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# USE OF LEARNING ASSESSMENT DATA IN THE PLANNING CYCLE CASE STUDY – SENEGAL

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	French Agency for Development
Bac	Baccalaureate
BFEE	Certificate of Middle Cycle Studies
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CFEE	Certificate of End of Elementary Studies
CONFEMEN	Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries
DEE	<i>Direction de l'Enseignement Élémentaire</i> /Directorate of Elementary Education
DEMSG	<i>Direction de l'Enseignement Moyen Secondaire Général</i> // Directorate of Secondary Education
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GNPE	<i>Groupe National des Partenaires de l'Éducation</i> /National Group of Education Partners
GoS	Government of Senegal
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GSE	<i>Groupe Sectoriel de l'Éducation</i> /Education Sector Group
IA	<i>Inspections d'Académie</i> /Regional Education Inspectors
IEF	<i>Inspecteurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation</i> /Education and Training District Inspectors
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning – UNESCO
INEADE	<i>Institut National d'Études et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Éducation</i> /National Institute for Studies and Action for the Development of Education
JSR	Joint Sector Review
LMICs	Lower- and Middle-Income Countries
LPT	USAID Lecture Pour Tous Project
MEN	Ministry of National Education
PADES	<i>Programme d'Appui au Développement à l'Éducation au Sénégal</i> //Education Development Support Program
PAQEEB	Project Quality Improvement and Equity and Basic Education
PAQUET	<i>Programme d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence du secteur de l'Éducation et de la Formation</i> /Education and Training Quality, Equity, and Transparency Improvement Program
PASEC	Program for the Analysis of Educational Systems
SG	Secretary General
SIMEN	<i>Système d'Informatique et de Management de l'Éducation Nationale</i> /Education Management Information System

SNERS	<i>Système National d'Évaluation des Rendements Scolaires</i> /National System for the Evaluation of School Results
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

## I. INTRODUCTION

In its World Development Report 2018,<sup>1</sup> the World Bank raised an alert for a “learning crisis” in global education that affects millions of children and youth in low and middle-income countries.<sup>2</sup> Without learning, education cannot be utilized as an instrument to combat poverty, and children and youth will not be furnished with better life opportunities.

The newest data released by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics show that 202 million children and adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa are not reaching minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics even though two-thirds of them are enrolled in school.<sup>3</sup>

The Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 4 in particular widened the range of focus from access to education (Millennium Development Goal 2) to a more comprehensive approach that includes equity and learning for all.<sup>4</sup> The use of learning assessment systems and data are therefore key elements of the resulting, expanded agenda.

In the context, USAID joined the research project initiated by UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) on the use of learning assessment data in the educational planning cycle.<sup>5</sup> The aim of the six-country study in sub-Saharan Africa is to generate context-specific knowledge on the use of learning assessment data in planning processes. USAID and IIEP are making the findings available to national decision makers, so that learning assessment data can inform educational planning cycles, including strategy choice, resource allocation, and the monitoring of plans. This qualitative study employs a multi-case-study design and will provide an in-depth analysis of national assessment systems in selected sub-Saharan African countries.

## 2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SENEGAL

In Senegal, ten years of basic education (which consists of six years in primary education and four in lower secondary education) are compulsory and free by law and have been so since 2004. Recently, one year of pre-primary education was added to the offering of basic education.

Senegal has made significant progress in increasing the enrollment numbers of children in school. As evidence of this development, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for preschool increased from 15.2 percent in 2013 to 16.8 percent in 2015. Additionally, the GER for primary education increased from almost 76 percent in 2003 to 93 percent in 2013, but subsequently decreased to 87.3 percent in 2017

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, “World Development Report 2018: LEARNING to Realize Education’s Promise,” 2017, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, “World Bank warns of ‘learning crisis’ in global education,” September 26, 2017, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/09/26/world-bank-warns-of-learning-crisis-in-global-education>

<sup>3</sup> UIS, “More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide,” UIS factsheet No. 46, 2017, September 2017, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs46-more-than-half-children-not-learning-en-2017.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Target 4.1 sets the following goal: “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” with two indicators: 4.1.1., which references the proportion of children and young people a) in Grade 2 or 3, b) at the end of primary education, and c) at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in i) reading and ii) mathematics, by sex; and 4.1.2., which references the administration of a nationally representative learning assessment a) in Grade 2 or 3, b) at the end of primary education, and c) at the end of lower secondary education.

<sup>5</sup> The study is based on the methodological guidelines developed by IIEP.

(Ministry of National Education, 2018: 2). The primary education completion rate was 61.82 percent in 2017, which is 1.92 points higher than it was in 2016. However, the GER drops sharply, to 58 percent, when looking at the middle school level. For upper secondary education, the GER was 34.06 percent in 2016, which is above the target of 27.1 percent. The completion rate for lower secondary education increased from 34.7 percent in 2012 to 39.5 percent in 2015 (MEN, 2017b: 9).

Despite these accomplishments, enrollment rates are still below the targets set by the Ministry of National Education.<sup>6</sup> The GER for pre-primary education is lower than an average of 20 percent on the continent in 2012.<sup>7</sup> In Senegal, where 37 percent of the population consists of school-aged children, some 1.5 million are out of school (USAID, 2017a: ii).

Moreover, the joint sector review (JSR) 2019 recorded its compilers' observation that both access and quality indicators are below expectations. Like in many other LMICs, the quality of education in primary and middle school has remained stagnant as access has increased. According to the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Senegal "only about 6 percent of the children who enter first grade will finish middle school, often because they are ill-prepared at the primary level to advance on to the middle school level." Many challenges experienced by the Senegal education system are those common to lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs), such as a lack of trained teachers, a shortage of instructional resources, and a challenging school environment.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of equity, there are significant geographical disparities among the regions; for instance, the GER in primary education in Dakar is 104 percent, while in Kaffrine it is just 47 percent (MEN, 2018a: 59). According to PASEC 2014, Senegal shows the highest disparities among quintiles for the ten countries analyzed (MEN, 2017b: 13).

The language of instruction in formal education is still French, which is not the mother tongue of the vast majority of children in Senegal.

### 3. MAIN STAKEHOLDERS IN EDUCATION IN SENEGAL

The Ministry of National Education (MEN) is in charge of basic education (pre-primary to lower secondary) and high-secondary in Senegal. In addition to the MEN, there is a Ministry for Higher Education and another for Vocational and Professional Training. At the decentralized level, the Regional Education Inspectors (*Inspections d'Académie* or IA) and the Education District Inspectors (which employ Education and Training District Inspectors or *Inspecteurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation*—IEF) are in charge of coordinating educational activities (from pre-primary to high-secondary) by region and district, respectively. At the local level, the local governments (or *collectivités territoriales*, which consist of assemblies, local councils, and majors) also have responsibilities in education.

