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Effective literacy programmes

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**Going from literacy to lifelong
education**

**The measurement of the right to education in
Burkina Faso**

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Acronyms

CEAP:	Elementary Teaching Certificate
CEB:	Basic Education District
CEP:	Primary Teachers Certificate
CSI	Information Authority
ENEP:	National Primary Teacher Training College
F:	Formal
FCB:	Complementary Basic Training
GAP:	Group of Teaching Assistants
IL	Initial Literacy
NF:	Nonformal
PASEC:	Education System Analysis Programme of the CONFEMEN
PDDEB:	Decennial Plan for the Development of Basic Education
GNP:	Gross National Product
GAR	Gross Admission Rate
GER:	Gross Enrolment Ratio
NER:	Net Enrolment Ratio

1. SUMMARY

1. The creation of the Ministry of Basic Education and Mass Literacy in 1988 was the result of the fact that those in charge of policy matters in Burkina Faso wanted to fight against illiteracy both upstream, by efforts undertaken towards overall enrolment (development of primary education), and downstream by massive literacy campaigns (Commando and Bantaare) directed towards an adult population of which at that time 85% were illiterate. This vision meant that the two educational sub-systems had to be integrated, the formal and the nonformal, in order to establish the reciprocal reinforcement of both, a capitalization of acquired knowledge, and a rational use of resources. This led to the development of the Decennial Plan for the Development of Basic Education (PDDEB, 2001-2010), the objective of which was to render effective the right to basic education for all (children, adolescents, adults). The three component parts of the PDDEB deal with the whole of the system without distinguishing the formal from the nonformal: its access as well as its quality together with piloting skills.

2. In order to take this integration into account, administrative and teaching arrangements were made. For example, the primary teaching districts became the basic education districts (CEB). The training given in the National Primary Teacher Training Colleges (ENEP) and in the National *Grande Ecole* for Teacher Management takes into account both the formal and the informal sectors.

3. However, the tendency, or the risk, remains that of seeing the nonformal diluted into the formal, particularly because of the lack of relevant tools for the evaluation, in a specific manner, of the various programmes, but also so that comparisons can be made. Hence it is necessary to maintain the visibility of each sub-system because they are complementary and must mutually reinforce each other. However, the indicators retained for the evaluation of the PDDEB concentrate more on the formal to the detriment of the nonformal (only three indicators out of sixty deal with the nonformal, the others applying to the formal sector...).

4. As a result, the study on the measurement of the right to education offers, at one and the same time, the possibility to those responsible for the implementation of the PDDEB both to extend and to go into more detail with regard to the existing evaluation framework in order to shed light on what needs to be done both in the formal as well as in the nonformal sector.

2. Introduction

1. The creation of the Ministry for Basic Education and Mass Literacy in 1988 was the result of the fact that those in charge of policy matters in Burkina Faso wanted to fight against illiteracy both upstream, by efforts undertaken towards overall enrolment (development of primary education), and downstream, by massive literacy campaigns (Commando and Bantaare) directed towards an adult population of which at that time 85% were illiterate. This vision meant that the two educational sub-systems had to be integrated, the formal and the nonformal in order to establish not only the reciprocal reinforcement of both but also a capitalization of acquired knowledge and a rational use of resources. This led to the development of the Decennial Plan for the Development of Basic Education (PDDEB, 2001-2010), the objective of which was to render effective the right to basic education for all (children, adolescents, adults). The three component

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3. Objectives of the research

4. The originality of the research undertaken on the measurement of the right to education lies in its approach through the four 'A's, inspired by United Nations' texts: acceptability, adaptability, availability, accessibility. Contrary to a more classical approach with regard to evaluation which puts more emphasis on access to the system and deals with its internal effectiveness, the aim of the research was to take into account the actual expectations and demands of the actors in order to attain greater effectiveness in the right to education. This means thus integrating the cultural, economical, political and technical dimensions of the education system by the following means:

