

## **Education in Burkina Faso at Horizon 2025**

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses aspects of the educational system of Burkina Faso in an attempt to envisage how it will be like at horizon 2025. The authors take a retrospective look at the achievements, the opportunities, and also the constraints and risks characterizing education in the country. Key aspects are examined, among which the organization and administration of the system, the curriculum, the infrastructures and human resources, attitudes towards learning and the relationships between the various stakeholders. This review served as a basis for sketching a mildly optimistic scenario, in line with the findings of a more general national prospective study.

### **Introduction**

Burkina Faso is a landlocked francophone country in West Africa bounded by Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire in the South, by Mali in the West, and by Niger in the East. It has a surface area of 274 000 sq km and a population estimated at 13.7 million inhabitants. More than half of this population (58%) is less than 20 years old. Life expectancy remains low at about 51.8 years. Because of its GNI per capita of \$ 400 and other low indicators such as the literacy rate ( 24.8% in 2005), and the primary school enrolment rate (66.5%<sup>1</sup> for the 2006/2007 school year), it has one of the lowest ranking in the UNDP human development index classification.

Yet, the country has come a long way since the introduction of modern western type of education in 1900 under the French colonial rule. All the governments who ruled the country since its independence in 1960 have laid emphasis on education, and particularly basic education, considered as a top priority. They allocated a sizable part of the state budget to this sector (up to 25% at a given point in the history of the country). However the results were rather disappointing during the first 25 years of internal autonomy (1958-1960) and external autonomy (1960-1983). The school gross enrollment rate progressed very slowly from 0% in 1900 to 5% in 1960 and then to 16.8% in 1983.

During the past 25 years, thanks to a strong mobilisation of the State, its partners and the families, some significant results have been achieved. The gross enrollment rate jumped from 16.8% in 1983 to 72.50 in January 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> The gross enrollment rate was 72.50% in January 2008.

Today most of the efforts in the educational sector are geared towards meeting the millennium development goals, particularly equitable quality education for all. The ten year basic education development plan (PDDEB = *Plan Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation*) that covers the 2000 – 2010 period aims at improving the access, quality and management of basic education. In 2007 the government launched a general education reform that should bring among other innovations an extension of basic education from the current six years to ten years, and generalise progressively free compulsory education for children aged 6 - 16.

How close will these actions bring us towards the Millennium Development Goals? What progress can reasonably be foreseen at horizon 2025? The present paper attempts to answer these questions with a special focus on the following issues emanating from the theme of this special issue of the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, namely: the control, administration and organization of the educational system, the curriculum, teachers and students, relations between school and community, the role of parents, resources and computer-assisted instruction.

On each of those topics we will discuss the achievements and opportunities on the one hand, then the constraints and risks. Finally we shall try to sketch a scenario for the future of education in Burkina Faso.

Drawing scenarios for schooling in the next 15 to 20 years in developing countries is undoubtedly of paramount importance given the key role that education will play in shaping the future of our countries. It remains however a daunting task because of the uncertainties surrounding the opportunities and risks that may affect the evolution of our societies in terms of social, economic, political, demographic, scientific and technological changes. One can entertain an optimistic vision of the future based on the few successful or promising stories of countries such as Botswana. On the other hand we cannot overlook the permanent risks looming over our countries that might turn a potential success story into a nightmare. The ordeals endured recently by Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe are cases in point.

The exercise is therefore highly speculative for poorer developing countries like Burkina Faso, but nonetheless very useful because prospective studies can provide tools for guiding decision makers and technicians in charge of proposing development policies. This explains why the Burkinabè government launched a nation-wide study entitled “Burkina 2025” to take stock of the country's current situation and people's aspirations, draw scenarios and propose development strategies to reinforce the country's capacity for anticipation and concerted management. This underscores the relevance of the present paper.

