UNESCO

Regional Office for Education in Africa

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR ANALYSIS UNIT – PÔLE DE DAKAR

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The World Forum on Education for All (EFA), held in Dakar in April 2000, observed that achieving the EFA goals posed major challenges in Africa, including that (a) half of African children did not have access to full primary education and that (b) in a context of increasingly scarce resources, all components of the African education system, from pre-school to third level, must meet the demands of effectiveness and equity.

2. The Dakar Forum declared that the partners from the international community would lend their support to all countries with a credible[1] EFA plan to meet the goals for EFA. Built around the Fast Track Initiative and approved by the G8 since 2002 to speed up the achievement of these goals, the financial mobilization of the international community turned towards seeking greater effectiveness and improved targeting of the technical and financial partnership to tackle these challenges.

[1] UNESCO. 2000. The Dakar Framework for Action. Education For All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments (p10)

3. The statistical and economic approach, which is committed to informing educational policy-decision-making based on their cost and social benefits examines a series of issues, including: demographic change, financing, trade-offs between sub-sectors, the structure of educational spending and its distribution between public and private financing, assessment and quality improvment, internal and external efficiency of educational systems, social impacts, and entry into the labour market for school-leavers.

4. At that time, shortly after Dakar 2000, it was observed that the expertise needed for credible plans , provided both by countries and technical and financial partners, was insufficient. An agreement between France and UNESCO[2] led to the French Foreign Ministry's initiative to create the *Pôle de Dakar* in 2001 – a platform of expertise in education sectoral analysis placed within UNESCO/BREDA (Regional Office for Education in Africa) in order to assist African countries.

5. The Pole was given the following missions[3]:

- Contribute to the needs for educational sector analysis of sub-Saharan African countries;
- Assist in the the drafting and implementation of sector strategies in the region;
- Provide technical support to the national teams responsible for their drafting;
- Gather and process data for comparative analyses of African education policies.

6. These missions are carried out through the Pole's three main activities. :

- Direct technical assistance for countries. The Pole responds to countries' requests to advise /accompany national teams in conducting sector analyses, carrying out financial simulations, providing understanding of the trade-offs inherent in education policies and drawing up national strategies and programme documents, as well as other programme and monitoring tools; the CSRs (Country Status Reports) account for much of this activity.

- Indirect support aimed at spreading the culture of the economic analysis of educational systems by training managers and decision makers in technical and leadership positions . This includes training, through the PSGSE (sector policy and education system management) programme.

- Production of statistical and analytical work related to the monitoring of EFA, plus thematic studies that are published and disseminated..

7. In ten years (2001-2011), the Pole helped to carry out CSRs in 24 African countries, including six updates. PSGSE training, which began in 2007, took place in 17 countries.

8. The *Pôle de Dakar* has now been active for 10 years. It has a solid reputation both in recipient countries and among the main education-sector partners. An external evaluation of the Pole was deemed necessary and was commissioned by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), with the agreement of UNESCO and the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), in

[2] Signed on 30 October 2001 by the Director-General of UNESCO and the French State Minister ~~Delegate~~ for Cooperation and Francophonie.

[3] Pôle de Dakar – Education Sector Analysis. Activity report November 2001 - April 2003.

order to capitalize on the Pole's experience and better assess its services in providing responses to countries' evolving needs. According to the Terms of Reference, the aim of the mission is to:

- evaluate the Pole's 10 years of activities by dealing with the following five aspects: the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of the Pole and the impact of its action;
- identify adjustments, changes and/or reforms that would enable *Pôle de Dakar* , to more effectively respond to the current and future expectations of African countries and their partners in the development of education in Africa.

9. The mission was carried out by a team of independent evaluators from the *C2G Conseil* consultancy, whose two experts were not involved in the evaluated activities. The team began with an analysis of the documentation. It then did field missions to Senegal, Benin and Mauritania (the latter two were the case studies as per the Terms of Reference, but the mission in Senegal also allowed for a third case study). It also launched web questionnaires and conducted interviews with numerous people — actors and partners of the Pole during the decade in question (2001-2011). The team is made up of Mahieddine Saidi and Richard Sack, respectively educational economist and head of the team and sociologist of education. The *C2G Conseil* consultancy is represented by its Manager, Alain Granel.

10. The evaluation took place between February and July 2012. In the early stages, the evaluation team received comments, opinions and advice from the evaluation's steering committee, made up of representatives from the MAE, AFD and UNESCO and chaired by Mr André Gauron, an independent expert. In particular, the methodological note prepared by the evaluation team in February 2012 was commented upon by the Steering Committee and then amended following an initial mission in Dakar, which took place in March 2012.