- 1) Acceptability. Is it acceptable to the various populations? Is everyone in agreement with the objectives of the education given?
- 2) Adaptability. Is it adaptable to the various needs and contexts of the pupils or those learning?
- 3) Availability. Is it provided in a way which corresponds to real needs in terms of the people needed and the equipment required?
- 4) Accessibility. Is it accessible to all people?¹

5. This approach has shown its relevance with regard to rights. It links the complexity of the field to the interaction of the actor(s) (persons and institutions) and to the indivisibility of rights. The link to rights has been established, which means that an ethical and highly functional unity has been created, in as much as the right to basic education examined is directly related to the rights to both food and to care as part of the

¹ The United Nations, CESCR (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), general comments concerning Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, November 1999, Geneva.

fundamental rights of man (for example, indicator 1.1 of availability, relative to undernourished children at the age of four; indicator 3.4 of acceptability, on the schools which have a first-aid kit), to the rights of freedom of expression, of information (for example, indicator 4.1 on the adaptability of the system, in relation to the number of radios containing basic education in their programmes), of participation and association (for example, indicator 2.7 of acceptability, in relation to the percentage of schools with an active parent-pupil's association).

4. Presentation of the main results

6. The education chart (cf Annex 1) has been drawn up on the basis of values established by the actors with reference to the four above-mentioned capacities. It is therefore not a straightforward evaluation exercise of the education system but rather the effective taking into account of the expectations and the demands of the actors concerned. In this respect, fifty-two indicators have been created that respect the balance between individual and institutional data, between the data concerning the formal and nonformal sector (cf Annex 2).

What are the important messages that can be learned from this approach, the aim of which is to achieve the measurement of the right to education?

7.

- **This approach, which uses the four capacities of the education system, means that the multidimensional character of the right can be more easily grasped by its study from various perspectives.** Other than the usual data on the conditions of access to the system (the principles of non-discrimination), and availability (human and material), it is possible to evaluate the values relative to the acceptability and the adaptability of the system (28 indicators, cf Annex 2). These two capacities relate more specifically to the actor's or actors' demands by evaluating the system's objectives with regard to rights (based on its relevance, acceptability, cf Annex 3), and its results, not only in terms of school registration but also on the real amount of basic knowledge that has in fact been acquired (effectiveness of the system due to its adaptability).

8.

- **The chart on the right to education, which has as its aim the integration and the highlighting of data relative to the nonformal sector, has shown that one can create indicators which are specific to the nonformal sector.** In other words, there are relevant alternatives to the one single way of measuring the literacy rate (9 indicators, cf Annex 2).

9.

- **Research has also shown that it is possible to evaluate literacy and training programmes in the nonformal sector with the indicators which already exist for the formal sector** for those who have not been able to benefit, or at least not entirely, from basic primary education (15 indicators, for example, the rate and degree of basic knowledge, the dropout and wastage rate, the success rate, the availability of basic teaching materials, the cost of schooling and of literacy, cf Annex 2). Even if the indicators sometimes need to be slightly adapted, they can generally be applied in the same way to both sectors – the formal and the informal.

This approach has two sides to it. On the one hand, it is a little costly. However, on the other, it enables comparisons to be made which can be very useful for both sectors.

10.

- The chart thus created confirms that the means alone are not significant. The positive and negative dynamics which are linked to the basic education policies that have been put in place are clearly visible in the disaggregated data. With regard to the positive dynamics, girl/boy parity can be seen to have particularly improved over the last three school years in the net enrolment ratio. In the nonformal sector, a high level of success is visible (indicator 3.5, adaptability), as well as a positive rate of increase in the number of those in Initial Literacy (IL) and in Complementary Basic Training (FBC) during the last campaign (indicator 1.2.2, accessibility). It also has to be underlined that there has been an increase in public financing. As for the negative dynamics, inequality of treatment can be observed with regard to the child's family status (given into others' care for studies, or not given, that is, at home with its family), and the type of residence and environment (urban-rural). In an urban area, a girl in the care of others has less chance of being enrolled than the girl who is at home (indicator 1.3.1, accessibility).