The input for this paper comes from a documentary analysis of government texts and reports, from other written and oral sources, and above all from the authors' own experience of the educational system. For the scenario, we shall build on more general scenarios designed by the “Burkina 2025” study. Although we have tried to take into account some aspects of that nation-wide prospective study, we assume full responsibility for any omissions, misinterpretations or errors.

## **Control and Administration of the Educational System**

In Burkina Faso education is implemented by three ministries run by five (5) ministers<sup>2</sup>:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs, in charge of pre-primary education;
- The Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy, in charge of primary education, literacy and non-formal education;
- The Ministry of Secondary, Higher Education and Scientific Research, in charge of secondary education, higher education and scientific research.

These ministries all exhibit the characteristics of large complex organizations with centralized and decentralized functions. They are governed by rules and regulations that entail complex procedures and processes. Although they are hierarchically structured, teachers who constitute the overwhelming majority of the personnel enjoy a great deal of autonomy in their classes where the true work is done.

The ministries in charge of education carry a lot of weight because they manage the largest budgets and civilian personnel in the country. They operate in a sector where the transparency norms are generally not well defined. There is not an accepted definition of expected results as compared to profits and yields, or the production or productivity levels of a business firm. However, with the continuous constraint of decreasing resources, they are under pressure from the Ministry of Finance and the external partners to demonstrate their operational efficiency - obtaining the maximum results with minimum resources. The simple demand for education no longer constitutes a basis for allocating resources to these ministries whose sizes and high costs make them favorite targets for budget cuts.

They are actually made even more vulnerable by their obsolete management systems implemented by converted former teachers who are ill-prepared for highly demanding management tasks. Furthermore the management of the educational system is centralized and stratified along functional lines but mostly hierarchical ones, with poor communication among the various entities. This brings about an inefficient use of human and material resources and a slow and difficult adaptation to change. There is a shortage of qualified personnel and an inefficient use of existing ones, particularly at the level of lower or intermediate level staff. Another sign of the wrong management of human resources is the rapid rotation of high level officials, often due to the interference of politics. These constant changes cause serious waste of time and experience.

The way forward will be a real decentralisation and the transfer of competences and resources from the central services to the regions and local districts. This will minimize some of the current bureaucratic bottlenecks generated by the gigantism of the educational

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<sup>2</sup> The Minister of Basic Education and Literacy is assisted by a Delegate Minister in charge of literacy and nonformal education while the Minister in charge of secondary and higher education is assisted by a Delegate Minister in charge of technical education and vocational training.

sector, and avoid for instance stories of teachers who have to travel to Ouagadougou from other provinces to get their salaries, wasting several teaching days in the process. On the other hand, this should be accompanied by measures to improve communication across the decision making and implementation line.

## **Organization**

The structure of the Burkinabè formal educational system was inherited from France. Pre-primary education of children aged 3-6 is limited to major towns. Primary school lasts six years and ends with a primary school leaving certificate (CEP), Secondary school is divided into two cycles: the first cycle (junior secondary school) lasts 4 years and leads to the BEPC degree. The second cycle lasts 3 years and ends with the secondary school leaving degree (Baccalauréat) that corresponds to the A levels. Higher education is provided by four public universities, two catholic universities, and a growing number of private colleges.

Non Formal Education covers adult literacy and related programmes designed for adolescents who could not attend formal education. It is provided mostly in centres called CPAF and CEBNF.

The new Education Orientation Law (Burkina 2007) introduces a new definition of basic education that covers pre-school education, primary education and post-primary education (the first cycle of secondary school). Compulsory free education concerns only primary and post-primary education. The extension of the age limits of compulsory basic education is a good move. At the age of 16 the school leaver can more easily prepare himself to integrate the work force than thirteen year olds.

In the future, the country may need to muster enough courage to change the current subdivisions and particularly to create bridges between formal and non formal education and integrate even more fully the two sub-systems.

## **The Curriculum**

### **Curriculum renewal**

The significant headways achieved by PDDED in the expansion of access to education in Burkina Faso must be coupled with an effort to maintain and improve quality because EFA must be conceived of as quality education for all.