11. The evaluation was carried out on the basis of (i) the proposal of *C2G Conseil* as accepted by the Contracting Parties; (ii) the Terms of Reference, revised and approved by the Contracting Parties (version of 17 January 2012); (iii) the methodological note of 29 February 2012; (iv) the comments and opinions of the Steering Committee.

12. Overall, , about 125 persons were interviewed (see the list in Annex 1). The team is grateful to everyone who helped make this mission a success by sharing information, contributions and analyses. We would like to express our thanks.

13. The evaluation report comprises two parts: (i) a retrospective evaluation of the Pole de Dakar's operation since its creation 10 years ago, based largely on the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and the evaluation questions contained within; (ii) a prospective section which identifies proposals for the future development of the *Pôle de Dakar*.

14. The report was reviewed and commented on by the steering committee before the team produced the final report. The conclusions of the evaluation are not binding on its sponsors, the Education Ministries in the countries supported by the Pole, nor the persons interviewed. The analyses, opinions, conclusions and recommendations in the report are those of the evaluation team which also takes responsibility for the the report.

Methodology

15. The methodology is based on the 13 evaluation questions from the retrospective section (QE 1-13) and structured around three areas: (i) information and its sources; (ii) the tools and

methods used to gather information, including questionnaires, missions to three countries and assessment guides (iii) processing, analysis and interpretation of this information. The prospective section concerning the Pole's future action (QE 14-17) is based on the results and observations of the retrospective part.

16. The questions on the retrospective evaluation are based on OECD/DAC[4] criteria and definitions: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

17. Information was gathered from the available documentation (see References, page 82) and evaluation tools (three questionnaires for the stakeholders; case studies; interviews). It dealt with: (i) the outputs of the Pole: studies, reports, statistics, databases, training, advice, meetings, etc.; (ii) data on the Pole's structure, organization and operations: human resources; budget/ expenditure, etc.; (iii) perceptions, opinions, viewpoints from stakeholders on the different aspects of the evaluation questions.

18. The stakeholders are divided into four categories: (i) Internal actors: staff from the Pole and BREDA; (ii) The institutional actors in the countries which have benefitted from the Pole's activities, comprising experts and officials from the ministries of education (planners, ministry officials, budget officials, etc.) and policy decision-makers (managers at central departments); (iii) representatives from bi- and multi-lateral agencies (technical and financial partners (TFPs) for whom the Pole's production structures dialogue with countries; (iv) persons who have directly benefitted from Pole activities – former trainees/students; persons directly involved in the Pole's support activities. Interviews were carried out with 125 people, a list of whom can be found in Annexe 1. The interviewees include: (i) officials/experts from the case-study countries; (ii) BREDA staff from UNESCO headquarters; representatives of TFPs in the countries and in their headquarters; former PSGSE students; Pole members; former Pole coordinators.

19. Three questionnaires were drawn up and conducted on line (web questionnaires):

(a) A questionnaire for the 122 former PSGSE students, 80 of whom responded, i.e. a response rate of 65.6% (see Annexe 10).

(b) A questionnaire for the "decision-makers", sent following official communication via the MAE and BREDA to the education Ministers and Permanent Secretaries o, was sent to 65 managers in 13 countries. Responses were received from 19 people in 12 countries, a response rate of 29.2% (see Annexe EQ-12a).

(c) A questionnaire sent to 119 members from (technical) teams mobilized during Pole support initiatives in 20 countries. Thirty people (in 12 countries) replied, i.e. a response rate of 25.2% (see Annexe EQ-12b).

20. The response rate for the PSGSE questionnaire was excellent, unlike the two others. We cannot claim "representativeness" for the "decision-makers", nor the members of technical teams, nor for the other categories of persons interviewed (TFPs, country officials, etc.).

Evaluation Findings

21. After ten years of existence, the *Pôle de Dakar* can be satisfied with an overall positive outcome which is strongly appreciated by its two main "clients": (i) the countries to which it provides support and (ii) their financial partners for which a "credible plan" is necessary to justify their

[4] See OECD (1991). DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance

financing aimed at achieving education for all. The CSR (generally with the financial simulation) is the Pole's main contribution to these credible plans and has facilitated access to Fast Track Initiative/Global Partnership for Education (FTI/GPE) financing for at least thirteen countries. The Pole can also pride itself on the broad appreciation of the quality, know-how and professionalism of its experts.

