$

$$1) 448 \times 23 = 10294$$

$$2) 437 - 174 = 263$$

$$3) 375, 221, 35 = 374, 55$$

in solution

Results

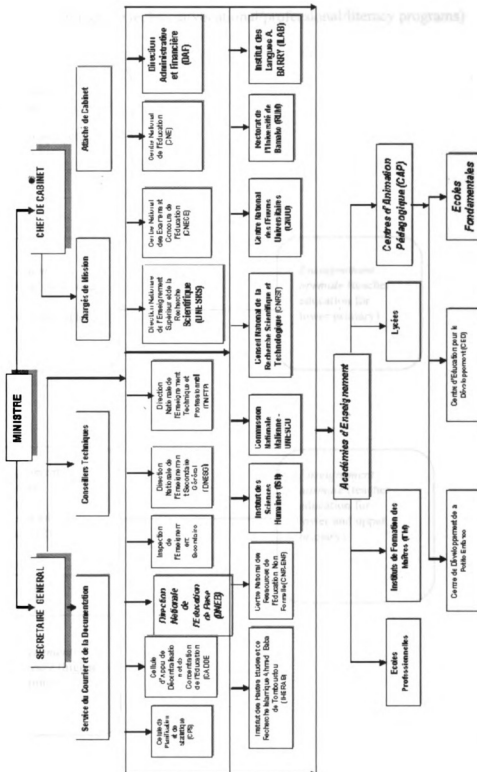
operations

	Investment	Results
2	$45 \times 3 =$	135 F
	$1000 F - 135 F =$	865 F
	$865 F + 130 F =$	995 F

$$\begin{array}{r}
 45 F \\
 \times 3 F \\
 \hline
 135 F \\
 1000 F \\
 - 135 F \\
 \hline
 865 F \\
 + 130 F \\
 \hline
 995 F
 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r}
 9 m \\
 + 7 m \\
 \hline
 16 m \\
 + 3 m \\
 \hline
 19 m
 \end{array}$$

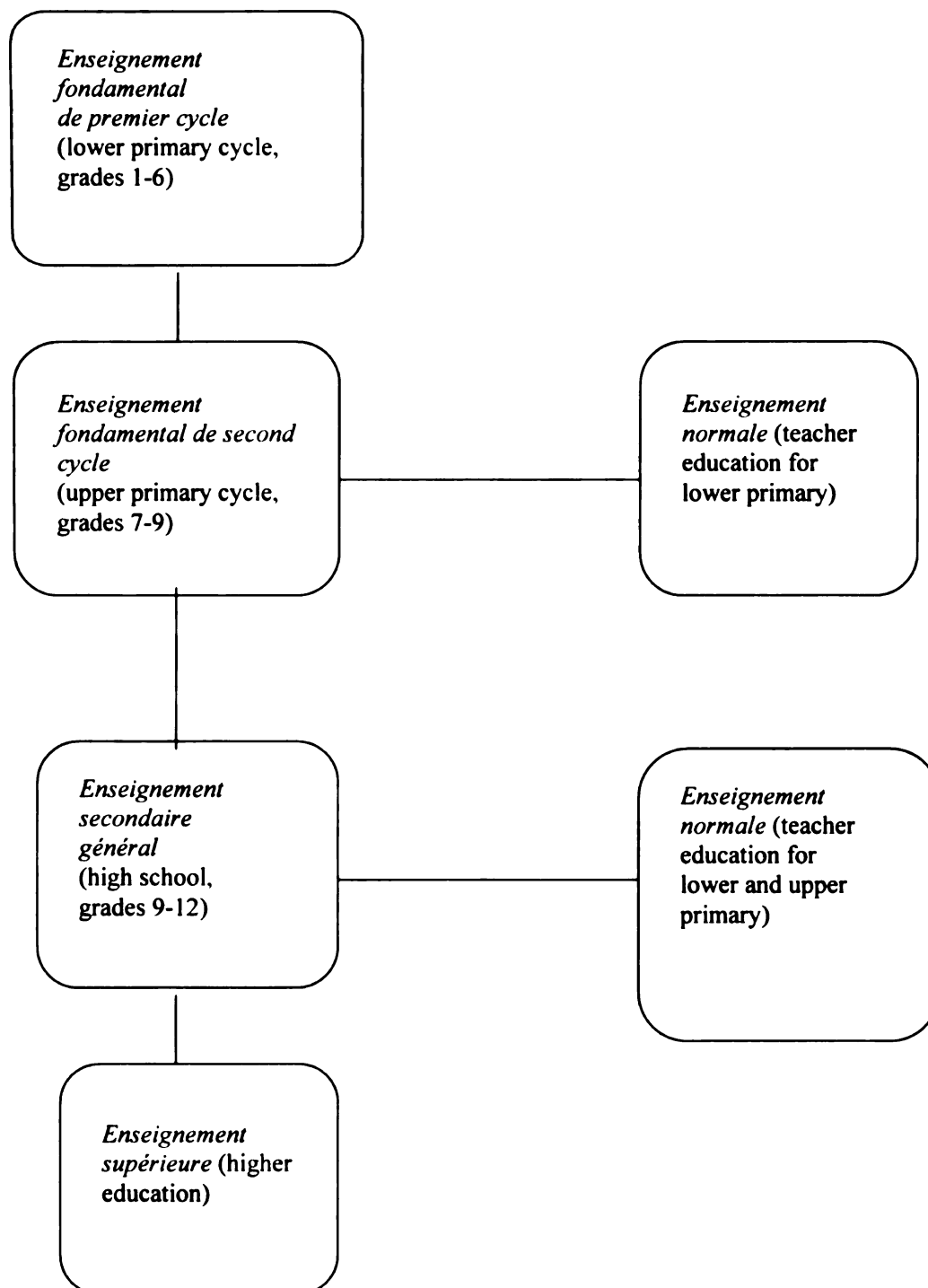
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX M

THE MALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM, PRIMARY THROUGH TERTIARY AND PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION

(does not include technical/vocational/professional/literacy programs)



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