The first phase of PDDEB seemed to have a superficial definition of quality. In most of its six monthly reports for the joint government – technical partners evaluation meetings (called *Missions Conjointes*), the sections devoted to the quality axis deal mostly with material inputs for improving teaching and learning conditions such as free distribution of books, school meals, health and sanitation, teachers' housing, latrines and the like. There is no doubt that no quality learning can take place when these basics are missing but they should not constitute the main indicators of the improvement of the quality of education. The reports do pay lip service to the reform of the curricula, but little has actually been done until

recently to set off the renovation process on sound bases. Now there are re however some opportunities for addressing more directly the issue of quality because the second phase of PDDEB that started in 2006 focuses more on improving quality and relevance. (See MEBA 2007f).

The history of education in Burkina Faso is paved with various attempts to revise the curricula to improve quality. In 1962 two years after the country's independence, minor revisions were made to the syllabuses and teaching materials. A major attempt to reform the whole educational system was the 1979-1984 experimental project that tried among other innovations to use three national languages as mediums of instruction. The experiment was stopped by the revolutionary regime that governed the country from 1984 to 1987. They then designed a reform project called "the revolutionary school" that raised strong criticism and was quickly shelved without any implementation on the field.

In 2007 a new Education Orientation Law was adopted (See Burkina 2007) as part of a general educational reform which introduces universal compulsory free education in 45 administrative districts on an experimental basis. The reform will entail a revision of the curricula in order to build a coherent, relevant and integrated educational system for all pupils aged 6-16.

All these reform projects were usually preceded by national forums that diagnosed the problems and made suggestions for improvements. They also drew some insights from the many small-scale experiments of aspects of the curricula. One such experiment that yielded fairly convincing results is the bilingual education project carried out by OSEO, a Swiss NGO and the ministry of basic education and literacy. It has shown that pupils who are taught in their mother tongues in the early years of schooling before switching later to French performed better than those of the classical system where French is used from the first day of school, even in rural areas where most people don't understand the language. After just **five** years of schooling, the pupils of bilingual schools reach better results than those who spent **six** years in the classical system. The Government is appropriating the approach through careful progressive generalisation, and the new curricula will take the national languages into account.

Other experiments carried out in primary education concerned the emergent themes that will be integrated into the new curricula: road security, prevention of STD/HIV-AIDS, environmental education, children's rights, water management, health and sanitation, art and culture, citizenship, social education, gender, etc.

It should however be pointed out that the introduction of new contents relating to so many themes poses a serious threat for curriculum implementation. Each new topic will tend to pull the blanket on itself. Indeed most of the time these innovations are linked to externally funded projects with means to produce fat syllabi and modules, and financial incentives to motivate teachers and supervisors. Besides the fact that they often end when the funding runs out, they are introduced in a context where many factors contribute to shortening teaching and learning time. A recent study (MEBA 2008) has shown that for the current curriculum designed to be implemented in 961 hours, the actual teaching time is 574

hours a year.

### **The curriculum and teaching methods**

The current curriculum was introduced in 1988-89 under the objective-based planning approach (PP0) that was on fashion at the time. As already mentioned in the introduction, new curricula are to be designed within the framework of the new reform. The fact that they will adopt the competency-based approach is laudable, but it may be at odds with the prevailing teaching methods that remain frontal, talk-and-chalk partly because of the overcrowded classes. The one-shot retraining sessions that seem to be the habits in the Ministry are likely to be inefficient in inculcating the new learner-centred attitudes and behaviours required by the innovations. Teachers should have been trained, or at least fully briefed, ahead of the reform.

The risks in this area would be to consider educational reform, and even curricular revisions as administrative and technical blueprints that can be designed in vitro and then handed to other stakeholders (pedagogic supervisors, teachers and pupils) for implementation in a top-down approach. This danger is real given that the current reform was officially launched before most primary school teachers and even some of their supervisors were clearly informed about the practical details of what was really expected from them. Although it is not easy to apply a fully democratic participatory bottom-up approach to innovation in our context, the government should find better communication and sensitization channels to ensure the full participation of all the main actors.