22. The Pole has not limited itself to CSRs. Since its first year, it has been working on statistical contributions for pan-African meetings and technical notes, generally for training purposes. These interventions increased with three major statistical and analytical documents on the progress of African countries towards EFA[5]. In particular, in 2005 the Pole began to organize training based on the CSR which took shape in 2007 with the first group of students and a partnership with the Faculty of Science and Technologies of Education and Training (FASTEF) at Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Dakar. Five cohorts and 154 students have received this training which is mainly carried out via distance learning but with training periods in Dakar. Tthe vast majority of the trainees were working in their education ministries before their training and still work there.

23. In sum, the Pole's three areas of activity– direct support for countries, capacity building for sector analysis and the statistical and analytical work on EFA– were a relevant response for the problems identified at the Dakar 2000 World Education Forum and the ensuing creation of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). But what was relevant in 2001 may no longer be in 2012. The issues have changed and diversified. The emphasis on access and basic education has somewhat migrated towards concerns for quality, implemention capacities, student flow management, internal and external efficiency, and the increasing demand for higher levels of education. .

24. Furthermore, very few countries have the ability to independently carry out sector analyses. Progress has certainly been made, often attributable to the direct support to countries and the Pole's training programme. But the capacity building objectives allowing the countries to acquire autonomy for the elaboration of their credible plans are far from achieved.

25. During these 10 years, the Pole has generally lived up to expectations. In this sense, it has been effective. While noting the absence of clear annual guidelines, the Pole has acted in a sufficiently structured manner to meet its stakeholders' accountability needs. However, one would think of the Pole's accountability differently if it were seen as a regional public good, which would mean avoiding a short-term accountability policy.

26. The Pole has used resources efficiently, in particular for country support activities. This efficiency has increased for 2009-2012. Its performance, compared to that of the market, is relatively higher, since the Pole's costs are lower by over a third, while achieving equal or greater quality. There is insufficient data to assess the efficiency of the other activities.

27. The Steering Committee (CO) is the Pole's governing body; it plays two roles: (i) its annual meetings provide broad guidance for the Pole ; (ii) the legitimacy it provides for the Pole's functional autonomy (mainly programmatic) with regard to UNESCO. It carries out its role efficiently. But the CO is not a partnership-based.. It is made up of upstream stakeholders (financial, administrative, operational) and lacks those who are downstream to the Pole's activities (Ministries of Education, TFPs).

28. The externalization of the Pole's administration, which is , assigned to BREDA, has not managed to create the best of operating conditions. The vision espousing the "integration" of the Pole

[5] Dakar +5, +6, +7 Reports.

into BREDA's activities has forced the Pole to mobilize energy to maintain its main missions, its identity and its visibility. The Pole would have been more efficient if it had had more direct contacts with the countries at the political level and if it had continued to participate in sector reviews. As for the **internal organization**, the flat organizational model worked well for a long time. It has now reached its limits and the transition must be made to a more structured functional organization. Among the four organizational options set out by the Pole[6] and which offer an excellent basis for discussions, option 3 seems preferable to us, as it is more flexible and realistic.

29. The contractual framework linking the partners worked during the decade and enabled the Pole's missions to be carried out with a certain amount of flexibility and a pragmatic adaptation to the situation on the ground. However, the source of financing of Pole activities has remained limited to France (80%) and the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF) managed by the World Bank (20%). The goal of achieving multilateral financing has not been as successful as hoped. It remains, however, essential to the Pole's sustainability.

30. The Pole's process for the recruitment of experts has often been slow and has hindered its abilities over the decade. In the future, to accompany the broader missions and meet the countries' requests for support, the profiles and the staff must be adapted sufficiently upstream of the work programme according to a sliding three-year plan at the same time as the budgetary forecasts and relating funding are put in place. In the past, the status of the Pole and Pole members did not provide attractive career prospects, resulting in the departure of several valued experts. In order to ensure the Pole's sustainability this issue must be resolved.

31. The Pole's direct supports had a strong and lasting impact on national capacity building in the area of sector analysis. However, national capacities are still largely insufficient to ensure continuity without technical assistance, which countries are still requesting. An increased political will from countries and a greater synergy of the support from the different institutions could further encourage the emergence of national capacities.

32. The impact of the Pole through the combined effects of its support for countries, its analytical and methodological productions and PSGSE training is considerable. Without the action of the Pole, it is highly likely that: (i) the landscape of sector analysis in Africa would be more sparse; (ii) the plans of the 13 countries which have received support from the Pole to carry out their CSRs in order to receive FTI/GPE financing would have been less complete, possibly with consequences for financing; (iii) the know-how in the area of sector analysis in the 16 countries which sent students to the PSGSE would be thinner. Above all, it is highly likely that Mauritania would not have been capable of producing several chapters of its recent CSR without technical assistance and that the UCAD education faculty would not be creating a Master's programme in educational sciences, with focus on sectoral analysis.

