LEARNING ASSESSMENTS
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

TEACHING AND LEARNING EDUCATORS' NETWORK FOR TRANSFORMATION (TALENT)

TALENT
Teaching and Learning
Educators' Network
For Transformation

SDG4-Education 2030
Regional Coordination Group
West and Central Africa

Education
2030

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AFD	French Development Agency / *Agence Française de Développement*
ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
C2D	Development and Debt Reduction Contract / *Contrat Développement Désendettement*
CONFEMEN	Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of the French-speaking Countries / *Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie*
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
DLI	Disbursement link indicator
DVSP	Management of programme monitoring and follow-up
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment/
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment / *Évaluation de la lecture dans les premières années d'études*
EFA	Education for All
GAML	Global Alliance to Monitoring Learning
HCR	Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
INEADE	Senegalese National Institute for Study and Action for the Development of Education / *Institut national d'étude et d'action pour le développement de l'éducation*
LSLA	Large-scale learning assessment
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
PASEC	Programme for the Analysis of Educational Systems of the CONFEMEN Countries
PIRLS	Progress In International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
TFP	Technical and Financial Partners
SEACMEQ	The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
TALENT	Teaching and Learning Educators' Network for Transformation
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the quality of education. Five years after the adoption of the "Education 2030" agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, there are signs that countries are still struggling to meet education quality standards and ensure that children in schools actually learn. This study is timely in providing an overview of the state of learning assessment systems in sub-Saharan Africa. It is well known that the region is home to the largest number of children who do not learn, and despite the enormous progress made by individual countries and regional organisations in recent decades, monitoring learning achievement remains a challenge for many ministries in charge of education. However, it is important to note that there have been positive developments over the past five years, with more and more countries placing the issue of learning assessment systems at the top of the list of national education sector plans and their implementation agenda in the education sector. The aim of this study is to provide an overview of what has been achieved at the national and regional levels in recent decades in terms of bolstering the mechanisms for assessing and monitoring learning outcomes, an essential feature of education systems in order to understand both where they are and where they are going.

All the different types of learning assessment are listed, except for teacher-led formative classroom assessments. The regional assessments show interesting trends, as they are well established in the region. Particularly in French-speaking African states, PASEC is now a tried and tested tool for regional comparisons. The majority of those French-speaking countries participated in the 2019 edition. Moreover, the well-designed SEACMEQ has shown signs of declining participation in recent years as only a few countries have produced a national report from the last edition of SEACMEQ and no regional report has been disseminated.

The technical and financial partners have been engaged in this thematic sub-sector for several decades now and despite some positive experiences, all the

stakeholders have felt an urgent need to focus on coordination and country ownership of their learning assessment systems.

This study comes at a time of uncertainty, marked by the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which threatens to undermine the efforts and progress made in recent decades in terms of access to education and the strengthening of education systems. The impact of COVID-19 adds a new element to this scenario, forcing Member States to consider how to monitor learning in the context of distance education. TALENT, responding to its mission and purpose, is in the process of adding a brief mapping of remote evaluation mechanisms in the region to this study.

Countries have a long way to go to stabilise their national learning assessment systems and the progress made requires significant investments in human and financial capacity to be sustainable. However, promising practices are gaining ground and countries are increasingly determined to monitor closely whether or not learning takes place in schools. This study provides a quick overview of the main trends and potential ways to strengthen learning assessment systems. However, it does not pretend to provide an exhaustive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each type of learning assessment and of the different parts of the learning assessment cycle. Country-specific analyses and other themed studies should integrate this study. TALENT also wishes to monitor the evolution of learning assessment systems on a regular basis in order to follow and understand where the region is going and whether commitments are being met.

Dr. Dimitri Sanga
Director of the UNESCO Regional Office
for West Africa - Sahel

2. CONTEXT

The global learning crisis has been documented in the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2014), as well as in the World Bank's Human Development Report (2018)[1]. Figures show that it is more widespread in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) than in other regions of the world. The region is home to 17 of the 21 countries for which data are available, where more than half of the children lack basic skills. This has been confirmed by several learning assessment surveys conducted throughout the region.

Conscious of these concerns and of the need to promote effective strategies to improve teaching and learning, several institutions established the Teaching and Learning Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT) in 2016 as part of the coordination of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in West and Central Africa. To date, the steering group of the TALENT network is composed of ADEA-NALA, ANCEFA, CONFEMEN (and its PASEC programme), Education International, UNESCO (and its institutes), IIEP and its office for Africa (more commonly known as Pôle de Dakar, UIS and IICBA), UNHCR, and UNICEF. In order to achieve its objectives, TALENT aims to publish a mapping study on the state of national learning assessment systems in sub-Saharan Africa. The

objective is to have an overall vision of the assessment of learning outcomes in Africa, to identify promising examples and possible support needs.

Indicator 4.1.1 of SDG 4[2] is the percentage of children and young people: (a) in the 2nd or 3rd year of studies; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education who have mastered at least the minimum skill standards in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by gender.

This indicator therefore leads to a regular measurement of quality through assessments of learning outcomes. The number of learning outcome schemes in Africa has increased, starting with the PASEC and SACMEQ regional programmes launched in 1991 in the wake of the Jomtien conference (1990). It was from the second half of the 2000s that quality measurement began to make its way onto the international political agenda, with the landmark work, Abadzi (2006). In the early 2000s, national assessment systems were not very developed[3].

Since 2015, several international initiatives have been put in place to promote measurement of learning outcomes. One such initiative is the Global Alliance

to Monitor Learning (GAML)[4], which is designed to improve learning outcomes by supporting national learning assessment strategies, as well as by developing internationally comparable indicators and methodological tools to measure progress towards the key goals of SDG 4. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has also introduced an indicator on systems for assessing learning outcomes in its results framework, Indicator 15[5]: "Proportion of developing country partners whose system for assessing learning outcomes in basic education meets quality standards."

The projects of the GPE — as well as those of the World Bank, with its Learning Poverty concept[6] — often contain components related to the assessment of learning outcomes. This is sometimes a credit trigger indicator[7]. Other multilateral partners such as UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as bilateral partners, support the establishment of national assessment systems, which has become an essential pillar of development assistance and an indicator of a quality education system.

On the countries side, technical skills have been reinforced, organisations have been put in place, and the political authorities have become aware of the value of regular measurement of the quality of learning outcomes, outside of their national examinations. As such, the context is favourable for the emergence and strengthening of national assessment mechanisms. UNESCO (2019) tells us of the potential value of such large-scale assessments.

1. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/28340/9781464813184.pdf?sequence=71&isAllowed=y

2. http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/uissdg4indicatorsquickguide-fr-f-web.pdf

3. International Consultative Forum on Education for All (2000).

4. http://gaml.uis.unesco.org

5. https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/gpe-indicateurs-cadre-de-resultats-notes-methodologiques.pdf

6. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty

7. In Cameroon, in the World Bank's PAREC project, Indicator 5 Credit Trigger relates to the establishment of an independent body for the assessment of learning outcomes, World Bank (2018b).

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse the practices of assessments of learning outcomes conducted in the 47 countries of sub-Saharan Africa : the study focuses in particular on international and regional assessments, national assessments, and public exams.

TALENT aims to strengthen the capacities of national executives in sub-Saharan African countries. Since 2018, TALENT—with the support of the GPE—has engaged countries in the region in knowledge sharing, research production, and capacity building initiatives aimed at supporting Ministries of Education in monitoring the quality of education to ensure that all learners effectively acquire the minimum basic skills.

The main objective of this mapping is to take stock of the current state of national learning assessment systems in order to have an overall view of changes in those systems in the region, recent trends, and to identify aspects that merit further examination in specific studies at the regional level, as well as positive experiences that prove effective in supporting the learning process.

To conduct this work, several data sources were utilised. The primary data source is the survey carried out by the TALENT network, based on a questionnaire administered to the network's national focal points in each country, to which 33 countries provided a response.

The responses to the questionnaires were supplemented (or identified for non-respondents) through the collection and analysis of further information based on:

• The UNESCO Institute for Statistics database[11],

• The questionnaires administered as part of gathering the information needed for the GPE Indicator 15,

• The EGRA Tracker database[12],

• The websites of the ministries and assessment bodies where applicable,

• Analysis of the countries' education sector plans,

• The websites of the international programmes[13],

• Conducting interviews,

• Online research.