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<sup>6</sup> The education system is incapable of absorbing the influx of new students who enter the school system each year (note that the population's annual growth rate is 2.8 percent <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=SN>)

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO, "Regional Overview: Sub-Saharan Africa," Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, [https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/regional\\_overview\\_SSA\\_en.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/regional_overview_SSA_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, "Education," USAID/Senegal, accessed November 2019, <https://www.usaid.gov/senegal/education>

The main actor in the learning assessment system in Senegal is the *Institut National d'Études et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Éducation* (INEADE), which is a semi-autonomous agency at the MEN dependent on the cabinet of the Minister of Education. The INEADE was created in the 1980s to conduct evaluations to measure learning outcomes and to evaluate and develop textbooks. Most learning assessments are conducted by the evaluation division of the INEADE.<sup>9</sup> The learning assessment data from all evaluations are then analyzed internally by the INEADE, except in the case of PASEC and PISA-D, for which the INEADE collects data but does not perform analysis.

The Education Planning and Reform Directorate (*Direction de la Planification et de la Réforme de l'Éducation-DPRE*) assumes leadership at the strategic level, and they are the focal point for the PASEC evaluation.<sup>10</sup> They produce statistical data, albeit not on learning since that is a responsibility of the INEADE.

There are two technical/pedagogical directorates, one for primary education (*Direction de l'Enseignement Élémentaire—DEE*) and one for secondary education (*Direction de l'Enseignement Moyen Secondaire Général—DEMSG*), both of which are oriented toward remedial intervention and focused on formative assessment at the school level.

The Education Management Information System (*Système d'Informatique et de Management de l'Éducation Nationale—SIMEN*) is a powerful system for merging all existing Senegalese educational data collection systems. However, only 20 percent of schools that have Internet connection are currently able to utilize SIMEN, and only information from grade-level standardized learning assessments is included in this database.

USAID, the World Bank, and the French Agency for Development (AFD) are the main donors in the education sector. Senegal has been a member of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) since 2006, and it has received several grants worth almost US\$170 million.

Development partners in Senegal carry out political and technical dialogue through the National Group of Education Partners (*Groupe National des Partenaires de l'Éducation—GNPE*) and the Education Sector Group (*Groupe Sectoriel de l'Éducation—GSE*).

## 4. DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS IN SENEGAL

### Intended Use of Learning Assessment Data

Since the Ten-Years Education and Training Program 2001-2010, and especially since the *Programmes d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence du secteur de l'Éducation et de la Formation* (PAQUET 2013-2025 and PAQUET 2018-2030), the quality of learning outcomes has been a

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<sup>9</sup> There are certain assessments that are conducted at IA level: 'Chaque académie a des évaluations standardisées et harmonisées (au niveau de l'académie) conçues et pilotées par l'académie (région) avec l'assistance des IEF dans la collecte des données. Au niveau de l'enseignement élémentaire, il s'agit des « évaluations standardisées » qui sont coordonnées au niveau des IEF et des IA pour les élèves du CM1 et CM2 en amont de l'examen.'

<sup>10</sup> INEADE also works with PASEC teams.

main concern for the MEN. However, given the ministry and its developments partners' substantial investment in the education sector, results were not as expected.

The INEADE conducts different types of assessments—standardized, regional/local, national, and international—however, their role and responsibilities are different in each of them. For each evaluation, they set specific objectives and data types so that all the evaluations are coordinated and complementary. In order to ensure the efficient monitoring of education quality, including the quality of remedial programs, data must be able to inform program indicators as well as dialogue with pedagogical directorates. For instance, the INEADE develops a framework for each *Système National d'Évaluation des Rendements Scolaires* or National System for the Evaluation of School Results (SNERS) that includes the objectives, the agency responsible for the assessment, the subjects to be evaluated, the type(s) of tests, etc.

Building on their significant experience with conducting standardized evaluations, Senegal is now developing a policy framework for conducting assessments and using learning assessment data. While the framework is in development and its content is unknown at the time of the study, respondents noted that it should involve all relevant directorates as well as all types of evaluations in the Senegalese education system.

### Learning Assessments Used in Senegal

All learning assessments are done in primary education. Additionally, teachers across all levels conduct formative assessments at the classroom level. PISA for Development (PISA-D) is conducted with 15-year-old children.

In Senegal, there are several types of assessments that are conducted across the entire education system:<sup>11</sup>

- *Système National d'Évaluation des Rendements Scolaires* or National System for the Evaluation of School Results (SNERS)
- Assessments at decentralized levels
- Continuous (formative) assessments at classroom/school level
- Examinations (certificative evaluations)

The main standardized assessments done in Senegal is the SNERS, administered, in principle, every two years. The SNERS, which is the first standardized Senegalese learning assessment, was created in 1994 (and conducted for the first time in 1996) as the education system's response to its difficulties and as a means of measuring students' proficiency in mathematics, reading, and science. The aim of the SNERS is to verify the level of implementation of the curriculum in the system. Its objectives are: 1) collect information about students' average performance levels in French, mathematics, and science; 2) calculate proficiencies for different regions; and 3) identify the variables (e.g., sex, school status, and location<sup>12</sup>) that influence the quality of education. The INEADE is in charge of the SNERS, so it designs the tests and coordinates the administration of the evaluation, which the World Bank has supported for two

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<sup>11</sup> None of these evaluations/assessments are available on the MEN's website. Most of them were obtained from donors.

<sup>12</sup> SNERS does not include data for refugees/internally displaced people.

decades. In most cases, SNERS assessments were carried out in grades two (CP) and four (CE2). Sampling (n=9,990 in 2017) is representative at the national level, but not at the regional and district levels.<sup>13</sup> The last SNERS was conducted in 2017. The MEN did not conduct the SNERS in the past two years because of lack of resources (due to the World Bank's decision to withdraw funding).

**Learning assessments at decentralized levels:** Under the supervision of the DEE and the DEMSG, each region (called a *académie* in the education sector) conducts standardized assessments (by sampling), which are conceptualized, implemented, and monitored by the regions with the support of inspectors at the regional and district levels. The results are analyzed at the regional level without harmonization among the regions, which means that results are not comparable as each region processes the data in a different way. Pre-and post-tests are done by the same students at the beginning and end of the school year, in reading and mathematics in grades two (CP), four (CE2), and six (CM2). The main objective of this practice is to identify those students who have learning difficulties in order to select appropriate remedial actions.

Quarterly continuous standardized assessments are also conducted **in all schools** (as a census with participation from all students in certain grades) at the district level by district and academy inspectors. The objectives are to: 1) harmonize progression by level and grade, 2) improve the internal efficiency of the system (at the school level), and 3) improve students' school exam results and link them to remedial actions. In the classroom, teachers use formative and summative evaluations. The results of these evaluations are mainly used to decide which children will move on to the next level.

Moreover, **examinations** at the end of each cycle are conducted to mark students' transition to the next educational cycle. For primary education, this certificate is the Certificate of End of Elementary Studies (*Certificat de Fin d'Études Élémentaires—CFEE*); for lower secondary education, it is the Certificate of Middle Cycle Studies (*Brevet de Fin d'Études Moyennes—BFEE*); and for high secondary education, it is the *Baccalauréat* (Bac).