33. The issue of substitution deserves to be analyzed in more detail. In certain countries, the PSGSE has indeed helped to increase participation and national human resource capacities for doing sector analyses. But in others, national capacities remain insufficient and the bulk of the work is still carried out by Pole members at the request of countries. However, the case of Senegal suggests that there may be non-ministerial human resources (university, private sector) which could have the necessary expertise to contribute to sector analyses.

[6] See the note prepared by the Pole on the Pole's internal organization, submitted to the OC in January 2012.

34. There are probably two reasons why, with a few exceptions, after 10 years of Pole operations, countries' national capacities to independently carry out sector analyses remain weak,: (i) because the objective of achieving greater autonomy for national capacities was never a top priority for countries, nor their external partners, nor the Pole. This was not the Pole's main objective. With the resources allocated to it and its annual priority objectives set out by its CO, the Pole met its decision-making bodies' expectations; and (ii) the second reason is that the Pole was asked to help countries carry out analyses (priority 1 for the FTI financing) and at the same time to help train nationals on how to carry them out (priority 2). Priority 1 has been achieved; priority 2 has seen progress but it is a time-consuming process.

35. Furthermore, there are limits to the impact which the Pole can have on national capacities, as observed by other training institutions such as the IIPE. Indeed, there are insufficient numbers of high-level staff in education ministries with sufficient training or knowledge in statistics, economics and finance. A capacity building programme for statisticians, economists, planners and public finances is essential. The impact of the Pole's support and the PSGSE training can only encourage the emergence of independent teams if the staff involved in the sector analysis and selected for training already have a sufficient grounding in the use of tools and training.

36. The Pole's reactivity and flexibility as an institution to country demand is limited by its staff and by the duration of the missions, which are not long enough to have a greater impact on the formation of national teams.

37. The Pole operated as an extra-budgetary project for a decade; its administrative status enabled it to operate, albeit with numerous constraints which sometimes limited its effectiveness. The latter would have been increased if the Pole had more direct contact with the countries at the political level and if it had continued to take part in sector reviews.

38. Despite the attempts made over the period, partnerships between the Pole and the most potentially interested institutions have not yet developed (expect with the World Bank).

39. In conclusion, according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, it can be said (i) that the missions assigned to the *Pôle de Dakar* were **relevant** to the prevailing context during its creation, but that these missions should change; (ii) that the Pole was generally **effective**, given that it met its objectives, but that a lot remains to be done; (iii) that it was **efficient** in using the resources at its disposal and that it could unquestionably operate competitively; (iv) that it has had a major **impact** on national capacity building and on the promotion of a culture of economic analysis in the education sector, but that more time is required for the impact to become fully effective; (v) that to consolidate its **sustainability**, it must no longer rely on a unique source of financing and must have a status that would grant it a greater degree of managerial independence, based on a multilateral partnership with the beneficiaries and the main donors in the education sector in Africa.

Evaluation Recommendations

On the Pole's missions

40. Hold discussions on targeting missions and therefore actions of the Pole based on changes in the development of education in Africa since 2000. These discussions should take account of the diversification of the issues. In particular, it must be considered whether it would be desirable and feasible to broaden the content of sector analyses in order to take account of issues such as: the assessment of learning outcomes; implementation capacities; the operation and

organization of teaching units (schools, classrooms). These discussions should address the issue of the Pole's comparative advantages and all stakeholders should participate.

41. Furthermore, the strategy and practices of the Pole's sponsors must focus mainly on sustainable national capacity building to develop a culture of sector analysis in countries (within Ministries or not). This mission should take precedence over creating country-products for specific purposes. The conditions of such a strategy should be subject to careful consideration, examining the work of social sciences on capacity building, as well as cases where the Pole succeeded and failed at this.

42. By moving from a role of accompanying countries to one of autonomy in sector analysis, the Pole must reassess the nature of its work. It could, for example, move towards a role of advice and scientific validation of the work of national teams.

43. The Pole's support should also move towards support for formulating action plans and advice for operational implementation; the scope of the action should open up more to other educational subsectors, in particular technical and professional education (ETFP) and higher education, including with a view to adapting training to employment. Its action should be broadened to cover non-French-speaking African countries. In this regard, the opening of a branch for Eastern and Southern Africa, which was examined by the CO in 2011, is an initiative which should be developed.