The issue of data quality deserves to be addressed here. One of the first limitations that arose relates to the number of respondents: as not all countries provided a response (33 out of

47 did). As such, there is a risk that the information collected may not provide a complete and representative overview of the overall situation in the countries. It was for this reason that additional data was collected. The countries that did not provide a response[14] may have different characteristics from those that did. It should also be noted that there were several respondents for some countries and, in general, the respondents were not always the individuals best placed to provide the level of detail targeted by the questionnaire. As a result, many of the questions remain unanswered, particularly in the area of funding. The steps undertaken to check the data consistency and collect additional data were an attempt to mitigate that factor.

Furthermore, the fact that the main source of the study is exclusively declarative in nature means there is a need to consider the possibility of an "intention" bias. It is also possible that the respondents did not possess all the information in relation to funding due to the structure of the national funding system. This is not the first time that UNESCO has identified assessment mechanisms. It was done in the EFA monitoring report (2008) and for the GPE countries (2012). But in this study, we have information that covers all sub-Saharan African countries.

Finally, it is important to point out that the field of assessing learning outcomes is very dynamic, which makes it a question of studying a situation that is constantly evolving. It must be borne in mind that this study covers data collected and reported up to the beginning of October 2019.

8. Sudan was not included in the study as it is not considered by UNESCO as a sub-Saharan African country in the regional classifications.

9. This study will also serve as a reference for the TALENT database of assessments in SSA which will be updated annually and available on the TALENT platform: http://www.education2030-africa.org/index.php/fr/equipes-de-travail/enseignement-et-apprentissage-talent

10. See questionnaires in Annex.

11. http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-learning-outcomes

12. https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/egra-tracker

13. PASEC : http://www.pasec.confemen.org/
SACMEQ : http://www.sacmeq.org/
PISA : https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/pisa-en-francais.htm
PIRLS and TIMSS : http://www.pirls.org/
UWEZO : https://www.uwezo.net/

14. Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Namibia, Botswana, Madagascar, Seychelles, Eritrea, Ghana, and Mauritania.

4. PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

There are several international programmes for measuring learning outcomes. Conducted since 2000 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the PISA tests the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. Every three years, students from randomly selected schools around the world participate in tests in reading, mathematics, and science as well as other areas necessary for participation in 21st century societies. These include general competence and financial literacy, with one subject being given priority over the others in each assessment year. PISA tests assess the students' ability to apply their knowledge to real-life situations. Contextual information is collected using background questionnaires. Senegal and Zambia participated in PISA-D (PISA for Development), an initiative launched in 2013. It employs a different methodology than PISA, in that it provides enhanced and contextualised assessment tools for developing countries.[15]

TIMMS is a study conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) that measures learning outcomes in mathematics and science of students in the 4th and 8th years of their studies. In addition, it collects information on programmes and their implementation, learning practices, and school resources. Also conducted by the IEA is the **PIRLS** assessment, which focuses on the students' reading comprehension. It provides internationally comparative data on children's reading ability at the end of the fourth year of compulsory school attendance. In addition, the study collects information on support received in the family, teaching practices, and school resources in each participating country. Botswana, Ghana, and South Africa participate in the TIMSS programme.

The **SEACMEQ** consortium brings together 16 Ministries of Education from Southern and Eastern Africa to share their experience and expertise in scientific monitoring and policy evaluation on school conditions and education quality. SEACMEQ conducts large-scale transnational research projects to assess schooling conditions, the performance levels of primary school students in their 6th year of school, and teachers in reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as levels of basic knowledge in the field of health. Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania (and Zanzibar), Mauritius, Zambia, and Zimbabwe participate in the SEACMEQ programme.

15. The enhanced assessment instruments proposed as part of PISA-D will make it possible to measure these students' performance, while at the same time ensuring the comparability of these results with data from the main PISA survey. The enhanced contextual questionnaires will also provide a better understanding of how certain factors—such as the students' socio-economic background or classroom learning environment—are associated with learning outcomes in different contexts." PISA for Development - Note - 2016/07 (July) © OECD 2016, page 1.

Map 1

**Participation in international
programmes, November 2019**

PARTICIPATION IN
INTERNATIONAL
ASSESSMENTS

- PASEC
- PIRLS
- PISA
- SEACMEQ
- TIMSS
- PISA-D
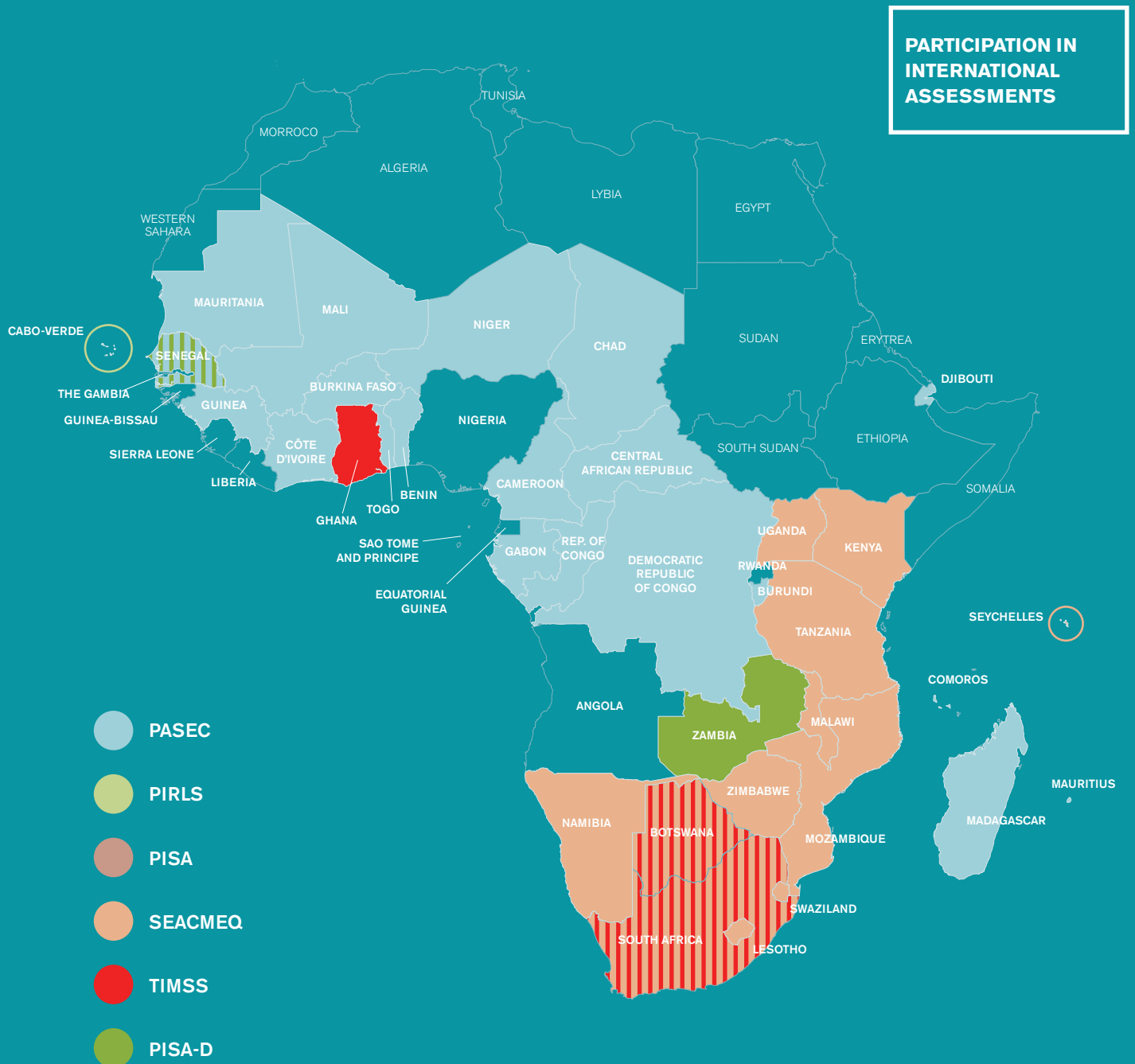
PASEC is a regional assessment tool for French-speaking countries in West Africa and Asia, conducted by the Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of the French-speaking Countries (CONFEMEN). It provides information on the performance of education systems in the 2nd and 6th years of primary education, which contributes to the development and monitoring of educational achievement in primary education in member countries.
In addition, PASEC carries out comparative assessments between its member countries. Benin, Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger, Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Togo participate or have participated in PASEC.[16]

Source: IIEP[17] for the programme characteristics, the TALENT questionnaire and international programme websites for participation.