Together with the SNERS, another large-scale national assessment conducted in Senegal is the EGRA. The first EGRA was conducted by the World Bank and RTI in 2007 in French and Wolof for grades two and three. A second EGRA was conducted by the RTI and the Hewlett Foundation in 2009; it was done in French and involved 687 third graders from 50 schools in 11 regions. Of the students assessed, 26 percent could not read a single one- or two-syllable word (RTI, 2010: 15). Students read, on average, five words-per-minute (wpm) in grade one, 20 wpm in grade two, and 35 wpm in grade three, all of which are below what is considered a necessary level of fluency to ensure comprehension. As of 2009, no EGRA was conducted in Senegal because the SNERS took over (in writing); however, the USAID-funded Lecture Pour Tous project administered an EGRA baseline test in 2017 and a midline in 2019 in all program schools.

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<sup>13</sup> The SNERS assessment was representative at the regional level only for the 2012-2013.

At the international level, Senegal participated in PASEC<sup>14</sup> (in 1996, 2007, 2014, and 2019)<sup>15</sup> and in PISA for Development or PISA-D<sup>16</sup> in 2015. PASEC and PISA-D both have comparative approaches across the various countries in which they operate, and both are sample-based.<sup>17</sup>

PASEC evaluates second- and sixth-grade students in their language of instruction and in mathematics. PASEC 2007 highlighted that there was no significant improvement in the level of pupil learning since 1996. While Senegal outperformed most participating countries in PASEC 2014, the country's learning levels are low. Results reveal that the vast majority of children in Senegal are not completing primary education with sufficient competency in mathematics and reading. In fact, only an estimated 32 percent of the children completing primary school have reached the minimum acceptable levels in reading (in French) and mathematics (World Bank, 2018: 7). Looking at second graders specifically, 71 percent did not have sufficient competencies in reading, and 50 percent fell short in mathematics. For sixth-graders, 60 percent of students reached the minimum level in both subjects (PASEC, 2016). The PASEC reports collect contextual data as well. PASEC 2019 will measure competencies in national languages and will also include a survey for teachers. PASEC includes information at the classroom level, but the report is generated by region.

**PISA for Development (PISA-D):**<sup>18</sup> Senegal is one of the three sub-Saharan African countries that conducted the PISA-D test in 2017. This assessment tests 15-year-old in-school children. However, in the case of Senegal, due to the large amount of out-of-school youth, 71 percent of 15-year-old children were not eligible (PISA, 33).<sup>19</sup> According to former Minister of National Education Serigne Mbaye Thiam, Senegal set two major objectives in July 2014 when it signed the protocol for participation in this international assessment program. The first objective was to develop an instrument capable of acquiring external data for a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the Senegalese education system, in addition to other assessments conducted at the national or regional level. The second objective was to capitalize on PISA's expertise in order to strengthen the capacities of national experts and stakeholders in the field of learning assessment management.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Senegal pledged to identify factors linked to student underperformance. This is necessary because the report on Senegal<sup>21</sup> indicates that 91 percent of students are performing at level one (out of a total of six levels) in reading and mathematics, and 96 percent are performing at level one in the sciences. It recommends strengthening the competency-based approach in secondary education, redefining pre-service and in-service training for

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<sup>14</sup> *Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN—Conférence des Ministres de l'Éducation des États et Gouvernements de la Francophonie*. Established in 1991, the PASEC provides information about the evolution of education systems' performance and contribute to the development and monitoring of education policies. Over two decades, more than 20 African and Asian countries have been supported by PASEC while conducting national evaluations. In 2012, in order to better meet countries' needs, PASEC established internationally comparative evaluations.

<sup>15</sup> The results of the latest one are still in the analysis phase, and the report will be published in 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Program for International Student Assessment—PISA for Development.

<sup>17</sup> According to the PAQEEB program document "PISA as well as TIMMS and PIRLS for grades 4 and 8 will also be introduced" (page 28). This was not the case, except for PISA.

<sup>18</sup> OECD, "PISA for Development," accessed November 2019, [www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/pisaforddevelopment.htm](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/pisaforddevelopment.htm)

<sup>19</sup> This implies a coverage rate of 29 percent, which is well below the average of 42.6 percent in other countries that conducted PISA-D.

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, "Senegal shares the results of its first participation in PISA-D," December 19, 2018, [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/senegal\\_shares\\_the\\_results\\_of\\_its\\_first\\_participation\\_in\\_the/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/member-states/single-view/news/senegal_shares_the_results_of_its_first_participation_in_the/)

<sup>21</sup> OECD, "Pisa pour le Développement: Analyse des besoins en termes de capacités : Sénégal," 2014, [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/NEW\\_Pisa-D\\_CNA\\_Senegal\\_FR\\_FINAL\\_revised.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/NEW_Pisa-D_CNA_Senegal_FR_FINAL_revised.pdf)

teachers, improving and adapting learning conditions to suit development objectives, and developing strategies to better support students. PISA-D was administered in French, Wolof, and Arabic.

### Who is Leading/Conducting/Funding Learning Assessments?

The INEADE has the mandate to lead learning assessments in Senegal, but all standardized evaluations/learning assessments are funded by donors,<sup>22</sup> of which the World Bank is the largest. It funded the SNERS assessment every two years (through Project Quality Improvement and Equity and Basic Education—PAQEED, which is co-funded by the International Development Association, the GPE, and Canada for the period 2014 to 2018 with an extension funded by the IDA until 2021) from 1996 to 2017. However, from 2017 onwards, the INEADE has not been able to conduct SNERS assessments due to lack of funds. The disbursement of funds via the above-mentioned system of budgetary support is linked to the results achieved for a set of indicators, some of which are related to learning. The World Bank and AFD co-funded PASEC 2014, the recent PASEC 2019,<sup>23</sup> PISA-D 2017, and school-level assessments. Swiss Cooperation also contributed to PASEC 2014. All assessments are funded through the MEN.

The World Bank is also working with the INEADE and the IEF/IA to look for convergences among the different evaluations done at the national and local levels. Inspectors are trained using World Bank resources.

USAID is funding the EGRA in the context of the Lecture Pour Tous (LPT) project, which it operates in six (out of 14) regions and works with 3,637 public primary schools as well as 100 *daaras* (Koranic schools) in CI, CP, CEI (i.e., grades one, two, and three). Recently, there has been an extension of the initiative to the region of Saint-Louis, as a bridge for exploring the possibility of generalization of the methodology to the entire country. With the LPT project, students go on to be taught in French without a transition period after three years of receiving instruction in national languages. In previous years, the USAID-funded PALME project supported the INEADE in improving existing-item banks by developing new items coded to the updated reading and learning standards, banking those items by subject area and grade level, constructing tests using test blueprints, and developing guidelines for test administration, data analysis, and reporting.

The latest GPE grant will support the PADES project, which includes disbursement conditions linked to leverage effects and expected outcomes.