11.

- **The obligation of achieving results is particularly important with regard to the acquisition of basic knowledge, which is guaranteed by the quality of the teaching as well as by a minimal number of teaching hours dispensed.** There is an initial obligation to guarantee a minimal number of effective teaching hours per year (for example, indicator 1.2, adaptability, on the average number of teaching hours per year, cf see below). In the formal sector, the acquisition of knowledge cannot be simply reduced to the knowledge acquired in school but must also take into account skills in everyday life (Jomtien 1990). It is also necessary to measure the degree of basic knowledge acquired in the nonformal sector. In the case of Burkina Faso, significant results have been achieved that avoid the simple distinction between those that have been declared either literate or illiterate.

12.

- **With regard to the nonformal sector, the indicators have for the first time enabled the measurement of the actions taken by the various actors in relation to those who have not been enrolled, or to those who are no longer enrolled, whose educational needs have not been satisfied.** The strengths and the weakness of the nonformal sector have thus appeared more clearly, permitting the eradication of certain generally accepted ideas.
For example: adaptability, an indicator relating to the rate of success in the alpha certificate (high); indicator 4.2 on the percentage of alpha centres that organize reading and writing clubs (high); availability: indicator 2.3, on the percentage of alpha centres constructed in definitive materials (weak); indicator 2.7, on the admission structures for early childhood (high); accessibility, indicator 1.1.3, the relationship between men/women's wastage rate (unequal), etc.

13.

- **The indicators underline the question of the education of girls and women.**

This question is central to development and the fight against poverty. The public and private actors are responsible for the progress made in this area. The strategies to be implemented cannot be the same for girls, on the one hand (the result of the admission requirements and of teaching), and for women on the other hand (emphasis being laid on child care and activities which generate income).

5. Presentation of a few key indicators

14.

- ▶ **The number of effective teaching hours per year (formal and nonformal).**

This indicator evaluates the real possibility of acquiring basic knowledge in relation to the benefits accrued from a minimum volume of annual teaching time.

In Burkina Faso, the official volume of hours is, in theory, somewhere between 720 and 1,020 hours per year, according to the reference basis (Law of Orientation, the annual ministerial order, and local academic decisions concerning the opening of new classes). It should be noted, that in the explanatory causes regarding a class not being held, only the absence of teachers for professional administrative or training reasons are taken into account. The result thus corresponds to the difference between the total number of teaching days without a teacher, apart from public holidays, official days off, or holiday periods in general, and the total volume of teaching hours required in relation to the province concerned.

The result of surveys undertaken in a province was, in theory, 599 hours of courses given. The interpretation of this indicator brings to light a basic problem: the capacity of the system to offer a complete educational service and to respect it, and knowing how to adapt it to external constraints of all kinds which exercise pressure upon it. It is interesting to compare the results on a scientific but on a non-declarative basis both with those of the countries in the sub-region and with international standards (980 hours, according to the World Education Report, UNESCO).

15.

- ▶ **The test concerning the level attained in Mathematics and in French in the fifth year CM1 (F) and the degree of basic knowledge attained (NF).**

This indicator, originally used to evaluate the rate of basic knowledge acquired, should give information on the percentage of those who, having accomplished a complete cycle of education, still retain for some time afterwards skills which correspond to fundamental educational needs as defined at the Jomtien and Dakar Conferences (reading, writing, arithmetic and general functional knowledge, allowing for socio economic integration as a citizen into the local way of life and its development). Due to this fact, the information obtained from this indicator could have represented the authentic sign for those concerned that the right to education had been effectively satisfied in relation to the definition in international law on basic education for all, at any stage of life (according to the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the general comment no. 13.)

With regard to *the formal* sector, as this type of data was not available, the researchers referred to the PASEC tests established to this end. These tests give the possibility of obtaining a comparative basis which exists, at one and the same time, in both time and space. To be precise, the PASEC tests give the level attained in the

fifth year (CM1) in French and in Mathematics, though not on the real level of the pupils' basic knowledge at the end of their training.