### **Ways of learning and examinations**

One positive phenomenon noticeable among pupils is the development of parallel informal ways of acquiring knowledge. Many children now exploit ICT, particularly the Internet, to access useful knowledge that may be more decisive in their lives than what they painfully accumulate at school. Many are actually driven by the strong motivation to flee from the country. While we should not train them for immigration, we could turn this into a positive move towards training for what the current Burkinabè Prime Minister often refers to as “an economy of services”. Regionalisation and globalisation could bring many services to poorer countries that have well trained human resources through the phenomenon of outsourcing. So, the idea of generalising computer literacy at all levels of the school system is not so far-fetched as it would seem at first.

On the negative side, we must admit that the current school system overemphasises the acquisition of “know-what” at the expense of the other types of knowledge “know-why” “know-how” and “know-who” (See OECD). The examination systems are based on rote memorisation and restitution so that the classroom, particularly the last year of primary school presents pitiable scenes of mechanical question – answer drilling, due to well known backwash phenomenon that incites teachers to teach according to the exam when the latter is at odds with the official syllabus and guidelines.

How to revert the trend and favour discovery procedures, manipulation, problem solving

and autonomous learning is a daunting task that can be facilitated however by reforming first the examination system. Innovative types of tests could be experimented as part of the *Acquis Scolaire* study which gathers data every year to monitor pupils' performance (See MEBA 2007b).

## Teachers

PDDEB has brought about a massive increase in the number of trained teachers. Some 3 000 teachers are trained each year by the four teacher training schools (ENEP). For the 2006/2007 school year 2 328 new teachers were posted in the classrooms.

The percentage of women in the teaching staff is constantly rising (See Table 1 in Appendix) but it should still be improved further as women are known to play a key model role in zones where there is resistance to girls' education. Unfortunately the management of this category of personnel raises delicate human problems; we can mention among others, maternity leaves, absenteeism for family reasons and the need for keeping husband and wife in the same village or town. This explains why some classes in large cities have two or more teachers (often women), while other classes in remote villages are empty by lack of teachers.

One problem affecting the quality of the initial training of primary school teachers is the reduction of this pre-service training from two to one academic year, as a result of pressures or conditionalities imposed by some donors. This is inadequate for equipping properly the new teacher for a job that will be made more demanding by the innovations introduced by the reform. More and more voices are even asking the authorities to raise the level of recruitment to A levels holders instead of the current O levels requirement. But the government would not heed because of the financial cost of salary increases that this would entail.

The length of initial training would be less of a problem if in-service training was effectively provided. The reality is not so bright. The *Groupe d'Animation Pédagogique* is the main structure through which proximity supervision is to be provided. It gathers teachers from several neighbouring schools around a training topic and it includes model lessons. Unfortunately these activities are paralysed by trade union disputes. Teachers refuse to bear alone on their meagre salaries the cost of attending in-service training sessions.

On the whole, the teachers' morale is low due to low salaries and a decline of the status and consideration the profession used to enjoy. In many remote areas, teachers' lives are threatened by the growing insecurity (many teachers were killed on their way home on pay days).

Some administrative measures concerning teachers have just backfired. For instance, the ruling that primary school teachers must have a university degree before competing for professional exams to become inspectors pushed some teachers to desert their classes to attend university courses. The Excellence Days organized every year in each province to reward the best teachers and pupils seems to be misconstrued and it is suspected that it leads to fiddling of the CEP results.

## Students

### The issue of Access of students to education

Students are at the heart of the educational system. Not all children are lucky enough to go to school. We shall discuss here the issues of access and equity. Equitable access to education is by far the main issue that Burkina Faso has to address if the country wants to achieve free universal basic education by the year 2025.