### Analysis of Variables Influencing Learning Outcomes

The SNERS considers some contextual variables related to the characteristics of students, teachers, and head teachers, namely the availability of textbooks, instruction time, class size, sector (i.e., private versus public), the socioeconomic and cultural situation of families, exams, and geographical region. The 2016 report analyzes the average as well as disaggregated scores for each variable. However, the analysis and the conclusions that were extracted from it are uneven and, in some cases, inaccurate. For instance, the figures show that having a head teacher trained in the competency-based approach is not significantly

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<sup>22</sup> The INEADE has an annual budget that covers only salaries and some internal training.

<sup>23</sup> Funded at 50 percent by the CONFEMEN.

influential on the average scores of children in grades two and four, but the text states that this training plays a very important role in learning results. The same scenario holds true for pre-service training of grade-two teachers, conducive classroom environments, and more. Study respondents expressed similar concerns about other high-profile assessments, such as PASEC 2014 and EGRA 2009.

No one at the MEN made reference to using the information related to the variables contained in the above-mentioned reports for informing educational policies or plans. In our conversation with the Director of the INEADE, he mentioned sex and location (i.e., urban/rural) as influencing variables, among others. Learning factors, such as school equipment, textbooks, water points, and teacher training appear in SNERS reports and are considered in planning documents, although no complementary studies were conducted to analyze the sum total of variables influencing learning results. SNERS use the following contextual variables: textbooks, instruction time, size of classes, curriculum, private/public sector, socio-economic and cultural level of families, and regions.<sup>24</sup>

A former director at the MEN stated that teachers and head teachers are better positioned to analyze the variables influencing learning assessments.<sup>25</sup> However, they are barely involved in the design of tests, the analysis of data, and learning assessments reports.

### Learning Data Dissemination

Several informants pointed out that at the central and regional levels, the MEN and its development partners have no difficulties accessing learning data, whereas the districts, schools, and civil society organizations do not always have access to learning results. According to multiple sources, learning assessment reports are disseminated late and do not reach all stakeholders, especially at decentralized levels.

Several MEN informants mentioned that even if learning assessment reports are shared at the central level, there is no political or technical dialogue,<sup>26</sup> and little action is taken in response to specific learning assessment data. The lack of a shared culture of evidence, together with a low level of ownership due to the external funding, seem to be at the core of this issue. Based on experience with building the culture of evidence in education systems in North America and Europe, such transformation takes a long time and requires concerted effort and political will to implement.<sup>27</sup>

PASEC recommends that governments disseminate reports at all levels. Workshops were organized at the national level, but at the regional level, only four meetings were organized to disseminate the last PASEC report (2014, available in 2016). Despite the support of the AFD and the World Bank, the MEN did not have the resources to expand this activity to the entire country. Beyond the lack of resources, there is no dissemination policy for the SNERS assessments and other evaluations. On the other hand, we could not find any sensitivities regarding data collection and the use of learning assessment data.

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<sup>24</sup> Attendance and school readiness are not considered among the contextual variables. PASEC considers absenteeism but curiously, this variable is non-significant when learning outcomes are measured.

<sup>25</sup> He said, "It's the class that builds the results."

<sup>26</sup> The last Joint Sector Review aide-memoire mentioned the importance of monitoring learning outcomes, but there was not a technical or political dialogue around learning assessment data.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Michael Fullan's work on effecting change in the education systems.

## 5. CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT OF KEY ACTORS

### Institutional and Legal Factors

Since the 1990s, Senegal has implemented a decentralization process. The 1996 law includes education among the nine competences that were stipulated for transfer to local governments. This process was accelerated with *Acte III* in 2013. The PAQUET points out that, “Decentralization transfers competences to the municipalities (pre-primary, primary, and adult education; national languages; and the fight against illiteracy), to the districts (low and high secondary education) and to the regions (vocational and professional training)” (on page 7).

The decision-making process in the education system is still quite centralized in the MEN, and there is a perception that learning assessments are also very centralized. A donor representative declared that “authorities at decentralized levels in Senegal do not have much decision power.” An informant from civil society added that “standardized evaluations should take into account the reality of regions and districts, but nowadays it is too centralized.” However, non-harmonized regional assessments are run entirely autonomously by the regions without national coordination by the INEADE.

There is the matter of national pride in standardized learning assessments. A director at the MEN declared, “I believe much more in SNERS [than PASEC or PISA-D].” The SG also stated the importance of sovereignty, which is related to a sense of ownership. A key informant said, “We still need some time for an adequate ownership of data so we can better build the practices in terms of management.”

The 2005 Education Policy included a reference to the importance of “a periodic evaluation of learning outcomes as a tool for decision making and for the monitoring of the quality at the central and decentralized levels.”

In July 2018, the MEN published a new Education Policy to guide the education sector over the next years. The improvement of the quality of learning at all levels, from pre-primary education to professional training, is at the core of this policy document. SNERS is mentioned for the indicators in lower secondary (although that evaluation is only done in primary education) and PASEC’s data help contextualize the situation of the education sector.

### Strategic Planning in the Education Sector

Senegal has a long tradition of educational sector plans. The PDEF 2001-2011 focused on universalizing access. Then the MEN elaborated the first Programme d’Amélioration de la Qualité, de l’Équité et de la Transparence du secteur de l’Éducation et de la Formation (PAQUET) 2013-2025 framework in order to operationalize an educational policy that focused on quality. This plan included three strategic objectives: 1) improve the quality of education and training at all levels; 2) strengthen the coverage, diversification, and integration of the education and training system at all levels; and 3) promote an integrated, inclusive, decentralized, transparent, and effective sector governance.

The most recent PAQUET marks a shift to a greater focus on learning outcomes, including strategies to improve the school environment, teaching, and learning conditions, and set a functional system of information and quality of learning management as well as a national evaluation system of competencies. Among the main challenges of the education sector, this PAQUET mentioned the quality of education,

pointing out that “periodic and systematic evaluation mechanisms are non-existent or underperforming” (page 18). The PAQUET acknowledged that the system for learning assessments was inadequate (page 13). The plan also regretted the frequency of SNERS due to a dependency on external funds and the inadequate use of the results. It included a learning indicator related to the proportion of students in grade six who achieved a minimum competency in reading and mathematics with minimal increases.<sup>28</sup>

The PAQUET 2013-2025 was reviewed and updated in 2017 to respond to commitments made by the Government of Senegal (GoS) with particular regard to the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025, and the Education 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The updated PAQUET 2018-2030 (or PAQUET 2) integrated the focal points of the Education Forum (*Assises de l'Éducation*), a national forum held in 2014 to discuss education, with a strong focus on quality. This document included 11 presidential decisions, among which was a decision to “improve the quality of teaching and learning” with results related to functional evaluation mechanisms and quality assurance systems at all educational levels. According to the Education Forum, internal efficiency and teaching quality are not sufficient compared to invested resources. However, none of the 11 fora created by the Education Forum revolved around learning assessments or learning achievements.

