

Using Student Assessment Results for Education Quality and Systems Strengthening



CASE STUDY

*Uses of assessment information to support student learning in **THE GAMBIA***



THE GAMBIA

The Gambia

Location: West Africa, area is about 11000 km²

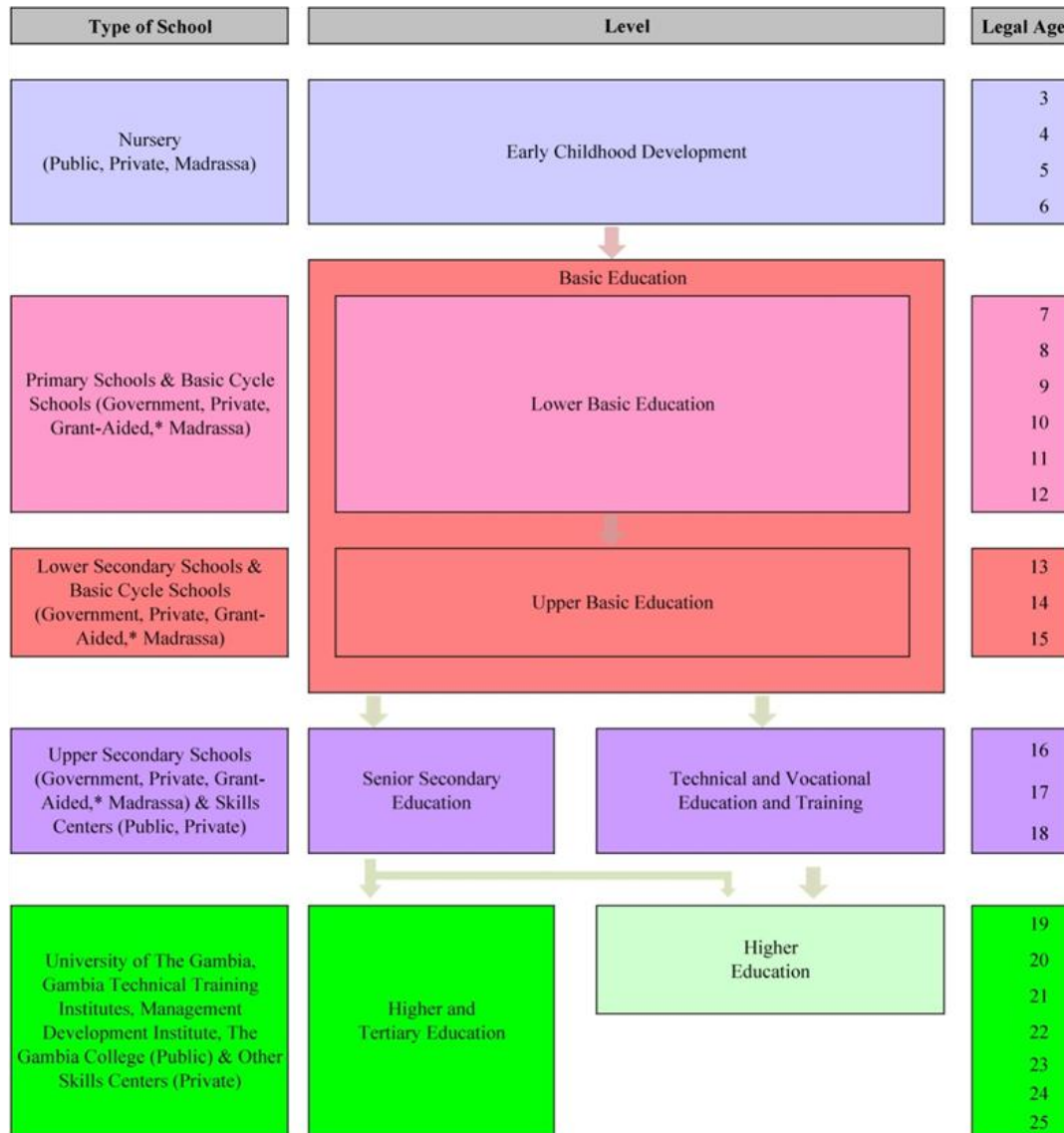
Capital: Banjul

Population: 1.64 million in 2010 (GBOS)

Economy: GDP per capita was estimated at D 16,630 (about US\$600). The country's economy is relatively undiversified and limited by a small internal market.