The projections on Tables 2 and 3 of the school age population (see appendix) indicate the extent of the problem of access. These projections may be misleading as they seem to imply that we can reach universal primary education by 2025 if the current trends of the enrolment rates are maintained. There are however limits to school expansion. It is well known that it is easier to move from 16 to 70 per cent enrolment rates than to go from 70 to 80 per cent, let alone 100 %, even in countries with more resources and resourcefulness. Even less reasonable are the projections of the population of secondary school pupils and university students - the latter figure would be multiplied by 18 within 19 years - when the country has enormous problems in catering for its current five digit students. The creation of regional universities seems to be slowed down by financial problems.

Access to secondary school remains highly selective. For instance, in 2004-2005 out of the 87 127 pupils who passed the CEP exam only 20 000 were admitted in the first year of secondary school (6e). For the 2007-2008 school year access to 6e is free for all CEP graduates in 45 experimental *départements* but there are alarming reports in the press of classes so overcrowded that some of them were unable to start the school year.

Universities are overcrowded, so that only “early birds” can catch a seat because some amphitheatres built to accommodate one hundred students are often used for courses attended by double this number. This creates not only frustration but it can also brood violence. Students’ demonstrations tend to get more and more violent with stories of teachers being assaulted by students<sup>3</sup>. The bad teaching conditions lower the quality of the education received and results in massive failure rates in some faculties. This incites unscrupulous students to resort to organized cheating and even to immoral acts such as the so called “sexually transmitted marks”.

### Equity

In addition to low access, equity is another issue facing the Burkinabè educational system. The challenge is how to reduce the marked gender and regional gaps. For instance the gender parity index for gross enrollment ratio was 0.85 in 2007. While the Central region covering the capital and a few surrounding villages has a GER of 99.7% the Sahel province in the northern part of the country is trailing far behind with 43.6 %, just behind the Eastern

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<sup>3</sup> The universities of Ouagadougou 1 and 2 have just closed abruptly the 2007-2008 academic year without final exams following violent clashes between the police and students demonstrating for better living and study conditions.



region with 47%. (Source MEBA 2007d)

Several sensitization and advocacy campaigns are carried out to try to reach boy-girl parity in education or at least scrap gender discrimination factors such as teachers' and parents' attitudes, physical and psychological obstacles to girls' education. Some incentives were given to parents to encourage them to send their daughters to school: waiver of school fees, provision of school supplies and even bicycles in some cases.

To reduce geographical disparities, PDDEB has singled out for special priority treatment the 20 provinces (out of 45) with the lowest school enrolment rates. These are called *Provinces prioritaires* and are carefully monitored through regular reports.

Two factors may constitute constraints and even risks as far as improving access is concerned: the steady population increase (as shown by the projections on Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix) resulting in a boom of the school aged children. The second factor is the stagnation of the country's resources (GNP) even in the absence of natural or man-made disasters.

The lack of resources is due to a combination of factors including lack of natural resources, recurrent calamities (droughts, endemic diseases), and mismanagement. We should also mention unfair trade. The country draws up to 60% of its import revenues from cotton of which it is one of the biggest African producers. Yet the vicious effects of the US government subsidies to its cotton farmers are literally putting Burkinabé producers to their knees.

To sustain the improvement of access at a significant level, the country must continue to count heavily on aid, subsidies and loans from donors often with strings and conditionalities attached. Furthermore, despite ambitious promises of free access, parents and communities will have to continue to pitch in despite the fact that a high proportion of people, especially in the most populated rural areas, are far below the poverty line living on less than a dollar a day. The high cost of building schools, recruiting and training teachers, and procuring teaching materials will be difficult to meet to reach universal primary education within the next 20 years.

The headways in the reduction of inequalities of access are also slowed down by some parents' negative perceptions of school and the returns they can draw from it. School is no longer perceived as a way to social mobility and access to well-paid jobs in the civil service. As a result, some brand new schools in the priority provinces remain half empty while school aged children roam the bush keeping cows or helping their parents in the farms.