National teams were set up to participate in these international assessments. They were involved in all stages of the assessments, from test construction to report writing, with varying levels of involvement depending on the programme. Data processing and analysis is usually carried out by the staff of the international programmes as this requires advanced skills in statistics and psychometrics.

An analysis of trends in country participation in international learning assessment programmes shows that two programmes stand out: the PASEC programme (with 15 participating countries in the area covered by the study) and the SAECMEQ programme (with 16 participating countries in the area covered by the study). The distinction between those two programmes is primarily linguistic. French-speaking countries participate in PASEC, which is the best of the French-speaking programmes, while English-speaking countries participate in SEACMEQ. It should be noted, however, that English-speaking West African countries have never participated in SEACMEQ. The high number of countries participating in those

16. The countries that participated in the PASEC programme in 2019 are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

17. https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/fr/fiches-pratiques/mesurer-les-apprentissages/évaluations-des-apprentissages

two programmes can be explained by the fact that they were designed specifically for African contexts and, as such, are probably better contextualised and more relevant than programmes such as PISA or PIRLS. It can also be seen that the East African zone hardly participates in the international programmes mentioned.

Participation in international programmes has beneficial effects on national assessment systems. It is often the same people who conduct both the international and national assessment (as in Côte d'Ivoire). As a result, those staff members receive training and technical support in international assessment that they can put to use again in national assessments. Those international programmes contribute to the dissemination of quality measurement techniques and propagate a culture of assessment at the institutional level. PASEC has carried

out missions to support the setting up of national assessment systems, as in Mali, CONFEMEN (2015).

But there can also be negative aspects to participation in international programmes. Certain focal points of the TALENT network raised the issue that such programmes can be seen as substitutes for national schemes. Significant funding goes into such programmes[18], whether national or international. And this is sometimes to the detriment of national systems. There may also be problems of ownership of the results, as is the case in Niger with the PASEC results.[19] In addition, the staff of national structures are sometimes recruited by international organisations (e.g. staff from Niger and Cameroon were recruited by CONFEMEN), which leads to a loss of qualified human resources.

18. Wagner D., UNESCO-IIPE, 2011 ;

19. Interview with the former Secretary General of CONFEMEN and member of the Constitutional Council of Niger.

5. NATIONAL SYSTEMS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Most countries have or are in the process of developing a national policy covering the assessment of learning outcomes among students. Only 11 countries (23%) stated that they do not have such a policy. For most countries, it seems that the issue of assessment is a component of education policy as a whole, or of strategic development plans for the education sector (e.g. Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti).

Looking at the map and the collected data, we can identify certain trends: of the 22 countries that indicated they have a national assessment policy, 13 are English-speaking countries[20] (almost 60% of the countries with such a policy). Few French-speaking countries (only 4[21]) stated that they have a national assessment policy. Although changes are happening, and there is a general trend towards the implementation of national policies, the French-speaking area remains the least advanced in this area. By comparing the data with those in Map 1 (participation in international programmes), it can be hypothesised that the widespread participation of French-speaking countries in the PASEC programme is one of the explanatory factors: PASEC surveys and results can be seen as a substitute for sustainable national systems, as mentioned above.

Graph 1

Existence of a national assessment policy (number of countries)

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).
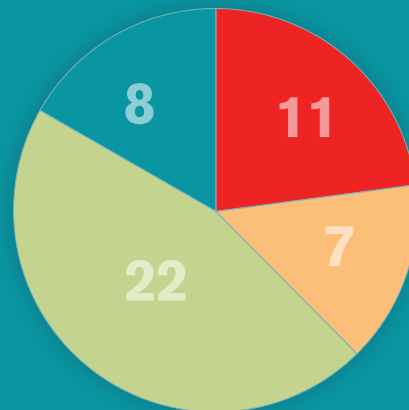
In Uganda, the Government White Paper on Education, dating from 1992, provides the formal framework for the National Assessment of Progress in Education, with multi-year plans for large-scale national assessments[22].

It is also interesting to note that 15% of the countries report that a national assessment policy is being developed. If that number is added to those already in place, 60% of the countries concerned should, within the next few years, have a policy framework for the assessment of learning outcomes, often accompanied by the creation of dedicated units within Ministries (e.g. Sierra Leone and Nigeria).

20. Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius, Eswatini, Lesotho.

21. Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon, and Côte d'Ivoire.

22. Ministry of education (1992), Government White Paper on Education: https://www.cmi.no/pdf/?file=/uganda/doc/government-whitepaper.pdf

Map 2

Existence of a national assessment policy, November 2019

EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL ASSESSMENT POLICY

TUNISIA

MORROCO

ALGERIA

LYBIA

EGYPT

WESTERN SAHARA

MAURITANIA

MALI

NIGER

CHAD

SUDAN

ERYTREA

DJIBOUTI

CABO-VERDE

SENEGAL

THE GAMBIA

GUINEA

GUINEA-BISSAU

SIERRA LEONE

LIBERIA

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

GHANA

TOGO

BENIN

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

BURKINA FASO

NIGERIA

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

CAMEROON

GABON

REP. OF CONGO

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

SOUTH SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA

UGANDA

RWANDA

BURUNDI

KENYA

TANZANIA

SEYCHELLES

COMOROS

ANGOLA

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

MOZAMBIQUE

MADAGASCAR

MAURITIUS

ZIMBABWE

NAMIBIA

BOTSWANA

SWAZILAND

SOUTH AFRICA

LESOTHO

YES

IN PROGRESS

NO

BOX 1

Example of a component of Eswatini's sectoral strategy dedicated to the assessment of learning outcomes

In Eswatini, an education and training policy paper was drafted and published in July 2018, with support and funding from UNICEF. It is the second education policy document produced by the country (emanating from the revision of the first sectoral strategy in 2011).

The new strategy includes a section on evaluation, cited below:

2.5.1 Reason for the assessment policy

The National Curriculum Framework for General Education in the Kingdom of Eswatini (2018) describes in detail the rationale, purpose, and objectives of the assessment policy, including the methods of assessment in primary and secondary education contained in that policy. Assessment provides a link between curriculum development, pedagogy, and andragogy, all of which are pillars of pedagogical assessment. Assessment also has an impact and contributes to any education reform. The assessment can be summative or formative. The development of a national assessment framework from pre-school to higher education, including school-based and national assessments, should be compatible with the national Eswatini curriculum framework for general education and continuing vocational training programmes. The national assessment framework should include appropriate assessment principles, objectives, methods, and instruments, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the Eswatini Review Board and other stakeholders.

2.5.2 Objective of the assessment policy

Develop a national assessment framework to improve the quality, equity, relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness of education and training.

2.5.3 Objectives of the assessment policy

- Design and administer an assessment system that meets the needs of the education and training system
- Design an assessment system that meets market demand and ensures its international acceptance
- Develop assessment methods and instruments in areas where they are not currently available
- Examine the assessment methods and instruments and align them with innovations
- Draw up, provide, and administer guidelines for appropriate standardised assessments for formative and summative assessments, and for the assignment of grades and qualifications
- Ensure a better balance between formative and summative procedures
- Improve the apprenticeship programme through regular national examinations
- Improve (formative) learning assessment as a form of continuous assessment that provides feedback to the learner and the teacher
- Promote compliance with the (summative) assessment of learning weightings stipulated in the national curriculum.

2.5.4 Strategic Assessment Framework

SHORT TERM
- Develop a national assessment framework
- Advocate for the implementation of the national assessment framework
- Strengthen the capacities of key education stakeholders on the assessment framework
- Monitor and evaluate assessment practices in schools

MEDIUM TO LONG TERM
- Conduct national examinations on the issue of assessment
- Assess the learners' acquisition of skills at the end of a defined (summative) teaching period, such as the end of the unit or subject, term, year, programme, or phase.