Currency: The Gambian Dalasi, Exchange Rate **US\$1=**
D27.72

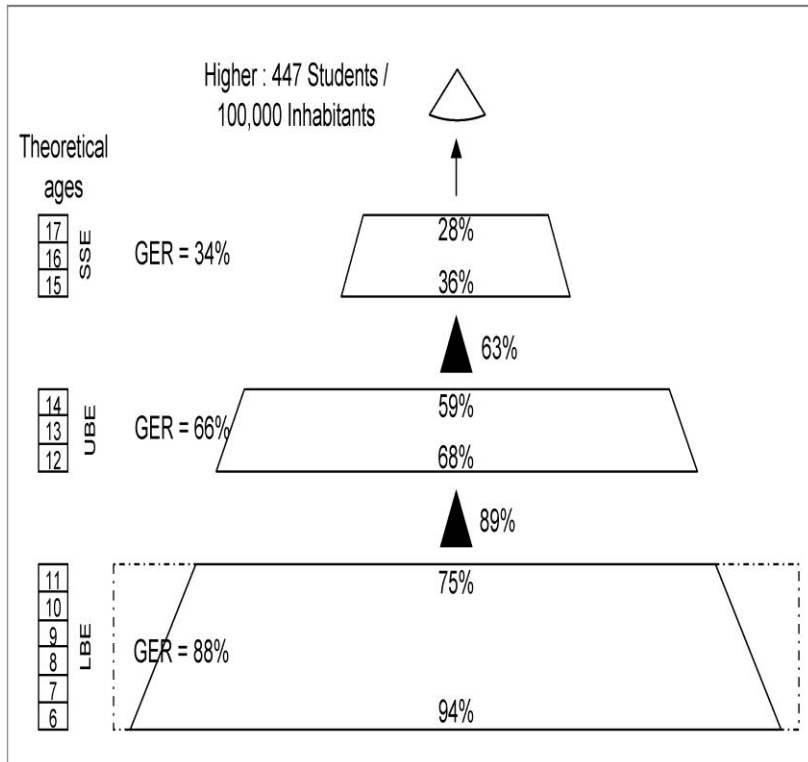
THE GAMBIA's Education System



Source: THE Gambia CSR 2010.

Education Data

Primary and Secondary Survival Profile, and transition rates 2009/10



Source: UNESCO-Pôle de Dakar.

- **Out of school children represent 31.6% of the group aged 7-15 years, most of whom (29.1%) have never attended school**

- **The primary level pupil to teacher ratio is comparatively good: at 41 to 1, it is in line with the FTI benchmark of 40 to 1.**

- **The average teacher's monthly salary in lower basic is D3,400 and represents annually 2.5 units of GDP per capita, lower than FTI benchmark of 3.5**

Student Assessment Activities in The Gambia

Classroom Assessment

Purpose:

- Monitor level of coverage of individual teachers
- Assess effectiveness of teaching and students learning outcome
- Develop informed strategies to address low performance
- Engage and challenge students and parents about their shared responsibilities
- To justify utilization of school resources
- To conform to policy directives and guidelines

Student Assessment Activities in The Gambia

Survey Type Assessment:

Two types of survey type assessments all focusing on lower basic education in the Gambia:

1. The sample based Early Grade Reading Assessment to assessed reading ability of grades 1-3
2. The National Assessment Test, a census based assessment for grades 3 and 5 students.

Student Assessment Activities in The Gambia

Purpose of Large Scale and Survey Based Assessment:

Early Grade Reading Assessment

Purpose:

- Measure the most basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in Grades 1 to 3
- Inform the education sector on the system's quality of instruction.
- Improve the teaching of reading and influence the development of tailored reading materials.