Given the above-mentioned focal shift, quality of learning becomes a priority starting from preschool. PAQUET 2 acknowledges the insufficient performance of the education sector in Senegal, with concerns about poorer results in terms of completion and transition.<sup>29</sup> It refers to the results of PASEC 2014, where 70 percent of students did not reach the minimum level in language competencies and 50 percent did not reach it in mathematics.

### **Actors: Capacity, Commitment, Opinions, and Perceptions**

The Ministry of National Education is the only institution responsible for learning assessments in Senegal. As the Secretary General (SG) mentioned, there is a self-declared high commitment at the leadership level, but in practice the GoS has shown more capacity than commitment in conducting the learning assessments.

There is a concentration of responsibilities in the INEADE, which has the mandate to design and implement standardized evaluations and assessments with the data support of the DPRE. The INEADE has some installed capacities in its evaluation division. According to USAID/Senegal, the INEADE is overextended due to the multitude of assignments/tasks it must manage while coping with the loss of trained staff.

Several informants at the ministry stated that the INEADE does not always have good communication with other actors such as the DPRE, DEE, DEMSG, SIMEN, DEXCO and the decentralized levels. There

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<sup>28</sup> Reference value in reading for 2014: 59 percent; target for 2018: 60 percent; target for 2022: 61 percent; in math: 61 percent, 62 percent, and 64 percent, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> In primary education, the transition rate was 87.4 percent in 2012 and 86.3 percent in 2015, and the repetition rate increased from 2.8 percent in 2012 to 3.9 percent in 2015. The completion rate was 59.3 percent in 2015, below the target of 73.2 percent. In secondary education, the transition rate was 74.5 percent in 2012 and 65.9 percent in 2015. The drop-out rate increased by 2.4 points (from 9.1 percent to 11.5 percent). (MEN, 2017b: 10).

is also poor institutional collaboration regarding learning assessment data between the different directorates. The forthcoming policy framework for learning assessments is expected to set clear objectives and define the roles and responsibilities of these institutions.

The DPRE stated that “there is a need for the reinforcement of national and local capacities in the production of learning data,” although the INEADE team is recognized as one of the strongest in sub-Saharan Africa. However, there are differences in capacities between the MEN at the central level and the actors at the local levels. As mentioned above, learning reports are not always shared at all levels, but in addition, the actors are not always in a position to participate in the design, implementation, and analysis of standardized evaluations because of insufficient capacities and, ultimately, a lack of interest. Principals and teachers largely have no training beyond pedagogical aspects, and they are not always equipped to understand the importance of assessments. This situation is typical of many education systems, particularly in LMICs.

The role of civil society organizations is limited in the design and implementation of learning assessments, which are funded by development partners and coordinated by the INEADE. However, an organization called LARTES<sup>30</sup> has been developing learning assessments in the context of a barometer for the quality of learning in Senegal. An NGO informant stated that acceptance was slow, but the MEN and other actors have now recognized the technical value of the document.

### **Budget and Resources Allocated to Learning Assessments**

In the African context, funding for the Senegalese education sector is exceptional. Without counting public debt, 40 percent of recurrent cost and 29 percent of the public budget are allocated to education, which amounts to 7 percent of the GDP. In recent decades, the GoS has made a big effort in improving infrastructure, constructing thousands of new classrooms, and investing in equipment, water points, and latrines, albeit with a great dependency on external development partners for capital investments. Some 90 percent of the education budget is going to recurrent expenditures, mainly salaries. As an informant said: “Education is a huge fund-consuming sector but the MEN can rarely go beyond keeping the system going on.”<sup>31</sup>

Overall, external support represents 10.7 percent of the education budget. However, all of the learning assessments, even those at the school level, are funded exclusively by donors, mainly through budget support and sometimes through projects. Furthermore, all pilot projects (as well as scale-up projects and remedial programs) related to improving learning outcomes are funded by development partners and NGOs.<sup>32</sup>

As we have seen with the SNERS, assessments typically do not happen unless they are linked to a project or to a budget support program. However, the Director of the DPRE pointed out that “the national system of learning assessments must be a sovereignty expenditure,” linked to government

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<sup>30</sup> Results for Development, “Evaluating Citizen-Led Assessments of Learning,” accessed November 2019, <https://www.r4d.org/projects/evaluating-citizen-led-assessments-learning>

<sup>31</sup> The French term used by an informant was “*budgetivore*.”

<sup>32</sup> This lack of resources led a high-level informant to declare, “We had no resources, the AFD came to our aid.”

priorities. The Director of the INEADE proposed identifying the key assessments and funding them with the national budget, but highest-level officials did not consider this feasible.

Total dependency on external funds comes at a price: aid conditionality that is linked to the achievement of indicators directly related to a budget support program. This is a circumstance that is increasing in intensity given the recently approved PADES. In that vein, results-based programs are used by some donors to hold education authorities accountable for results and to better monitor progress in students' performance.

Some donors are questioning the political will<sup>33</sup> to fund learning assessments. A World Bank informant indirectly referred to donor fatigue in light of the fact that the World Bank has been funding learning assessments in Senegal for more than 20 years, and they are stopping funding if the MEN does not co-fund. According to another donor, the MEN is not adequately making a case in favor of learning assessment data, and therefore, the Ministry of Finance is not understanding the importance of these assessments, specifically from a cost-benefit perspective on investments in the sector.

This situation also implies a serious challenge in terms of the sustainability of learning assessments, including the SNERS, PISA-D, and PASEC.

### **Actual Practices Observed Using Learning Assessment Data**

Senegal has a long tradition of learning assessments, as the SNERS have been conducted since 1996. In recent years, the interest of the MEN and its partners in these assessments seems to have grown with the addition of regional and classroom evaluations as well as the EGRA, PASEC, and PISA-D.

Following the global education agenda, formal public rhetoric in Senegal focuses on quality and learning assessments, which are reportedly priorities for the MEN. Indeed, high-level officials at the MEN are aware of the importance of having quality learning assessment data, and there is an apparent political will to improve the use of those data. In the Education Forum Report 2014, the MEN recognized that “the evaluation of learning outcomes to get information regarding the desirable levels of mastery and to inform the performance indicators has become an essential monitoring tool of education systems, both at the classroom level and in the definition of education policies. At the national level, the periodic evaluation of learning outcomes as a tool for decision making, and monitoring of quality is a priority for the education officials” (page 102). However, as mentioned above, there does not appear to be a sustained government commitment to investing the necessary resources to implement learning assessments.

All the standardized evaluations/assessments conducted in Senegal show that the education system there, far from being performant, is not capable of producing a minimal level of positive learning outcomes for more than half of its learners.

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<sup>33</sup> Political will has been defined as “a sustained commitment of politicians and administrators to invest the necessary resources to achieve specific objectives and a willingness to make and implement policy despite opposition” (Little 2011, cited in Kingdon, Little et al., “A rigorous review of the political economy of education systems in developing countries.” Final Report. Education Rigorous Literature Review. Department of International Development, 2014, page 37.)