Source:
National Education and Training Sector Policy, Ministry of Education, Eswatini, 2018 : http://www.gov.sz/images/Educationdocuments/education-policy.pdf

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Data limitations:
Beyond the question of whether or not they have a national policy, the countries provided little information on the name of the policy and the aspects it covers. Only 16 countries (33%) stated that they have a policy that covers national, international, or regional assessments. The data for the other countries are missing or incomplete.

The information from the analysis in Table 1 shows that there is a move towards supervision and formalisation of assessment by the education authorities in the target countries. In almost all cases, the issue of assessment is integrated into the most recent education sector plans, which are pushing towards the creation of units or departments dedicated to assessment within Ministries of Education.

5.1. The national assessment framework: example of Seychelles

However, some countries have developed a specific framework for assessment. This is notably the case in Seychelles, which since 2013 has had a national framework to guide action on assessment: national assessments are planned for each key stage of the education system from pre-school to secondary school. The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for test development and administration. Schools play a key role in their administration, correction, and the dissemination of results.

Given the size of the country (population of 73,000 and 25 primary schools), the assessment of learning outcomes concerns all students at the target levels (census-based assessment).

National assessments take place at the following levels:

MILESTONE 1

Early childhood

MILESTONES 2 AND 3

Primary education (literacy, numeracy, life skills).

The assessments should:

- Enable the determination of performance levels in literacy, numeracy, science, and life skills;

- Be developed in such a way that the learner's weaknesses and strengths can be easily diagnosed and identified, with a clear plan for corrective action. Place particular emphasis on the design of the instruments, the scoring of answers, and the communication of results;

- Assist and facilitate the setting of individual, class, and school learning objectives and measure progress over time;

- Be used as a tool for monitoring the quality of learning outcomes, providing essential information on the achievement of learning and performance standards at national level and identifying areas where improvements are needed;

- Be used as a comparison mechanism, comparing different groups of learners on similar tests and tasks in different years;

- Be used as a valid indicator and gauge of the effectiveness of the teaching and the curriculum;

- Lead to the national qualification framework level 1 certificate in key phase 3.

MILESTONES 4 AND 5

The assessment practices of milestones 4 and 5 should consolidate the achievements of the previous milestones The assessment activities should provide sufficient scope and depth and allow for growth in the overall conceptual understanding of learners in different subjects[23], Seychelles Ministry of Education (2013).[24]

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23. Art and design, languages, mathematics, science, geography, history, technical and vocational education, personal, social and citizenship education, information and communication technologies.

24. Seychelles Ministry of Education (2013), The National Assessment Framework p.7-9.

6. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BODIES

Table 1

Who conducts the assessments?

	Dedicated national institution		Independent experts		Ministry of Education staff	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	21	43.8%	7	14.6%	27	56.3%
No	18	37.5%	29	60.4%	12	25.0%
Missing	9	18.8%	12	25.0%	9	18.8%
Total	**48**	**100.0%**	**48**	**100.0%**	**48**	**100.0%**

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).

The majority of national assessments (27 countries) are conducted by Ministry of Education staff, sometimes within the framework of a dedicated national institution (21 countries). In the case of Nigeria, that institution is the Universal Basic Education Commission[25]. For Botswana, it is the Botswana Examination Council[26]. For Namibia, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED)[27]. And for Senegal, the Institute for Study and Action for Development in Education / *Institut National d'Etudes et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Education* (INEADE) (which has administrative and financial autonomy).

Some countries have set up a department dedicated to assessment within their Ministry. Such is the case in Côte d'Ivoire and Niger. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Division of Oversight and Program Monitoring / *Direction de la Veille et de suivi des programmes* (DVSP) is responsible for assessing learning outcomes. Those assessments may be ordered by the supervising Ministry as well as by donors, such as the Development and Debt Reduction Contract / *Contrat Développement Désendettement* (C2D) for an assessment in local colleges.[28]

25. Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC): https://www.ubec.gov.ng/
26. Botswana Examination Council: http://www.bec.co.bw/
27. National Institute for Educational Development (Namibia: http://www.nied.edu.na/
28. See an example of the DVSP's activities on their website: https://menci-dvsp.org/#

The DVSP is responsible for:

- *Assessing students' learning outcomes and skills;*

- *Conducting systemic analyses of the functioning of education;*

- *Monitoring reforms of the education system;*

- *Conducting studies and research in the field of assessment, survey instruments;*

- *Developing international partnerships and ensuring participation in comparative assessments at the sub-regional and international levels;*

- *Publishing data and analytical findings on discrimination and inequalities in access, quality, and performance in education;*

- *Evaluating curricula and academic performance;*

- *Communicating the results of assessments to the relevant target audience so that those data can be put to use. (Organisation chart and missions of the DVSP in annex).*

The following table presents the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of body (division or independent body).

Table 2

Advantages and disadvantages of types of bodies for assessing learning outcomes

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Independent body	• Rapid disbursement allowing operations to be carried out on time • Spread across several ministries • Independence of the results	• Collaboration sometimes difficult with the different divisions of the Ministry • Activities that may deviate from the initial objectives • Increased operating costs • Little link between the results and the educational measures taken • Difficulty in accessing certain data (EMIS)
Division	• Easier collaboration with the various divisions	• There may be more than one ministry of education • Increased possibility of political cover-up of results • Need to review the organisation chart • Lengthy disbursement procedures

Source: Authors (own reflections and interviews with education officials in Cameroon)

Relatively few countries (7: Benin, Burundi, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia) report calling in independent experts to conduct national assessments.

Here, a trend can be seen towards structuring assessment in countries and the existence and strengthening of national human capacity in the field of assessment.

7. THE STAFF OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BODIES

Two types of profile make up both the national assessment teams and the international programme teams[29] :

• Statisticians with training in psychometrics and a solid scientific grounding (sometimes former mathematics teachers who have learned on the job)

• Experts in the discipline, often experienced national inspectors

The former are in charge of sampling, scaling up testing, and data analysis. The latter are in charge of constructing the tests in accordance with the programme and classroom practices and of the pedagogical interpretation of the results. Test administrators—often recruited from among teachers or teachers-in-training—are mobilised for operations in the field. The staff managing the EMIS can also provide assistance in setting up the sampling frame (list of schools).

In SEACMEQ national teams, a national research coordinator is often drawn from the world of academia and research in education and assessment. The PASEC teams come from the ministries in charge of education[30].

29. The job profiles can be viewed on the CONFEMEN website:
http://www.pasec.confemen.org/equipe/?filtre-pays=true and the DVSP organisation chart is attached in annex;

30. http://www.pasec.confemen.org/equipe/?filtre-pays=true

8. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT FUNDING

Table 3

Sources of funding for national assessments

Government	#	%	External sources	#	%	No funding	#	%
Missing	12	25.0	Missing	11	22.9	Missing	10	20.8
Yes	11	22.9	Yes	13	27.1	Yes	4	8.3
No	25	52.1	No	24	50.0	No	34	70.8
Overall total	**48**	**100.0**	**Overall total**	**48**	**100.0**	**Overall total**	**48**	**100.0**

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019)

Information on the sources of funding is missing for almost 25% of the countries (12 out of 48). Only 11 countries have funding from national budgets. 13 have external funding and 4 report having no funding at all (Central African Republic, Gabon, Lesotho, and Mali).

Many answers are missing. The information on funding does not seem very reliable. For example, Lesotho reported that it has not received any funding even though assessments of learning outcomes have been carried out in the country[31] since 2005 and therefore there is funding, GPE (2012). For Mali, which has declared that it has no funding, we have a list of assessments carried out in recent years[32]. The last one in 2015 was funded by USAID. It seems that countries may have understated the funding for the assessments in the hope of obtaining more funds[33].