Student Assessment Activities in The Gambia

National Assessment Test

Purpose:

- Provide a national picture of learning achievements by Grades 3 and 5 in core subjects.
- Signal weaknesses in the system
- Inform curriculum revision
- Monitor effects of strategic initiative
- Set national standards
- For accountability

Student Assessment Activities in The Gambia

Two types of external examination:

- The Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination**
- The West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination**

**External
Examination**

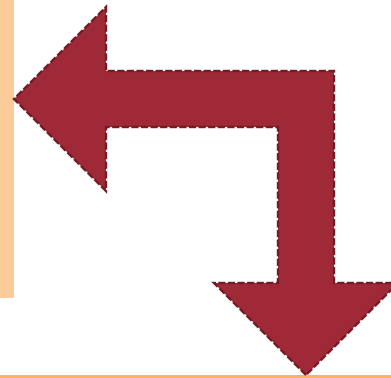
Purpose:

- Entry into Senior Secondary School or further educations**
- Inform teacher about curriculum coverage and mastery**
- Results are now used to inform policy about overall performance of individual students**

Uses of assessment results

This is guided by:

1. The increasing need for more data
2. High demand for efficiency and accountability
3. The urgent need to address quality in education



Underpinned by:

1. High commitment of leadership
2. The development of reliable assessment tools
3. Increased and predictable budget allocation
4. Availability of assessment results
5. Improved monitoring mechanism

USES of Assessment information

Survey Types Assessments (EGRA SURVEY and the National Assessment Test)

- **International comparison**
- **Negotiation Tool**
- **Improved pedagogical approaches**
- **Teacher training**
- **Justify the reorganization of the sector**
- **Address disparity and equity issues**
- **Curriculum revision**
- **Raise public awareness to foster accountability**

Monitoring Mechanisms

- **The bimonthly Coordinating Committee Meeting (CCM)** : this is an opened forum of education experts to monitor progress in education
- **The Participatory Performance Monitoring** – Participatory engagement of parents and communities in the delivery of quality education
- School Report Cards** - Comparative data informing schools about how they are faring in national assessments.
- The Guidelines for Conducting Remedial Classes**
- **School Management Manual**

Monitoring Tools

- **Learning Achievement Targets** is a reference book for teachers that provide a comprehensive list of learning targets and outcomes per grade level.
- **The Minimum Standards** : Set of standards used to assess schools' performance in various domains such school based assessment and the analysis and uses of national assessment results
- **Standardized tools for measuring learning outcomes** : Set of guideline that covers the developement of reliable assessment instruments at school level, analysis of assessment results and reporting

Evolution of Assessment in the Gambia

The evolution of assessment in the Gambia can be linked to :

1. Prioritization of Education as a key to development
 2. Structural reform of the Education System
 3. Strong leadership commitment
 4. Collective consciousness of the need of data for informed decisions
 5. National capacity strengthened in analyzing assessment results and reporting
1. Shift in pedagogical approaches “learner centred approach”
 2. Greater involvement of the public and stakeholder in the steering of Gambian education system

Evolution of Assessment in the Gambia

The evolution of assessment in the Gambia is more noticeable at the Primary level where one can observe :

- A change in assessment type from **external examination** to **survey type assessment**
- A change in the uses of assessment from *entry requirement* to **system diagnose** for improved learning outcome
- A change in the format from **simple test questions** to a more elaborated format with combined **questionnaires for students, teachers and schools**
- A change in the degree level of analysis of assessment results from **simple counts** of numbers of passes and failures to **econometrics analysis**

Evolution of Assessment in the Gambia

Terminal examination at Grade 6 phased out



Ad hoc survey-type assessment.



Institutionalization of survey-type assessment

- Early Grade Reading Assessment for Grades 1,2,3 for every 2 years
- National Assessment Test for **all** Grades 3 and 5 annually.