However, the MEN uses learning assessment data in a limited way. In some cases, learning assessment data are used in the planning cycle; for instance, the situation analysis done for the PAQUET 2013-2025 uses the SNERS as the source for learning data. The education sector analysis done by JICA in 2012 does not use learning assessment data save for a quick mention that there was no progress in the results from PASEC 1996 to 2007. The Performance Report 2018 does not mention learning assessment data among indicators for primary and secondary education (although CFEE and BFEM are mentioned). PAQUET 2 uses figures from PASEC but not from the SNERS or decentralized evaluations. PISA-D 2017 is the only standardized learning assessment conducted at the secondary level, but informants at the DEMSG stated that the data are not used for multiple reasons.

The recommendations of PASEC 2007 are not included in PAQUET I, and there is merely a reference to Senegal's participation in that assessment, without any accompanying data. However, this issue has improved for PAQUET 2, which includes several references to the results of PASEC 2014.

In joint sector reviews (JSRs), learning assessment data are, in principle, used as inputs for technical and political dialogue. The *aide-mémoire* of the 2018 JSR mentions "*pilotage*" (i.e., monitoring) in a vague way without referring to any standardized evaluation such as SNERS or PASEC. In the 2019 JSR, out of the 20 indicators set in a matrix, only one ("proportion of students in grade 6 achieving a minimum level of competency in reading and mathematics disaggregated by region and sex") is related to learning data from standardized evaluations. Two indicators are related to examinations in professional training and education for youth and adults.

The Director of the DPRE mentioned that while PASEC is useful for comparing Senegal's learning results to other countries' results, it cannot be used to monitor learning at the local level (which they called "*pilotage de proximité*"). The system and its actors, especially at the operational level (i.e., the decentralized levels and operational directorates), rely heavily on continuous assessments and examinations. Additionally, in planning documents (e.g., PAQUET), indicators are often only related to examinations.

A former MEN staff member mentioned that following through with recommendations "is an old challenge that remains unsolved." This is linked to various limitations, including existing capacity at the MEN level. As a note, PASEC is conducting a study on government follow-through on its report recommendations. The study will be ready by the end of the year.

To summarize, the low level of learning assessment data use can be related to the question of why countries conduct learning assessments. All MEN informants have internalized the importance of learning data, but in practice, key informants mentioned that, at the strategic level, the use of learning assessment data is promoted by donors through the inclusion of results-based management in their projects or as budgetary support responses. Furthermore, the SG candidly stated that learning assessments are mainly done in response to donors, and therefore, the use of learning assessment data is conditioned by that fact. Several informants mentioned that one of the fundamental reasons for the lack of use of learning assessment data is that the GoS does not pay for these assessments, donors do. Sharing this view, many actors in the system do not feel a sense of ownership, and in some cases, they do not even feel the need to use learning assessment data. With the new policy framework regulating the implementation and use of learning assessments, there is a hope that the right incentives for data-driven decisions will be introduced in the entire education system.

Regarding **utility**, there are several elements to consider:

- Similar to other sample-based assessments, the SNERS assessment is not designed to be representative at the school or district levels, and therefore inspectors, principals, teachers, and education authorities at decentralized levels do not use them. Similarly, PASEC presents learning assessment data only at the national level, and therefore, it is not useful for education authorities and partners at the decentralized levels.<sup>34,35</sup> The Director of the DPRE recognizes that learning assessment data will be useful to local education authorities and educators only when the regional and local-level data are included in analysis.
- Learning assessment reports are often done with only the decision-makers' and donors' requirements in mind without considering the needs of users (e.g., inspectors, teachers, and principals). Therefore, these actors often do not feel that learning assessment data are a useful tool for their work. According to an informant at the MEN, head teachers are not trained in the identification of factors linked to learning outcomes, and this is limiting learning assessment data use.
- There is a debate in Senegal about the timeframe for production of learning assessments in the context of sector dynamics. Several informants declared that data becomes stale due to long delays before analysis is performed and the data can be utilized. Some experts believe that evaluations that are done every five years, like PASEC, are not useful for decision-making at the MEN level, and are even less useful at the decentralized levels. Even as it concerns the SNERS, which are produced, in principle, every other year, some directors assert that this frequency is not enough. "SNERS is conducted only every other year, I cannot wait for them," said the Director of Primary Education, "and therefore I use the information from pre-tests and post-tests and the examination (CFEE) results [which are available on a yearly basis]." On the other hand, other informants consider that conducting evaluations every year or even every other year as is done with the SNERS does not give authorities sufficient time to use the evaluation because by the time results become available, the MEN has already embarked on a new evaluation cycle.<sup>36</sup>
- A development partner mentioned that a major problem is that the work plans for the evaluations do not include the intended use of the results.<sup>37</sup> He also mentioned that the INEADE does not monitor whether directors at the central level or inspectors and other actors at decentralized levels use the learning assessment data produced by the institute.

Regarding **capacity**:

- Several informants at the MEN openly recognized that capacities to understand and use learning assessment data are weak in the Ministry, in particular at the local level. Several informants

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<sup>34</sup> Education authorities are aware of the need to make changes and to adapt learning assessments to the decentralized process, but they have no resources and are fully dependent on donors.

<sup>35</sup> The informant from PASEC mentioned that raw data are available by school (sample), but most actors do not have the skills to use this information.

<sup>36</sup> PASEC defends the five-year cycle by asserting that the evaluated situation does not change much in that period, and IIEP maintains that a two-year cycle is most appropriate, provided that data are exploited, disseminated, and used by a wide range of stakeholders.

<sup>37</sup> The Inspector General mentioned that, "We need better evaluation mechanisms [for the production of learning assessment data], but mainly a better use of learning assessment data."

mentioned that many teachers do not have an interest in learning assessment data because of lack of knowledge and understanding on its potential use.

- Even at the central level, there are challenges related to capacity, as the INEADE has more individual than institutional capacities, and it suffers from high turnover. The INEADE is only authorized to hire teachers who are then trained. Unfortunately, many of these teachers leave the MEN after being trained and go on to work with development partners.
- At the decentralized levels, there are weak capacities not only to design/develop learning assessments but to analyze and interpret learning assessment data. Many informants suggested that actors in regions, districts, and schools should be trained. Capacity-building activities are also funded by donors, and they only happen when they are associated with a project or a specific instance of donor support.
- At the same time, capacity-building is a component in some learning assessments, such as PASEC or PISA-D. A crucial element of PISA-D is that countries receive support to build their capacities for carrying out and using the assessment,<sup>38</sup> which includes an analysis of capacity needs. The OECD recommended that the INEADE prepare a “dissemination and media coverage plan” on the occasion of the publication of the results. However, directors at MEN recognized that this was not done, and that only four regional meetings were organized to disseminate the results. Similarly, the analysis on capacities recommend conducting in-depth research and collaborating with external networks in order to maximize the use of the data.