Graph 2

Regularity of funding broken down by source (number of countries)

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019)
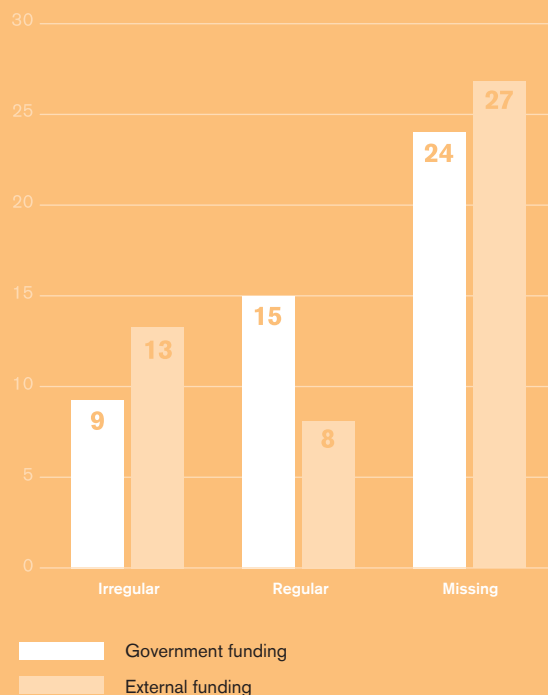
31. In 2005, Lesotho was ranked as the country with the best system for assessing learning outcomes, GPE (2012) p. 224.

32. Annex 2 of the Report *Un système national d'évaluation pour le Mali* [A National Assessment System for Mali], commissioned by PASEC in November 2015, http://www.pasec.confemen.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/rapport-SNE-Mali-v3.pdf

33. For the status of national and international assessments of GPE countries in 2012, see GPE (2012) p. 235.

BOX 2

Example of a credit trigger indicator linked to assessment of learning outcomes

Data on the regularity of funding is scarce: more than half of the countries did not provide an answer, regardless of the source of funding considered. Government funding seems to be more regular than external funding: 31% of the countries stated that government funding is regular, compared to only 17% for external funding.

The low response rate to this question does not allow conclusions to be drawn as to the regularity of funding. However, it seems that where national funding exists, it tends to be more regular than external funding (31% compared to 17%). This may be due to the fact that external funding of learning assessments of students is most often a component of donor projects with a limited life cycle. The assessments do not continue after the project ends, which poses problems for the sustainability and durability of systems for assessing learning outcomes.

In addition, there seem to be some inconsistencies: while only 11 countries stated that they received government funding, 24 countries commented on the regularity of their government funding. The funding of assessment systems by donors and international projects (e.g. Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria) is significant. Establishing units for assessing learning outcomes or conducting national assessments are sometimes conditions for access to international funding. GPE projects almost always include support for national assessment systems and the achievement of indicator 15 of the above-mentioned results framework, as well as World Bank projects.

In Cameroon, the World Bank's PAREC project contains as credit trigger indicator 5 (disbursement link indicator, DLI) the implementation of a "standardised system for assessing the learning of primary and secondary school students".

 "*The objective of this outcome domain is to assist the government in its ongoing efforts to establish a national learning assessment system.*

*The outcome domains include:
a) the institutionalisation of a national assessment framework;
b) the establishment of an entity with sufficient independence, capacity (including staff numbers), functions, and links with other educational institutions (particularly in terms of curriculum development and teacher training) to manage the system effectively;
c) the development of a comprehensive programme of national assessments; and
d) the implementation of pilot projects and large-scale national assessments of learning outcomes among students in English and French (classes 2 and 4 for secondary education and classes 3 and 5 for primary education). The design and implementation of large-scale national assessment systems will be carried out in accordance with international standards. The release of IDA funds under this outcome domain will be linked to the following SDI: Establishment of a standardised system of assessment of learning outcomes for students in primary and secondary education (DLI 5). World Bank (2008b).*"

BOX 3

Uganda's assessment system

In the box we present the situation in Uganda, a country that has a rating system based on the SABER classification, World Bank (2012), which is well documented in the literature.

Assessment policy: the 1992 Government White Paper on Education provides the formal framework for assessment at the national level (National Assessment of Progress in Education), in addition to multi-annual plans for large-scale national assessments.

National assessment bodies: the Uganda National Examinations Board is responsible for implementing the assessments.

Achievements: *A National Assessment of Progress in Education* (NAPE) has been in place at primary level since 1996 and at secondary level since 2008. At primary level, an annual assessment is conducted in the 3rd and 6th years of school in literacy and numeracy, and every three years in oral English skills. At secondary level, students in the second year of secondary school are assessed annually in English, mathematics, and biology. In addition, a sample of teachers is assessed.

Funding: The national assessment is regularly funded by both governmental and non-governmental sources (e.g. the World Bank). The activities covered by the funding include the design and administration of the assessments, data analysis, and reporting.

Possible improvements:
A careful analysis of Uganda's assessment system (Ref) shows that too many students who succeed in school are not learning sufficient skills and knowledge to meet current and future employment needs and the future development of Uganda's economy. Public discourse on education is focused more on scores than on learning outcomes and their alignment with what is needed to ensure current and future individual and community success. Agency reports often do not lead to effective action at central, district, and local levels.

Sources:

http://saber.worldbank.org/index.cfm?indx=2&ctrn=UG

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08ab440f0b649740007
1a/04-Learning-Outcomes-How-To-Note.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/
media/57a0896240f0b64974000056/Think-Piece-the-impact-of-assessment-
results-on-education-policy-and-practice-in-East-Africa.pdf

9. NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

9.1. Trends in national assessments

CONDUCTING
A NATIONAL
ASSESSMENT
OF EDUCATIONAL
OUTCOMES OVER
THE PAST FIVE YEARS

TUNISIA
MORROCO
ALGERIA
LYBIA
EGYPT
WESTERN SAHARA
MAURITANIA
MALI
NIGER
CHAD
SUDAN
ERYTREA
DJIBOUTI
CABO-VERDE
SENEGAL
THE GAMBIA
GUINEA
BURKINA FASO
NIGERIA
ETHIOPIA
GUINEA-BISSAU
SOUTH SUDAN
SIERRA LEONE
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOMALIA
LIBERIA
CAMEROON
GHANA
TOGO
BENIN
UGANDA
KENYA
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE
GABON
REP. OF CONGO
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
RWANDA
BURUNDI
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
TANZANIA
SEYCHELLES
COMOROS
ANGOLA
ZAMBIA
MALAWI
MAURITIUS
ZIMBABWE
MADAGASCAR
NAMIBIA
BOTSWANA
MOZAMBIQUE
SWAZILAND
SOUTH AFRICA
LESOTHO

● YES

● NO

Map 3

The conducting of a national assessment of educational outcomes, November 2019

The following table presents the implementation of the national assessments.

Graph 3

The conducting of national assessments
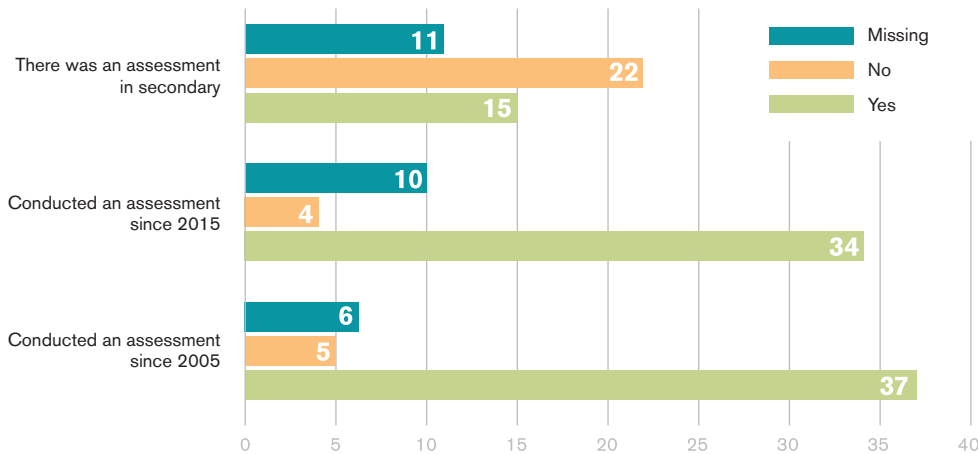
Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).

Of the 47 countries surveyed, 33 responded but external data sources provided information on 42 countries. Of the 42 countries for which information is available, 37 have conducted at least one national assessment since 2005. 34 of those assessments took place between 2015 and 2019. According to those data, there has been a growing movement towards the conducting of national assessments in recent years. Only four countries (Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Tanzania) have not conducted a national assessment recently.

No significant variances emerge based on geographical or linguistic area: the practice of national assessment seems to be spreading independently of these factors.