With regard to the *nonformal* sector, since no data, no more than the national or sub-regional tools, were available to establish the rate of basic knowledge acquired, it was decided to undertake specific surveys, using a more advanced idea, currently being studied internationally: the degree of basic knowledge acquired. The degree of basic knowledge takes into account various levels of diverse skills (rather than one, which allows for the classification of some as literate and others as remaining illiterate).

The results show that the year following the end of a complete cycle of literacy (IL + FCB), 7 adults out of 10 can be considered as literate according to UNESCO standards, but only about 1 out of 2 can be considered as having skills according to the criteria set out in Dakar with regard to the rate of basic knowledge to be acquired. A great difference can be noted in the results according to the gender, but there is no significant difference as far as age is concerned.

P: Year 2004

F: Test in French: 13/34

Test in Mathematics: 18/33

NF:

Results in %	M	F	Total	15-24 years old
1/ Can express themselves in writing: can produce a short text related to their life (literate according to UNESCO standards)	77.0	57.0	70.0	71.0
2/ Can write a message without leaving out essential information (identity of the person sending it and of the person receiving it, the subject matter of the communication being clear) (functionally literate)	46.0	37.0	43.0	42.0
3/ Mastery of writing and of adding up 3 numbers containing various figures	50.0	37.0	46.5	46.0
4/ Percentage of good answers to elementary questions in history/geography/agriculture	59.0	47.5	55.0	51.0

16.

▶ **The number of radios including basic education in their schedules.**

This indicator is a measurement of the dynamics of the system, at least as far as the nonformal sector is concerned. In fact, the broadcasting of information about literacy often results in the creation of literacy centres and acts as a stimulus to the centres' management committees. The indicator is also a factor which adds to the dynamics of educational demand and to the activities of the parent-pupils' associations. Finally, radio is an important means of transmitting information to a population which is mainly illiterate.

Out of the 29 radios in the registry compiled by the Information Authority (CSI) throughout Burkina Faso, 14 included in their schedule a programme on basic education. Only those programmes which covered specific information on basic education were retained. These programmes are mainly for children, educators and parent-educators. They give practical information on education (*kids' frequencies, children's space, small primary school children's appointment, rucksack*), and, for some, information on literacy (programmes on linguistics).

It should be noted that all the radios that are in existence in Burkina Faso are not included by the CSI. In fact, only those are put on their register that have transmitted an up-to-date dossier containing a financial statement, a schedule of their programmes, and a detailed report on the persons hired.

17.

▶ **The percentage of literacy centres which include activities that generate revenues for their learners.**

This indicator measures the proportion of literacy centres which, in conformity with the national consensual doctrine on this matter, effectively links the acquisition of basic knowledge to the production of good or services which generate revenues. In this doctrine, basic education is not an end in itself but is an element in the positive dynamics of local, and in particular, economic development.

This indicator was chosen because of the importance given by the learners, in particular, by the girls/women, to the existence of these activities which generate revenues. The field surveys have shown that the admission rate to these literacy centres depended particularly on the fact that those that work took into account how much they would lose elsewhere in earnings. It seems that it is less the real cost of the access to the programmes (registration costs and the buying of stationery/materials) that puts a brake on literacy for adults but rather the lack of income due to giving up remunerated activity (rural activities, breeding/rearing, small businesses), and/or those that are useful socially, in particular for women (care for members of the family, family activities and constraints, domestic tasks).

6. Conclusion

The chart on the right to education is **a tool that can be used for observation, piloting and training.**

In this respect, it is a relevant basis on which to create an observatory, the main tasks of which would be to ensure the availability of the data sources, their accessibility and their interpretation. Its role in following up and analyzing the data should be linked to the Decennial Plan for the Development of Basic Education and the Strategic Framework to Fight Poverty.