Regarding **awareness** and relevance of learning assessment data:

- An informant stated that before considering the existence (or not) of capacities, the relevant issue is for actors to understand the importance of data for improving school practices. It is also important to consider to what extent the current learning assessments are relevant for the different stakeholders.
- According to most informants, there is quite a high level of awareness at the centralized level, but actors at decentralized levels do not feel that their needs and interests are reflected in standardized evaluations. This is also related to the lack of relevance of some learning assessments at decentralize levels.

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The *Inspection d'Académie* of Kaolack decided in 2018 to overcome the lack of standardized learning assessments at the secondary education level by creating a regional technical team in charge of designing and conducting assessments for all secondary students in the region. At the initiative of the Inspector, a legal framework, evaluation instruments, and a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities of actors from the regional directorate to the schools were created. This effort was carried out without any support from or coordination with the INEADE and the MEN at the central level. Students were requested to make a contribution of FCFA 300 (US\$0.50) per school year to cover the expenses.

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<sup>38</sup> Zoido, Pablo, Michael Ward, Kelly Makowiecki, Lauren Miller, and Catalina Covacevich, “Can the Measurement of Learning Outcomes Lead to Quality Education for All?,” NORRAG Blog, July 21, 2016, <https://www.norrag.org/can-the-measurement-of-learning-outcomes-lead-to-quality-education-for-all>

A significant factor that deters the use of learning assessment data is the cost (which is unbearable for the GoS) of transforming learning report recommendations into action. Remedial programs, which could use learning results as an input, are all funded by development partners and NGOs. MEN leadership is active in this arena, but the lack of resources leads to a lack of decision-making power and a low level of ownership, and this negatively influences the use of learning assessment data.

As the final element in this section, there is the issue of **perception versus reality** in the use of learning assessment data in education planning documents. There is a generalized perception that learning assessment data are widely used by the MEN, but most informants could not give specific examples or details about its use in the shaping of policies or programs. Despite the reality that many informants think that learning assessment data are (or should be) informing educational policies and plans, there is not much evidence to suggest that this is actually true.

- Several informants mentioned the importance of learning outcomes among the indicators used to monitor the PAQUET when that is not really the case. In PAQUET I, there was a single indicator on quality in primary education that was related to learning outcomes (“Coefficient of variation in results of standardized tests (SNERS) CE2”), but it had no data. For lower and high secondary education, as there are no standardized learning assessments currently conducted, there were indicators for the success rate at the BFEM and the Bac. Completion rates and exam pass rates at the end of each cycle are frequently used as proxies for learning outcomes. The performance measurement framework (*Cadre de mesure de rendement*) in Annex 5 of PAQUET I includes targets for the indicators of each program (e.g., “Student performance as a component of quality”). A MEN director stated that “At the *cadre de mesure de rendement*, there is a quality component, and learning assessments are extremely important.” However, the indicators related to learning in that framework are not connected to standardized evaluations but only to examinations (i.e., the BFEM and Bac). Moreover, there is no explicit result chain in the plan that is related to the use of learning assessment.
- A number of informants mentioned that learning assessment data were used in the planning process, in particular to prepare the PAQUET I. However, the education sector analysis completed by JICA in 2012 barely mentions the SNERS, and does not include any of its results. According to the World Bank, the PASEC 2014 report was used in PAQUET 2, but no specific information was provided.

**Culture of evidence:** All informants agreed that there is a weak culture of evidence/assessments. DPRE stated that beyond information sharing,<sup>39</sup> “there is not a culture of assessing learning, it is not sufficiently instilled in the system, from the teacher to the minister.” The lack of a culture of evidence is also linked to some capacity deficiencies in teachers, as mentioned above. As in many other education systems, a lot of education data use is directed for input and resource-oriented tasks, such as to calculate the school population for the next year and to inform teacher rationalization plans. In part, this is the result of many years of efforts to improve access to education supported by the strong data management systems that are largely focused on education inputs and outputs. A shift toward quality and outcome-oriented management is relatively new in the sector and will undoubtedly take some years to take root.

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<sup>39</sup> Some informants from civil society organizations mentioned that even information sharing is limited outside of the MEN.

## Factors Facilitating or Impeding the Use of Learning Assessment Data

The facilitators identified in this research are linked to the following:

- The perception of most of the informants is that the environment in the education sector is favorable to the use of learning assessment data. There is a self-declared political will in favor of producing and using learning assessments, and the rhetoric of the MEN at the political level is in favor of learning assessments. The directors of the MEN declared they were actively promoting the use of learning assessment data.<sup>40</sup>
- The MEN has the support of development partners and civil society organizations in the use of learning assessment data, which they often produce and fund.
- There is common agreement that learning assessment data has a role in awakening consciences. The director of the INEADE stated that “*PASEC nous a réveillés*” (“PASEC woke us up”).
- An increased use of computers has facilitated a better dissemination and utilization of learning assessment data.

Barriers and obstacles (inhibitors) to the use of learning assessment data:

- Most of the informants agreed that the lack of a national framework for learning assessments, which prevents ownership by all actors in the education system, including those at the central level of the MEN, is a major barrier.
- A partner of the MEN stated that obstacles are related to the timely availability of data and the quality and reliability of the data.
- Some informants noted the above-mentioned discussion on the frequency of learning assessment administration is also an obstacle. The PASEC and other sample-based assessments are not designed for use at the local level where data is needed on an annual basis.
- The lack of representativity at the region/district level of the sampling system used by the SNERS, EGRA, and PASEC hinders the utility and relevance of learning assessment data for several actors, especially at the decentralized levels.
- For some informants, especially at the senior level in the MEN, the lack of a shared culture of evaluation is a serious obstacle to the use of learning assessment data.
- There are also barriers related to the lack of the resources needed to practically implement learning report recommendations—in remedial programs at the school level, for instance.
- As an informant at USAID said, a major issue is that there is no system for harmonizing learning assessment interventions at the school level for the various actors, including donors. This informant proposed that the MEN could set a more structured aid scheme.
- The absence of broad dissemination, beyond what an informant called “institutional distribution,” is an obstacle for the use of learning assessment data by all stakeholders.

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<sup>40</sup> However, as shown above, the results have been poor so far.

- As mentioned above, capacity deficiency at some levels is perceived as a barrier to the use of learning assessment data. An informant of the DEMSG said, “teachers do not know what to do with the learning data,” creating a sort of skepticism related to lack of knowledge and a perceived lack of utility.<sup>41</sup>

**Resistance:** In general, informants stated that there is no major resistance to the use of learning assessment data, and that there were no negative comments about learning assessment data. However, there has been some reticence to the way learning assessments are conducted and disseminated. Reticence is linked to the information received by each actor and to what extent this information allows them to understand the issues and challenges of learning assessment data. As the Inspector General declared, “Resistance is reduced when things are explained.”