Interestingly, 15 countries[34] (31%) have conducted national assessments beyond the 7th year of school, i.e. for secondary education (in most cases). The regional PASEC and SACMEQ programmes still only concern primary education, as do the majority of national assessments.

But many countries have adopted basic education, which covers nine years of education. And there is a high level of interest in testing the results at the end of that cycle. Generally, science is tested for these assessments at the secondary level, whereas it is not tested at the primary level.

9.2. Technical characteristics of large-scale national surveys

The various national assessments have distinct characteristics but are often centred on the same parameters. The samples are representative at the national level and sometimes at the regional level (as in the case of Ghana and Niger).[35] The samples cover public (including community schools) and private schools that follow the national curriculum. The tests are standardised and are mainly based on closed (multiple choice) questions. The number of items (exercises) is usually around 40-45[36]. Contextual questionnaires are

addressed to students, teachers, and school headmasters, making it possible to highlight the factors linked to better educational outcomes, using multivariate analyses (linear regression, multilevel analyses).

9.3. The limitations of these surveys

These surveys also have some methodological limitations. There is a discrepancy between the scientific procedures used in international programmes (which can be described as international standards, taken from the historical work of the IEA) and national methodologies. Item response theory and its complex models are invariably used in international programmes to enable the development of valid tests and their scaling up, but not in national assessments. This is detrimental to the quality of the tests carried out, to the analyses of them, and to the terms of the comparison over time, which requires specialised techniques.

Ghana, thanks to international expertise, has recently introduced item response models into its procedures, which gives better tests and also allows reliable comparison of results over time. But the appropriation of these techniques, whether by the staff of international organisations or by national teams, requires training and advanced software, which comes at a cost. The results also become more difficult to interpret and the analyses almost always lead to recourse to international expertise due to a lack of national expertise. Given this, there may be reluctance to change, as was the case during the PASEC reform[38].

The Ghanaian methodology does not contain plausible data, multi-level analyses, or replicate survey weightings, which are again a source of discrepancies with "international standards".[39] Moreover, while the results are presented in a skills scale, that scale was not created in accordance with international standards. To our knowledge, there is as yet no national assessment in sub-Saharan Africa that fully follows those standards[40], this may be explained by national capacities, the limited documentation available in French on those techniques (for French-speaking countries), and cost issues.

34. Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia.

35. The 2016 edition was the 6th application of the NEA and covered all 10 regions of the world. Ghana, sampling 550 schools and testing 35,996 students over three days in July 2016. The sample size was designed to be representative at the national and regional levels, but not at the district level. Source: https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/ghana-2016-national-education-assessment and NEAU (2016).

36. The national assessment in Ghana was a written multiple-choice in-class test whose content was based on the national curriculums. The P4 test contained 40 items each for Mathematics and English and the P6 test contained 45 items for each subject, NEAU (2016).

37. The work of V. Greaney & T. Kellaghan for the World Bank also provides a set of benchmark standards for the national assessment of learning outcomes. See bibliography.

38. https://journals.openedition.org/cres/3149?fbclid=IwAR1yWRKHw7IxeZjG7bCwJteFye8bUecmFMEl7aVwHm1WslVz9EnXk-sM7o

39. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/

40. Based on a review of national assessment reports from Niger, Cameroon, Uganda, Ghana, Seychelles, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone.

10. RESULTS SHARING

The facts and figures highlighted by LSLAs (Large Scale Learning Assessments) are intended to provide essential tools for the improvement of education systems and the success of students. However, these effects can only come about if key parties act on the basis of the available data by analysing them, sharing the results with the target groups, and using them to guide concrete action, UNESCO (2019).

Results sharing is essential. The IIEP[41] has developed a guide on these issues. It proposes the following:

- "*Integrate the LSLAs into broader assessment systems*
- *Disseminate the assessment results, including their variances*
- *Ensure the countries' capacity to take ownership of the assessments and promote institutionalisation*
- *Conserve the formative role of the LSLA*
- *Effectively use the learning data related to their design*".

How are the results of learning outcome assessments shared in sub-Saharan Africa?

Table 4

The results are disseminated to:

	The national education administration		The national government, not the education branch		Teacher unions and professional organisations		Regional education administrations		Parents and communities		No dissemination	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	38	79.2	21	43.8	20	41.7	23	51.1	18	37.5	0	0.0
No	1	2.1	12	25.0	13	27.1	10	22.2	15	31.3	33	68.8
Missing	9	18.8	15	31.3	15	31.3	12	26.7	15	31.3	15	31.3
Total	48	100	48	100	48	100	45	100	48	100	48	100

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).

41. https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org

Table 5

Form of results sharing

	Seminars		Government website		Media		Hard-copy reports		Upon request	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	20	41.7	13	27.1	14	29.2	31	64.6	8	16.7
No	14	29.2	21	43.8	21	43.8	7	14.6	25	52.1
Missing	14	29.2	14	29.2	13	27.1	10	20.8	15	31.3
Total	48	100	48	100	48	100	45	100	48	100

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).

Table 6

Time frame for making the results available to the public

	#	%
Never	1	2.1
Within a year	14	29.2
Within 6 months	15	31.3
12 to 18 months	1	2.1
Within 2 years	2	4.2
More than 3 years	2	4.2
Missing	13	27.1
Total	48	100

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019).

The countries that responded to the question (33) all indicated the existence of results sharing, at least internally within the education system, whether at the national or regional level. Results sharing also seems to occur in the political sphere outside the education sector. However, only 20 of the countries disseminate the results to trade unions and professional organisations. Only 18 disseminate the results to parents and the educational community.

Results sharing is done mostly by means of hard-copy reports, but also through seminars. The use of government media and websites is relatively rare: fewer than 15 countries use them. Côte d'Ivoire is one such country, it publishes the results online[42].

It should be noted that the time taken to make the results available to the public varies, ranging from 6 months (in the case of Cabo-Verde) to more than 3 years (Eswatini). But, on average, it occurs within the year following the assessment.

42. https://menci-dvsp.org/#

10.1. The risk of political cover-up of the results

Anecdotal evidence suggests a risk of pure and simple rejection of assessment results by political authorities. For instance, the French Development Agency (AFD) financed training and the implementation of a large-scale assessment of educational outcomes in Cameroon in 2010/2011. The results showed that nearly 50% of children in the 5th year of primary school had great difficulties in reading (ref. SOFRECO). While results sharing with the public was organised, the report was never officially approved or disseminated. The political authorities and the General Inspectorate of Teachers feared that the results would "discredit the education system" on the eve of the presidential election[43].

However, the document was circulated within the coordination group of technical and financial partners (TFPs) of the Ministry of Education and was used to inform the sector strategy and to review the methods of teaching reading (transition to syllabic). Since then, the situation has changed for the better. The assessment reports are disseminated within the educational community and a communication plan for teachers is being developed.

The risk of political cover-up of the results must be taken seriously and must be anticipated. As such, the PASEC agreements signed by the Ministers of Education and CONFEMEN specify that once approved by the Scientific Committee, the results of the assessments are publicly disseminated.

43. Interviews with the Minister of Basic Education, the Inspector General of Education, and the head of the Learning Outcomes Unit (UAS).

11. USE OF THE RESULTS

Table 7

Use of the assessment results

	Review and reform		Professional development for teachers		Professional development for headmasters/head-mistresses and supervisors		Intervention programme for a specific group of learners		Intervention programme for a specific area of learning		No specific use	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	26	54.2	29	60.4	1	2.1	14	29.2	25	52.1	1	2.1
No	7	14.6	4	8.3	32	66.7	18	37.5	7	14.6	32	66.7
Missing	15	31.3	15	31.3	15	31.3	16	33.3	16	33.3	15	31.3
Total	48	100	48	100	48	100	45	100	48	100	48	100

Source: Results of the TALENT survey (2019)

The use of the assessment results falls into three main categories: curriculum/policy revision or reform (26 countries); professional development of teachers (29 countries); and targeting a specific area of learning (25 countries).

With the exception of Angola, non-teaching staff (headmasters/headmistresses, supervisors) are seldom targeted, even though many of them are directly involved in the issue of the quality of learning.

Data limitations:
almost a third of the countries did not answer the question.