Another problem that affects equity is the growing divide between the few haves and the many have not. Well to do parents will always find ways of promoting their children's schooling. This means more and more recourse to private schools. One class we visited recently is located in a very populated part of central Ouagadougou but it had only 18 pupils. Most parents of the catchment area send their children to private schools or to more affluent schools in other neighbourhoods. Many parents also pay parallel teachers for extra home tuition. At university level more and more affluent parents send their children abroad to the US, France or Canada which is supposed to give them the edge in the hunt for scarce jobs after graduation. We may be heading towards a double standards school system pregnant

with social unrest and violence for tomorrow. The violent explosions witnessed recently during the demonstrations against price rises constitute an ominous warning of an uncertain tomorrow.

### **The Role of Parents and School-to-Community Relations**

Parents bear partly the cost of schooling of their children by providing supplies and contributing to the common fund of parents' associations. The relationships between the school and the surrounding community may vary from school to school. The responsibility for poor relations can come from the parents or the teacher or both. In the past, the money pooled by the parents' or the mothers' associations was used to help solve a few practical problems that the government budget does not cater for. Now that education has been declared free, asking parents to pay their dues can lead to bitter rows. Besides, as already mentioned earlier, the financial and material contribution of parents (for example for endogenous canteens) has serious limits because of generalised poverty.

Some innovations such as bilingual education create excellent conditions for school-community relations. First of all, the fact of using a national language as medium of instruction facilitates communication, it also allows local craftsmen and other parents to intervene in the classrooms and share their knowledge and expertise, particularly in the domains of arts and productive activities. Parents who are literate in their languages can also monitor their children's work.

### **Resources**

#### **Buildings**

The statistics on Table 4 (see Appendix) show the significant increase of the number of schools and teachers since the start of PDDEB in 2001. In 2006/2007 the government built 603 schools which allowed the opening of 2 481 new classes (Source MEBA 2007e). These trends are likely to continue if PDDEB is smoothly implemented to its term and then relayed beyond 2010 by a similar plan.

Concerning the infrastructures we must recall that the first PDDEB schools were built under difficult circumstances, marred by bureaucratic red tape and accusations of corruption around the bids for tenders and the execution of the contracts. Some building sites were deserted before completion. Even though the government and its partners seem to have resolved these administrative problems, there still exists a risk of unjustified delays that can block the disbursement of the donors' contribution to PDDEB.

#### **Provision of textbooks school supplies, meals, sanitation and health care**

Since 2001 the textbook/pupil ratio has improved thanks to a free distribution of several hundred thousands of books. In 2006-2007 the government has procured over three million books and over nine million school supplies for free distribution. More than 50% of the

schools have canteens and various activities are carried out to improve sanitation and health with the contribution of the State, the local communities and a consortium of NGOs.

### **Computer-assisted instruction**

A few small-scale projects are being implanted in secondary and even in primary education but due to the high cost of the equipment, it will be difficult to scale then up. But as we said earlier concerning the learners, ICT should not be seen today as a luxury. There could be innovative ways of exploiting the students' adulation for the Net to introduce for example problem-solving, discovery, information gathering, and peer and distance learning, etc.

### **Funding**

With regard to funding the government has kept its commitment made within the framework of the 20/20 initiative adopted in Copenhagen in 1995 and is devoting over 10% of its budget to education. It has also managed to convince the international community of its commitment in favour education, an important aspect of its poverty strategy reduction.

The country's main partners in the education sector (PTF) are actively engaged in this tremendous effort. These partners also regularly bring their technical contribution for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the plan. The most formal events of this partnership framework (*cadre partenarial*) are the joint missions that monitor at least twice a year the progress of the activities scheduled by PDDEB. Many of the PTF have agreed to put their financial contribution into a common basket that is now being managed by the CAST system of budgetary support. This partnership has been instrumental in stirring the sometimes sleeping administration into speedy action and keeping potential embezzlers at bay. Other programmes and projects such as the World Bank Fast track, the Millennium challenge account and the BRIGHT project to promote girls' education constitute opportunities that the country can seize to keep the steady increase of access.