## 6. POLITICAL ECONOMY

Apparently, there is no political interference in the way learning assessments are designed and implemented. The results of learning assessments are reported, published, and disseminated with no mediation from political entities. There appears not to be any difference between learning assessments conducted in Senegal during the most recent political cycles. The SNERS assessments started in 1996, before the term of President Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012), and they continued through the current President, Macky Sall. Senior informants at the MEN unequivocally affirmed, in conjunction with development partners, that there has been no political influence on learning assessments over the years. The change of President in 2012 does not seem to have had an impact on the approach of the MEN to learning assessments (the ministry is instead influenced by donors), nor have changes in Ministers of Education, including the latest such change this year.

The GoS faces the challenge of how to translate global goals (mainly the Education 2030 Agenda) into national goals, plans, targets, and indicators. There are significant implications since Senegal, like many African countries, has been focusing exclusively on improving access to education for two decades, while Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes learning and equity at all educational levels. This leads to a challenging relationship with donors, who increasingly push the GoS to accept their agendas and results-based management approach.

There is no involvement from other sectors of the GoS in the area of learning assessments, in part due to the fact that donors pay for most learning assessments.

This research could not identify specific interests and needs of stakeholders at the national and local levels that affect the production and use of learning assessment data.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING PRACTICES IN LEARNING ASSESSMENT DATA USE IN SENEGAL

The recommendations below are geared toward highlighting the key elements of a more conducive environment for the production and use of learning data, with the overarching goal of increasing and

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<sup>41</sup> The IIEP Guidelines do not include teachers among the stakeholders to be interviewed.

improving the use of learning assessment data by the Ministry of National Education at all levels and among all education partners.

## Recommendations for the Government of Senegal

### Regarding capacity

- It is necessary to establish better division of labor and collaboration among directorates so that the results of learning assessments are used before embarking on new evaluation cycles.
- The MEN should continue to support the INEADE's capacities and autonomy, thereby elevating the institution to authority to design, implement, and disseminate large-scale learning assessments autonomously.
- All actors in the system should be trained on how to better utilize learning results.
- Learning assessments should also respond to the needs of the DPRE and other planning agents at the central and decentralized levels regarding strategies for improving learning outcomes.

### Regarding commitment

- It is necessary to establish which learning assessments are implemented for what purpose, to ensure clarity among key stakeholders on their objectives and expected use. Setting a national framework for all kinds of learning assessments at all levels will be a significant step in that direction. Political and technical dialogue will only be possible if all actors have a common regulatory framework, which has to take into consideration the needs of actors in schools and at decentralized levels.
- It is necessary to prioritize learning assessment data within the financial framework, and increase national resources allocated to learning assessments in order to achieve sovereign evaluations and overcome the unpredictability of external support. The increase of the budget allocated to learning assessments will require transparency regarding how resources are transformed into results.
- The GoS should promote a shared culture of evidence and a culture of evaluation. As a first step, it should create a dissemination policy for learning assessment results. The purpose of assessments should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders so that the results of learning assessments are discussed at all levels. The SIMEN can be a powerful tool for learning assessment data dissemination. Summaries of learning assessment reports can be translated into national languages to facilitate use by local actors.
- The MEN should focus on organizing national learning assessments before undertaking new international assessments, which will consume significant amounts of human and material resources. It should promote quicker, simpler, and actionable country-owned learning assessments that fulfill needs at the district and school levels.
- The GoS should promote the more extensive use of learning assessment data (and related indicators) in performance reports, joint sector reviews, and education plans.
- The GoS should fashion learning assessments not only as instruments for measuring learning outcomes in Senegal but also as means of better understanding the variables/factors that influence learning, as well as the remedial programs that can ameliorate learning deficits.

- Similarly, it is critical to translate learning assessment data into action. The recommendations in the learning assessment reports should be more specific, and they should allow for the transformation of learning results into concrete actions. Moreover, learning assessments should be meaningful for actors at all levels, including districts and schools. Decentralized levels should be more involved in everything from design and analysis to reporting. In order to facilitate this, the MEN should improve capacities at the regional and local levels for the monitoring of learning outcomes. The MEN could start identifying the gaps in capacities related to learning assessment data internally and among stakeholders through a capacity needs assessment.
- Finally, it is crucial to encourage capitalization on practices related to learning assessments so that they can be scaled up.

## Recommendations for USAID/Senegal

### Regarding capacity

- USAID can support the MEN in strengthening capacities at all levels, particularly at the MEN and local levels.
- USAID could promote improved coordination among the different initiatives related to learning assessment in Senegal, namely TALENT, IIEP, PADES, PAQEED, etc.
- USAID should promote the integration of equity issues in learning assessments, including disaggregated data and influencing variables related to equity so that they can inform equity policies.
- USAID should design reading programs that take advantage of the existing learning assessments (instead of creating new assessments) and that may be scaled up using national resources. If new data are needed, USAID should support the new learning assessment data for the national evaluation system and not just for the project.
- USAID should explore the use of national NGOs as an entry point to improving learning assessments in Senegal; for instance, funding projects like the LARTES barometer may increase awareness regarding the importance of learning assessment data.

### Regarding commitment

- USAID should promote a support process that addresses the design and implementation of learning assessments with a learning-by-doing approach wherein the development partners work together with the MEN for a number of years, transferring competences and incorporating an exit strategy.
- USAID should promote, at all levels, a heightened awareness of the importance of learning assessments for improving learning outcomes and for data-driven decision making at all levels of the education system.
- USAID should support the MEN in making a case in favor of learning assessments so that more funds can be channeled in that direction by the Ministry of Finance.
- USAID could promote quantitative and qualitative secondary analyses on the variables/factors that contribute to negative results.

## 8. ANNEXES

### Annex I: Key Informants Interviewed

Organization	Position
Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (MEN)	Secretary General
Direction de la Planification et de la Réforme de l'Éducation (DPRE/MEN)	Director
Direction de l'Enseignement Élémentaire (DEE/MEN)	Director
Direction de l'Enseignement Moyen Sec General (DEMSG/MEN)	Coordinator
Direction des Examens et Concours (DEXCO/MEN)	Director
SIMEN (Système d'Informatique et de Management de l'Éducation Nationale/MEN)	Coordinator
Institut National d'Etude et d'Action pour le Développement de l'Éducation (INEADE/MEN)	Director
Inspection Générale de l'Éducation (MEN)	Inspector General
Inspection d'Académie Kaolack (MEN)	Inspector
Coalition des Organisations en Synergie pour la Défense de l'Éducation Publique (COSYDEP)	Coordinator
Chemonics (Lecture pour Tous)	Senior Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist
Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Transformations Economiques et Sociales (LARTES-IFAN)	Coordinator
	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
USAID	Education Evaluation Specialist
World Bank	Senior Education Specialist
IIEP Pôle de Dakar-UNESCO	Quality Management Program Coordinator
	Teaching/Learning Researcher
	Coordinator of Thematic Group on Education
PASEC	Coordinator
MEN retired officials from planning/evaluation	MoE Retired Official
	MoE Retired Official
	MoE Retired Official

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