Erk (2016) reviewed the evidence on the impact of learning assessments on educational policy and practice in East Africa. The study focuses primarily on Uganda, then considers the experience of Tanzania, Kenya, and Rwanda to highlight common problems and suggest examples of best practices. It deals with various assessments, including international, national, and citizen-managed ones.

12. EGRA/EGMA ASSESSMENTS

Since 2007, under the impetus of USAID, the NGO RTI International and the World Bank, EGRA[44] and EGMA surveys have been developed. They are based on an American test called the DIBELS .

The map above shows that EGRA surveys are commonly used, regardless of geographic or linguistic area.

The **EGRA** is an oral assessment tool designed to measure basic reading and writing skills in children in the early grades of elementary school. It is a one-on-one assessment that looks at each child's case. The tool measures letter recognition, reading of simple words, understanding of sentences and paragraphs, and overall comprehension. The assessment is adaptable, so that it can be implemented by a particular country in a given language. The EGRA helps to establish national reading performance and the level of children's reading skills. The assessment is often done in the national languages, however the question of contextualization and transposition of EGRA tests into the national language is one of the frequent criticisms of this assessment tool. USAID and the World Bank are the main sponsors.

The **EGMA** measures children's numeracy and mathematical skills. It focuses on the fundamentals of mathematics, i.e. number identification, quantity discrimination (larger and smaller than), identification of missing numbers, solving written problems, addition and subtraction, pattern recognition, and pattern extension. This tool helps teachers to define the level of understanding of students' fundamental skills and to identify the margins of progression towards the acquisition of new skills in the following year of school. Source: IIEP

These surveys are often used to gauge the impact of projects and interventions, particularly by USAID, which devotes a significant portion of its funding to projects targeting reading skills in the early years of school. With regard to the strengths and limitations of these surveys, we suggest reading Gove (2015).

It should be noted that on the Global Reading Network website[46] funded by USAID, the EGRA surveys — like the results of international assessments — are published online (results, data, instruments, methodology). USAID considers that since these surveys are publicly funded, they should be made available to the public and reusable free of charge. USAID includes indicators on reading outcomes in its results framework[47], which is an incentive to conduct EGRA surveys. According to our information from the review of sector plans, the EGRA and EGMA schemes are not really integrated into national assessment systems and are based on project-based approaches.
They can also be used at the classroom level as part of a classroom-based formative assessment.

Finally, these are not really international programmes, because the EGRA and EGMA assessments are managed by a multitude of different parties (World Bank, RTI International, American companies, and Save the Children, to name the main ones) and the results are not necessarily comparable between countries (different tests and, in particular, different languages tested).

Map 4

Countries that have participated in an EGRA/EGMA assessment since 2007, as of November 2019

CONDUCTING AN EGRA ASSESSMENT

TUNISIA

MOROCCO

ALGERIA

LYBIA

EGYPT

WESTERN SAHARA

MAURITANIA

MALI

NIGER

CHAD

SUDAN

ERYTREA

DJIBOUTI

CABO-VERDE

SENEGAL

THE GAMBIA

GUINEA

GUINEA-BISSAU

BURKINA FASO

NIGERIA

SIERRA LEONE

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

LIBERIA

SOUTH SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA

BENIN

GHANA

TOGO

CAMEROON

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

GABON

REP. OF CONGO

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UGANDA

RWANDA

BURUNDI

KENYA

TANZANIA

SEYCHELLES

ANGOLA

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

COMOROS

NAMIBIA

BOTSWANA

ZIMBABWE

MOZAMBIQUE

MAURITIUS

MADAGASCAR

EGRA

SWAZILAND

SOUTH AFRICA

LESOTHO

44. In 2015, 65 countries participated in EGRA worldwide (in 100 languages), Gove (2015).

45. https://dibels.uoregon.edu/

46. https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net

47. https://www.usaid.gov/education/usg-strategy

13. RECAP AND CONCLUSION

Sub-Saharan Africa has made tremendous progress in measuring learning outcomes since 2000, driven by regional programmes and the international community. Technical skills have been reinforced, bodies have been established, and political authorities have become aware of the value of regular measurement of the quality of learning outcomes by a mean other than their national examinations. Indicator 4.1.1 of SDG 4 induces regular measurement of learning outcomes since the adoption of the Education 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in 2015.

Based on a survey conducted by the TALENT network and additional information sources, a unique database on national assessment systems has been set up. The PASEC and SEACMEQ regional programmes for French-speaking and English-speaking Africa respectively cover 31 countries. These programmes play a leading role in disseminating the culture of assessing learning outcomes.

Most sub-Saharan African countries have or are in the process of developing a national policy covering the assessment of learning. Only 11 countries (23%) stated that they do not have such a policy. For most countries, the issue of assessment appears to be a component of their overall education policy or strategic development plans for the education sector. Technical and financial partners and the community have played a leading role in developing assessment policies, but national efforts remain insufficient. More technical and institutional support—in particular, discussions between peers—are desirable to improve the situation.

The majority of national assessments (27 countries) are conducted by staff from the Ministry of Education, sometimes within the framework of a dedicated national institution (21 countries) or a division of the Ministry of Education. The funding of assessment systems by donors and international projects (e.g. Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria) is significant. Establishing units for assessing learning outcomes or conducting national assessments are sometimes conditions for access to international funding. Funding is still too irregular and less than a quarter of the countries fund assessment systems from their own budgets. This is not consistent with the objective of sustainable and regular assessments of learning. National budgets

should take over from partners' projects when they come to an end. Provision should be made for the continuity of the learning assessment service.

Of the 42 countries for which information is available, 37 have conducted at least one national assessment since 2005. 34 of those assessments took place between 2015 and 2019. Only four countries (Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Tanzania) have not conducted a national assessment recently. The international community should focus more of its efforts on those countries.

The assessments have some methodological limitations. There is a discrepancy between the scientific procedures used in international programmes and national methods. Technical assistance efforts should be redoubled and better coordinated among partners to further improve the assessment methods. Economies of scale can be achieved in terms of guides and methodological documents at the sub-regional level under the auspices of PASEC and SEACMEQ.

The countries that responded to the question (33) all indicated the existence of results sharing, at least internally within the education system. The use of the assessment results falls into three main categories: curriculum/policy revision or reform, professional development of teachers, and targeting a specific area of learning. The results are rarely disseminated to non-teaching staff (headmasters/headmistresses, supervisors), even though they are supposed to oversee pedagogical changes. This points to the need to improve communication on results and to promote a culture of assessment and accountability among all those involved in the education system.

In Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the situation regarding the measurement of learning outcomes is changing for the better. However, there are significant variances between countries in terms of their national assessment systems. International aid should primarily target countries that do not have a national assessment system in place. For the countries that do have a such a system in place, there is a need to help them secure funding and improve their methods for regular monitoring of the quality of education.

SWOT diagnostic

Strengths
Regional programs have been well established since 1991 and are at the forefront of learning assessment. Real progress has been seen in setting up assessment bodies. There is a general trend towards establishing national assessments of learning outcomes.

Weaknesses
There remain discrepancies between the methods used in national assessments and international standards. Some countries have no system of national assessments in place.

Opportunities
Discussions between sub-Saharan countries are a means of advancing reflection on technical and institutional issues. Assessment of learning outcomes is a pillar of development assistance and international funding. Virtually all countries have integrated a learning outcomes component into their sector plans.

Threats
Funding relies partly on external sources and is not regular. International programmes can be seen as substitutes for national schemes, to the detriment of national assessments. There is a risk of political cover-up of the results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Promote the dissemination of French-language technical and scientific documents on assessing learning outcomes.

2. Promote discussions among sub-Saharan countries on the institutional positioning of assessment bodies (sharing of organisation charts, missions, and statuses).

3. Organise training on item response theory, the creation of tests that are comparable over time, and the creation of skills scales.