In the literacy and non formal education sector, a semi-autonomous fund (FONAENF) was set up to support the increasing number of associations, NGOs or even individuals committed to fighting illiteracy.

### **Conservatism and Resistance to Innovation**

We shall close our discussion of the achievements, constraints, risks and opportunities of the Burkinabè educational system by asking a fundamental question, the answer of which can shape our vision of the educational system. Will the governments of the next 20 years be able to muster enough political courage to initiate deep changes in the system? In an article on the future of education in Africa, Sifuna (2001) deplores the reluctance of Africans to move away radically from their current educational systems based on Western models with little relevance to them. Conservatism has actually characterised Burkinabè. The major reforms attempted so far always came under fire from those who were supposed to understand

their usefulness best, namely teachers and intellectuals. Many intellectuals combated the 1979-1984 reform, some, for emotional reasons because they were against the use of national languages; others were arguing that it would create an unfair system of two parallel schools. These fears were somewhat confirmed because the minister of education at the time did withdraw his child from one of the experimental schools. Even the revolutionary regime (1983-1987) well known for taking sweeping radical measures, was obliged to shelve its *Ecole Révolutionnaire* project that it intended to generalise right away without prior experimentation. The most vocal opponents were from their own ranks.

There is now a nagging feeling that successive governments have treaded very carefully on the educational field. The country has opted for progressive cautious steps in educational reforms. That is the attitude taken concerning bilingual education. The extension of bilingual schools will be based on requests from communities. Although this is psychologically appealing and reassuring for conservatives, one may wonder how many years it would take to generalise this promising experiment to all the country's schools.

It is therefore safe not to expect any radical change in the next 20 years. We are more likely to witness façade type of reforms or constant swings of the pendulum to follow the fashion of the moment. Just like the country abandoned the content-based syllabus in the 80's to adopt an objectives-based approach, today we seem to have adopted competency-based approach, without necessarily measuring the extent of attitudinal changes it implies. What can weigh in the balance in favour of courageous break from the past could be the development of a critical mass of specialists with enough independence and guts to spearhead the needed changes.

## **What Education in Burkina at Horizon 2025?**

Based on our analysis of the achievements, the opportunities, the constraints and risks and how they can impact positively or negatively the various aspects of the educational system we can take a mildly optimistic vision of what the educational system would be like at horizon 2025. This rejoins the third scenario of the "Burkina 2025" prospective study: *the taking flight of the albatross*.

## **The "Burkina 2025" Scenarios**

As already mentioned in the introduction, Burkina Faso has undertaken a national prospective study, "Burkina 2025" (See MEDEV 2002, 2004a, b, 2005a, b). It was launched in 1999 and carried out by a forty member multidisciplinary team. The ten reports it has produced so far include two relating more specifically to education (MEDEV 2002) and (MEDEV 2004a). The study team carried out a strategic diagnosis of the Burkinabè system as a whole, in a nation-wide survey of people's aspirations for Burkina at horizon 2025. They then built thematic and global scenarios and finally designed a vision that could federate and mobilise the country on its way towards the future.

The five global scenarios proposed range from most optimistic (the *galloping stallion*) to most pessimistic (*the ghost village*):

- 1 - The rainbow or the galloping stallion
- 2- The beehive, representing a coalition to set up a stronghold
- 3- The taking flight of the albatross symbolising renaissance
- 4- Silmande the whirlwind or the dead-end
- 5- Dougoumato or the ghost village

Under the third scenario which is mildly optimistic, just like the albatross slowly takes flight despite the difficulties that tend to bound it to the ground, Burkina Faso manages to make some progress by overcoming a rather hostile environment such as the “vassalisation” of Africa, a confiscated globalisation, discriminatory aid, regional and sub-regional expansionism, façade democracy, increasing bureaucracy and the exacerbation of sources of insecurity. The country is on the defensive in the quest for its identity and the spring of its progress will be provided by the emergence of a scientific and technological specialisation as well as the development of agro-industry although social inequalities are rife with the emergence of compradors.