No direct bearing on Learning outcomes

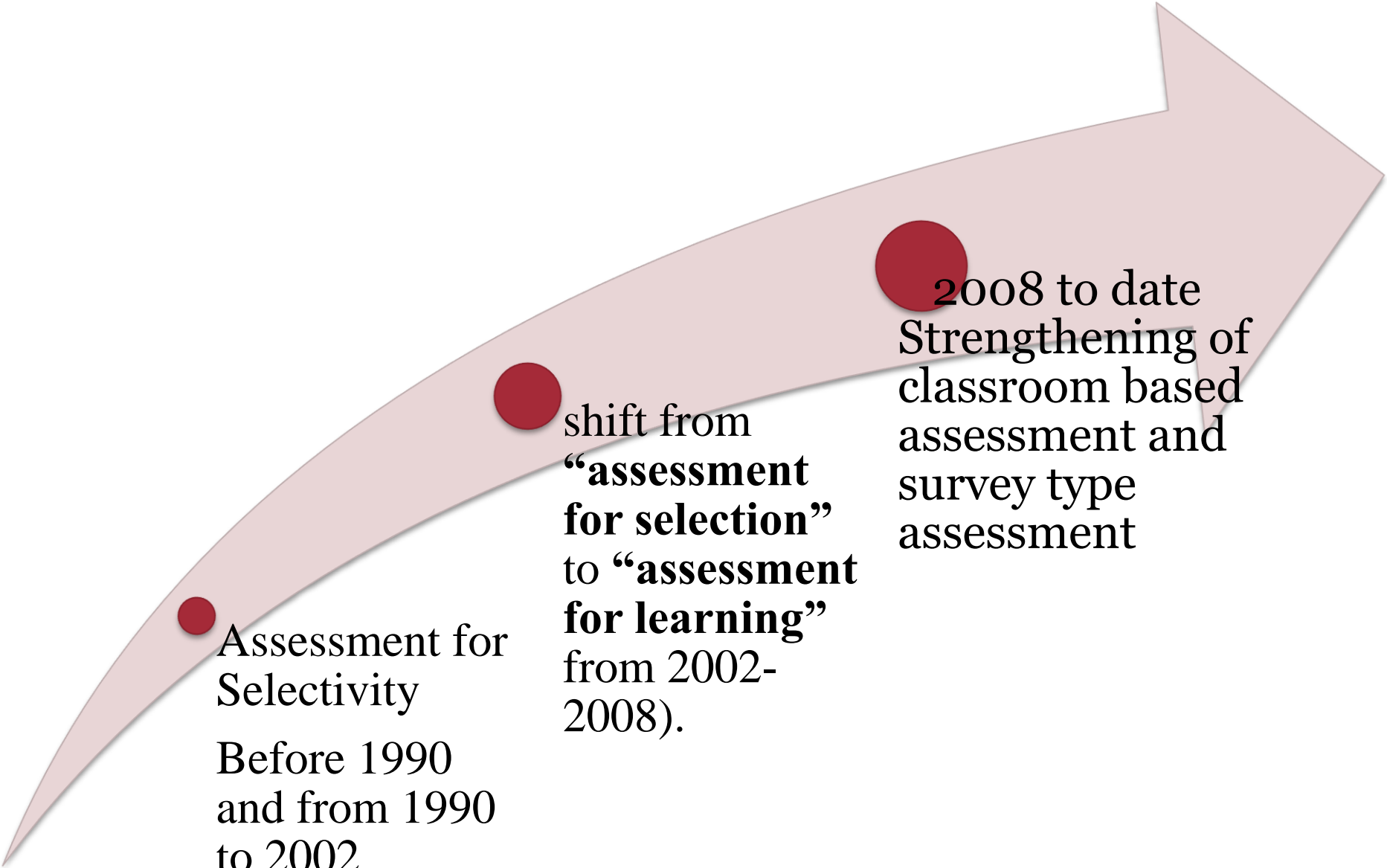


Enable to establish a baseline. Informed strategies developed with clear policy orientation. Limited uses



- Help to guide policies and strategies
- Widely used by different audiences
- systematic and regular

Evolution of assessment overtime



Assessment for
Selectivity
Before 1990
and from 1990
to 2002

shift from
“**assessment
for selection**”
to “**assessment
for learning**”
from 2002-
2008).

2008 to date
Strengthening of
classroom based
assessment and
survey type
assessment

Impact of Assessment

Feedbacks provided by the 2007 assessment results,
 - triggered a drastic methodological shift
 in in-service and initial teacher training,
 -Supplementary materials and reading
 materials for pupils reviewed and sent to
 schools.

	Grade 3		
	2007	2009	% Increase (Significance)
Phoneme Counting (% of phonemes correctly identified)	32.2	43.4	0.4 (***)
Phoneme Identification (% of phonemes correctly pronounced)	34.8	41.0	0.2 (***)
Letter Identification (Number of correct letters / minute)	36.2	45.8	0.4 (***)
Pseudoword Recognition (Number of correct non-words / minute)	2.2	4.7	0.3 (***)
Word Recognition (Number of correct words / minute)	4.3	8.7	0.4 (***)
Words in Context (Number of correct words / minute)	9.3	16.4	0.4 (***)
Reading Comprehension (% of correct answers)	30.6	49.3	0.6 (***)
Listening Comprehension (% of correct answers)	58.6	69.1	0.3 (***)
Spelling (% of correct answers)	12.1	33.9	0.8 (***)

Driving factors

The system was able to put in place overtime:

- Establishment of accountability forums
- Strengthened national capacity in data analysis and reporting
- Reliable assessment instruments
- Large political consensus & the building of strategic partnership
- The adoption of results and evidenced based strategies
- Shift in pedagogical approaches : assessment for learning
- Increased pressure on schools and the system for more quality
- The use of quality indicators to justify allocation of resources

Lessons Learned

- In the Gambia, the call for more quality has triggered a radical shift in thinking and focus on addressing issues related to students' learning achievement.
- In recent years, the introduction of comprehensive and reliable assessment instruments has redefined the role of assessment as an integral factor in improving performance.
 - Quality issues are better diagnosed
 - Appropriate strategies developed and improved overtime
 - Large trust and consensus built around the importance and uses of assessment
 - Improved pedagogical practice
 - Learning & teaching material better focused and more relevant

Recommendations

The positive impact of the uses of assessment information registered in this case study has now posed a challenge of sustaining and improving the good practices that led to the achievements. It therefore follows that more efforts, resources and indeed commitments, are much needed than ever before to carry out more tactful interventions to curb reading inabilities in schools

- Communication related to the uses of assessment information needs to go beyond the education sector and involve partnerships from various sector: Ministry of Finance, donors, NGOs, communities and the media
- The decision leading to quality should be guided by relevant and adequate data. One such data should be assessment data which is recognized to give unique evidence of the system's overall performance in bettering learning outcomes.

Recommendations

- Uses of assessment information needs to be decentralized at the local and school level by improving the capacity of teachers, cluster monitors and regional education officers in data analysis and reporting.
- Reporting on assessment information should be free of technical jargons to attract wider audience. Journalists who are key partners in the dissemination of assessment information should be trained on assessment reporting.
- **Assessment information should include** both the factors negatively impacting scores (repetition, absenteeism, and class size), and those having a positive impact (the availability of textbooks, for suggested policies to improve and strengthen student learning achievements

Recommendations

- Regularly assessment of learning achievements in primary schools with relevant national and internationally comparable tools is necessary to get better insights on potential education policy leverages.
- Develop capacity of assessment specialist in the use of ICT in assessment dissemination and data analysis using adequate software (STATA, SPSS)
- Introduce the uses of assessment information in the curricula of “Teacher Training institutions” to better prepare teachers
- Strengthened the capacity of school supervisors to monitor misuses of assessment data and information