4. Improve the information on the funding of assessments (sources and cost structure).

5. Promote online publication of assessment reports.

6. Conduct regular quality measurements (every 3 years), in particular during the implementation of curriculum reforms.

7. Better target teachers in the dissemination of result.

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SACMEQ: http://www.sacmeq.org/

PISA: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/pisa-en-francais.htm

PIRLS and TIMSS: http://www.pirls.org/

UWEZO: https://www.uwezo.net/

A UNICEF overview of learning outcomes

https://www.unicef.org/french/education/index_achievement.html

The GPE approach to national systems for the assessment of learning outcomes

https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/blog/essai-pilote-dune-nouvelle-approche-de-levaluation-des-acquis-scolaires

IIEP's Learning Portal website

https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org

NORRAG on the promise of learning assessments

https://www.norrag.org/the-promise-of-large-scale-learning-assessments-acknowledging-limits-to-unlock-opportunities-by-sobhi-tawil-and-maya-prince/

ANNEX 1
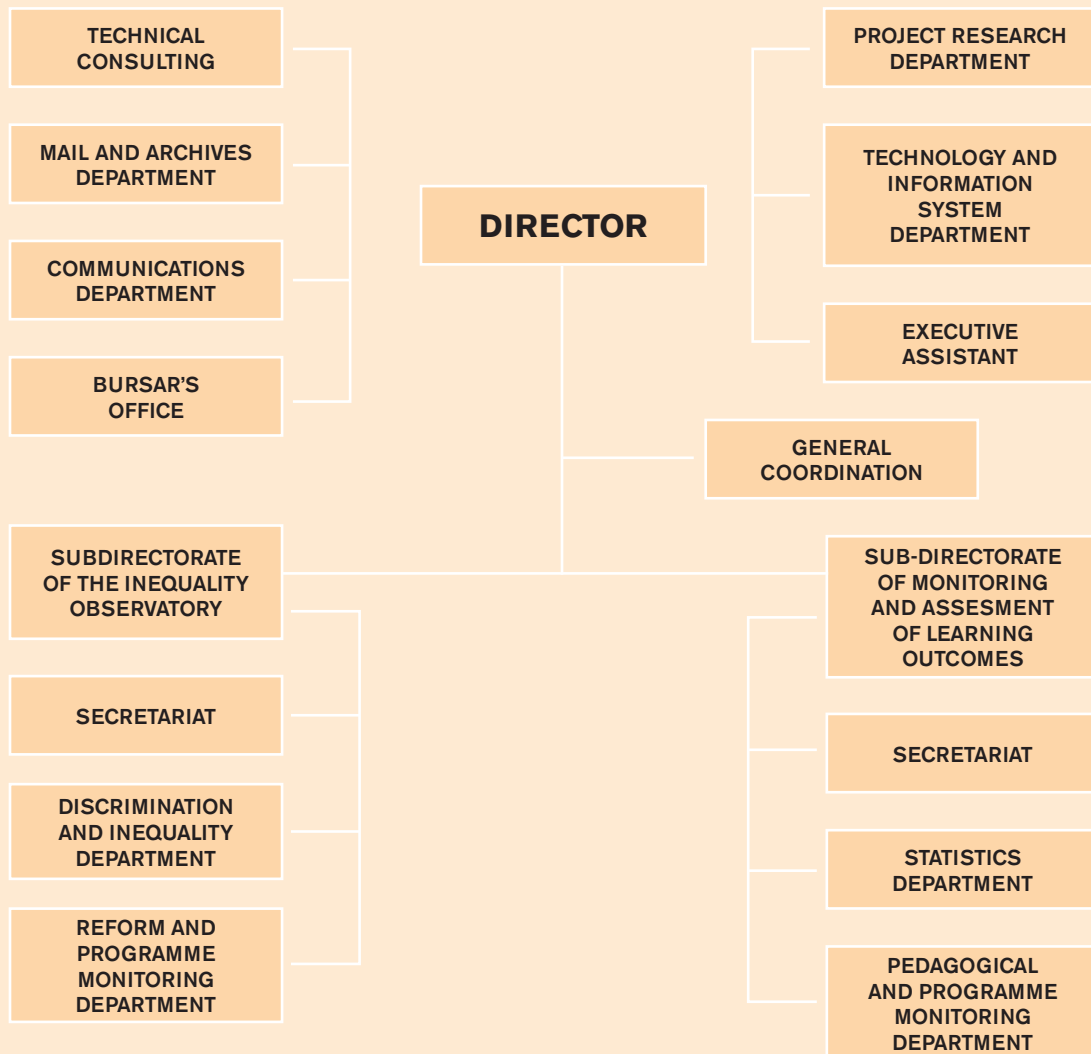## RESEARCH QUESTIONS FROM THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Are there existing national assessment policies? Or better yet, are such policies explicit and well integrated into the national education system?

• What types of assessments are conducted by the countries?

• How frequently are those assessments conducted?

• What is the governance structure of the national assessment system?

• What areas and skills are assessed?

• How are the assessment results disseminated?

• How are the assessment results put to use?

• How are teachers trained to assess students?

• What challenges were mentioned by the national director of learning assessment systems?

• What conclusions can be drawn in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to gauge the achievement of the learning objectives outlined in SDG 4?

ANNEX 2

EXAMPLE OF THE DVSP ORGANISATION CHART AND MISSIONS (CÔTE D'IVOIRE)

ORGANISATION CHART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAMME MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP (DVSP)

TECHNICAL CONSULTING		PROJECT RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
MAIL AND ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT		TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SYSTEM DEPARTMENT
COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT	**DIRECTOR**	EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
BURSAR'S OFFICE		
	GENERAL COORDINATION	
SUBDIRECTORATE OF THE INEQUALITY OBSERVATORY		SUB-DIRECTORATE OF MONITORING AND ASSESMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES
SECRETARIAT		SECRETARIAT
DISCRIMINATION AND INEQUALITY DEPARTMENT		STATISTICS DEPARTMENT
REFORM AND PROGRAMME MONITORING DEPARTMENT		PEDAGOGICAL AND PROGRAMME MONITORING DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MISSIONS

The Directorate for Programme Monitoring and Follow-up (DVSP) is responsible for:

- Assessing students' learning outcomes and skills
- Conducting systemic analyses of the functioning of education
- Monitoring reforms of the education system
- Conducting studies and research in the field of assessment, survey instruments
- Developing international partnerships and ensuring participation in comparative assessments at the sub-regional and international levels
- Publishing data and analytical findings on discrimination and inequalities in access, quality and performance in education
- Evaluating curriculums and academic performance
- Disseminating the results of assessments to the relevant target audience so that the data can be put to use

SPECIFIC MISSIONS OF THE SUB-DIRECTORATES AND DEPARTMENTS

The DVSP has two sub-directorates:

A. THE SUB-DIRECTORATE FOR THE MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

That sub-directorate has two departments:

The pedagogy department, which is responsible for:
- Analysing the official, implemented, and conducted curriculum in order to identify the various learning objectives
- Designing and writing survey instruments
- Collecting information in order to analyse the factors determining quality
- Administrating and encoding those measurement instruments
- Contributing to the preparation of various reports in collaboration with the staff of the other departments of the Sub-Directorate for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes.
- Initiate studies on the state of implementation of curriculums with a view to taking corrective measures

The statistics department, which is responsible for:
- Directing data collection
- Entering and cleaning up the collected data
- Building and managing statistical databases
- Promoting the construction of indicators for monitoring educational and pedagogical results
- Training the other members of the Sub-Directorate for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes in statistical analysis techniques.
- Contributing to the preparation of various reports in collaboration with the staff of the other departments of the Sub-Directorate for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes.

B. SUBDIRECTORATE OF THE INEQUALITY OBSERVATORY

That sub-directorate consists of two departments:

The Discrimination and Inequalities in Access, Quality, and Performance in the Education Department is responsible for:
• Monitoring the analysis of discriminatory factors influencing school performance with a view to improving the education system
• Ensuring equity of access and equal opportunities for all
• Studying disparities in performance and in the allocation of human and material resources
• Ensuring equity in terms of learning conditions for all students
• Collecting data to monitor equity within the system
• Promoting inclusive education

The Reform and Programme Monitoring Department is responsible for:
• Monitoring the various reforms
• Analysing educational programmes
• Designing and writing survey instruments
• Monitoring and evaluation of the various pilot schemes

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This document was prepared by M. Pierre Varly, expert consultant
in the analysis of education systems under the supervision
of the TALENT Secretariat.

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en Afrique

ancefa
Education For All

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Sustainable
development
goals

confemen
pasec
Programme d'analyse des systèmes
éducatifs de la confemen

Education International
Internationale de l'Education
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

REESAO

GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION

unicef

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency