

Pasec Comments to EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities (GRA)
Thematic Area: Learning Outcomes

Confemen (Conference of National Education Ministers in French-speaking World) was created in 1960 (with initially 15 Member States). It is an intergovernmental institution of the French speaking world specialized in the field of the steering of the quality in basic education

This institution has become a pillar of the French-speaking world and includes 44 Member States and governments. Its headquarter is located in Dakar.

The Analysis Programme of the CONFEMEN Education Systems (PASEC) was founded in 1991 by the Ministers of the CONFEMEN in response to the resolutions of the 1990 world conference on education held in Jontiem, which advocated education for all in 2000.

The Pasec objectives is to organize periodically a diagnostic analysis on the quality of students learning and to assess the performance of the education systems, with an evidence based approach, in the French speaking countries, in particular the Southern countries. This assessment programme is a scientific method which is able to measure the scores of the students in French and in Mathematics in the 2nd and 5th Grade of primary school highlighting the explanatory factors for performance or underperformance of students. After 20 years of existence, Pasec has published over 15 country study reports.

- Over the last 20 years, the Confemen through Pasec has collaborated very closely with the network of all the Ministries of Education, in order to develop capacity of Ministries of Education to undertake large-scale assessments to measure the quality of education, with a particular concentration on the three basic skills (reading, writing and numeracy) according to countries' curricular goals at the Grades 2 and 5 levels.
- Pasec welcomed the major policy shift which occurred in 2009 regarding the FTI's approval procedures in order to ensure "that learning outcomes are placed at the core of the FTI agenda" when FTI analyses the application of countries to benefit from FTI resources. In particular, we place a great value on the second reading skills indicator, namely: "Proportion of students who are able to **read with comprehension, according to their countries' curricular goals**" for the following reasons:
 - The Confemen wanted to monitor and evaluate the "output" of basic programmes of primary education – at various stages of primary education. They were interested in proficiency in the national language of instruction - because skills in this language were required for a successful transition to secondary schooling.
 - The Ministers wanted to assess the performance of their education systems in improving the reading comprehension of pupils and to identify efficient and low-cost school models by conducting surveys on a sample of schools and by making comparisons on a national and international scale.

- To find the levers to improve the learning outcomes, Pasesc organizes a test at the beginning of the school year and another test at the end of the same school year and collect information coming from various questionnaires on schools, pupils, teachers, headmasters.
- The Ministers encouraged the Pasesc to focus their assessments on the approach of “reading for meaning” – especially at Grade 5 level, because they were interested in finding out the reading comprehension levels of pupils when confronted with the kinds of passages of text that they would be challenged with at higher grade levels. A new set of items based on this approach is now available and will be used in all the evaluations starting in 2011.
- Even if testing at Grade 2 level tend to provide an assessment of the reading readiness skills acquired by pupils from their home environments, rather than an assessment of what school had added to their learning, Pasesc organize a test at this level **but** give a full scale of the knowledge and the competencies for this level and identify levers for improvement.
- Pasesc thought that “diagnostic” testing recommended by GRA to identify early problems in individual pupils was valuable - but that this approach should be more school-based and placed in the hands of teachers who has to appropriate it for their own uses. That is they considered that diagnostic testing should not be conducted for the purposes of developing national norms and cross-national comparisons.
- Therefore « diagnostic » testing cannot be considered as an assessment method as Sacmeq and Pasesc are. Both are in line with norms and international standards in the field of international comparable assessments.
- It would be desirable that FTI, from its strategic position at the international level for the development of education systems, give an efficient support to Pasesc and Sacmeq which are reliable tools which have been developed by and for the Southern countries.