In the educational field we can sketch the following picture:

- The educational system has undergone several timid superficial reforms but it is still plagued with the same problems as today;
- There are fewer ministers in charge of education due to austerity measures;
- Decentralisation is effective but begins to show its limits with the bureaucritisation of decentralised structures which lack the means to function properly;
- Management standards are imposed by the donors who have become more selective and more discriminating;
- The format and organisation of the educational system have superficially changed but the main inspiration comes from the powerful donors of the day;
- Curricula have been revised several times; socio-constructivist approaches have been introduced and misapplied on the field;
- The country is planning its nth educational reform;
- There are more marked disparities and inequalities in the access to quality education: free schools are run-down institutions where no real learning takes place. Enterprising individuals or private organisations run parallel centres of learning for those who can afford it;
- Some technical and vocational programs are working but access is highly selective;
- The upper class send their children to study abroad.

## Conclusion

We are aware that we did not cover all the relevant issues but we hope to have raised the main ones and opened the way for further studies. The current growth of the educational system is likely to continue if the donors and the other partners continue their support and their advocacies. The education authorities should also open the field to the many specialists or good-willed intellectuals who may not share all their views and approaches. The light is likely to come from a healthy clash of ideas on the best way of preparing the future of the educational system. The scenario we have sketched may sound too pessimistic to some, but it is more positive than the last two scenarios of total chaos where no viable education system can strive. One of the useful roles of scenarios is to warn against dreadful possibles with the hope that something can be done to avoid them. We hope that this will incite other specialists to explore this theme further.

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## Appendix

**Table 1. Evolution of the number of teachers in class**

Indicator	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Number of teachers in class	18 176	19 740	21 884	24 350	26 558	28 886
% women	22.9	24.8	25.9	26.6	27.4	28.5

This table shows the efforts made by the government to recruit teachers for the newly opened classrooms since the launching of PDDEB, the ten year development plan. The number of teachers has increased by 59.92% in six years which represents a 10% annual increase. Even though gender parity is still far away, the percentage of women has increased constantly throughout the years.

**Table 2. Projection of school aged children from 2006 to 2025**

Level	Age group	2006	2015	2025
Pre-school	3-6 years	1 830 055	2 277 618	2 904 391
Primary	7-12 years	2 408 360	3 008 395	3 083 683
Secondary	13-19 years	2 429 632	2 944 647	3 008 224
Higher education	20-29 years	2 265 610	3 321 028	3 465 187
All levels	3-29 years	8 935 663	11 553 703	12 463 510

Table 2 shows that the population of school aged children will reach 12 463 510 by the year 2025, which represents almost the total population of Burkina Faso today, if the steady increase observed during the past twenty years is maintained.

**Table 3. Projection of the number of pupils and students**

Level	2006	2015	2025	Gross enrolment rate in 2015
Pre-school	27 192	31 007	36 298	1.25
Primary	1 390 571	2 796 302	3 215 602	102.28
Secondary	352 376	719 127	1 586 962	52.75
Higher education	33 459	130 982	596 717	17.22
All levels	1 803 598	3 677 418	5 435 579	43.61

Based on the current trends universal primary education is virtually possible by 2025. However, secondary and higher education will continue to trail behind.

**Table 4. Evolution of number of classes and schools in primary education**

Indicator	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Number of classes	19 252	20 621	22 330	24 403	26 444	28 925
% classes of private schools	13.68%	14.37%	15.04%	16.11%	14.88%	14.94%
Number of schools	5 389	5 804	6 266	6 917	7 579	8 182
Number of classes per school	3.57	3.55	3.56	3.52	3.49	3.54

The number of schools and classes has increased regularly since 2001 but the share of private schools remains marginal.