44. The Pole should be able to organize more direct contacts with the countries at the political levels and also participate in sector reviews in countries where it has direct support.

45. PSGSE

- Reduce the age of students entering the programme
- Courses should place greater emphasis on a learning-by-doing approach.
- Target candidate who are most likely to take part in teamsworking on sector analysis. The Pole and FASTEF could even (i) seek assurances on the participation of its students in the next sector analysis exercise and (ii) link country-cohorts to the programming of the sector analysis in order to promote learning-by-doing.
- Review the practice of selecting the number of trainees per country based on the training and follow-up of the national teams;
- Improve tutoring
- Encourage the creation of similar programmes in Gambia, Morocco and Cape Verde.
- It would be desirable to support FASTEF's efforts with a view to offering a complete Master's (M II) in education with emphasis on educational policy analysis.. Two main forms of support are envisaged: (i) collaboration of Pole members in the teaching provided; (ii) the provision of study grants. If FASTEF were to become a centre of excellence in the domain, this would greatly promote a culture of sector analysis in French-speaking Africa.

On the Pole's status, location and management

46. Location and status

- With UNESCO's new structure, the Pole must ensure that it has clear functional and administrative autonomy, which could be formalized by a memorandum of understanding.

The Pole should be able to have the same status and carry out the same operations as an Institute, or an independent entity like the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), including charging for its services and competing on the technical assistance services market.

- If the Pole were to remain located within UNESCO, it would be preferable to be attached directly to the Office of the Assistant Director-General for Education (ED/ADG), with a level D1 or even D2 as Coordinator and P5s as senior analysts. If the Pole remains within the BREDA premises, this would therefore only be for logistical reasons, as all management and administration decisions be made by the Pole's Coordinator as part of his/her mandate to make decisions on behalf of the CO.
- With this new status, the Pole will continue to strengthen synergies and complementarity with UNESCO institutions (Education sector, International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), etc.) in the support for national capacity building, with new UNESCO cluster offices (including BREDA) and country offices. In particular, mechanisms should be found to institutionalize information exchange and build partnerships.

47. With regard to the **options for changing the Pole's location**, five possibilities were examined in EQ 17; in any case, now is the time to move to a status which sustains the Pole and encourages its development, better responds to its changing missions, takes account of countries' changing needs and requires a wider field of action. The mission expresses its preference for option 2 in the short term (location at UNESCO if attached to ADG Education), moving towards option 4 in the medium term (Institute), with option 5 of stand-alone status also remaining a medium-term option.

48. Partnerships with UNICEF, the European Union and the African Development Bank would be extremely useful and would have a big impact on the countries.

49. The CO should become more inclusive so that all stakeholders play a part, i.e. at least "client" country representatives and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

50. The CO must consolidate a sliding three-year resources plan, lead the search for partnerships to ensure the Pole's sustainability and locate attractive career prospects for the Pole's members.

On the Pole's organization and operation

51. Create a template which would be submitted each year to the CO which would present the activities to be carried out the following year (or period) with their budgetary consequences.

52. When recruiting, the Pole has always prioritized statisticians and economists. It is likely that if the Pole had to diversify its missions to better accompany the countries on broader issues, both the profiles and the number of its staff would also need to be adapted, as well as increasing its capacities for intervention in English-speaking countries (branch for East and Southern Africa and staff adaptation).

53. Increase the responsiveness and flexibility of the "Pole" based on countries' needs, adjusting the staff numbers sufficiently in advance based on the priorities set out by the CO and adapting the duration and frequency of the support missions based on the countries in order to have greater impact on the formation of national teams.

54. The necessary structuring of the Pole in the future, as well as maintaining a level of country support at least equal to that of the 2010-2012 period, should lead to increasing the Pole's

staff to 18 analysts by the end of 2015 (staff numbers have de3clined to eight) and two PSGSE managers, without counting the four support staff nor the staff for the planned branch in East and Southern Africa.

55. In this context, it is essential to significantly shorten Pole members' recruitment times and offer contracts which will maintain the motivation of the most efficient workers as well as ensure career prospects.

56. The options set out in the note to the 2011 Steering Committee, held in January 2012, are an excellent basis for considering the **internal functional organization** . Option 3 is considered to be the most flexible and realistic.

57. The new coordinator should (i) have technical expertise on all technical aspects of the Pole's work; (ii) have the capacity to conceptualize the Pole's other analytical activities as outlined above; (iii) have good communication skills; (iv) be aware of the issues, needs and sensitivities of the education ministries in Africa and their financial partners.