Institutionalizing Assessment Capacity Development Efforts: A Story From Malawi

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Outline

- Introduction
- Where are we coming from?
- Institutionalization of capacity development (Strategies followed)
- Successes
- Utilization of skills
- Challenges
- Lessons for other countries

Introduction

- Malawi's Educational Policy:
  - Increase access, quality, equity, relevance and efficiency in the education system.
- Therefore, three main goals of education:
  1. Expand equitable access to education to enable all to benefit;
  2. Improve Quality and Relevance of education to reduce dropout and repetition and promote effective learning; and
  3. Improve governance and management of the system to enable more effective and efficient delivery of services.
- A lot has been in achieved in (1), but not in (2) & (3)

Introduction (Cont.)

- Increasingly rely on assessment information to answer questions such as:
  - ✓ Are standards of education in the country improving?
  - ✓ How much are children actually learning in our schools?
  - ✓ Are subgroups (girls, special needs students, orphans, urban and rural schools e.t.c) equitably benefiting from the system?
  - ✓ What are the effects on the system of the policies adopted to improve schools?
- Therefore, development of assessment capacity within the education sector is critical for improving educational quality.

Purpose of the Discussion

- Discuss the strategies that Malawi has followed to develop assessment capacity:
- Questions to be considered:
  1. How has Malawi institutionalized its assessment capacity development strategy?
  2. What are the success stories that the country has faced in its efforts to improve skills and capacity of its staff in assessment?
  3. What is the current situation of those that have been trained and how are their skills being utilized to improve the country's educational assessment?
  4. What are the challenges?
  5. What are the key lessons for other African and developing nations from the Malawi experience?

Where are we coming from?

- No clear written policy direction regulating educational assessment in Malawi before 2004.
  - ✓ Available were school-level policies developed by individual schools and colleges to guide assessment practices within their institutions
- No assessment guidelines from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to inform practice and/or help a large number of unqualified teachers who are in the system.

Where are we coming from? (Cont.)

- Since 1964, monitoring and evaluating educational quality heavily relied on:
  - ✓ educational indicators (enrolment, repeater, dropout, and survival rates, the number of years needed to complete a particular cycle, pupil-teacher and pupil-textbook ratios, etc.)
  - ✓ the Malawi National Examinations Board's (MANEB) end-of-cycle examination results
  - ✓ International assessments (SACMEQ, PASEC and MLA) results.

Where are we coming from?: Limitations

- Educational Indicators
  - ✓ tell us nothing about what children are actually learning at different points in the system, and at what level of proficiency.
- International assessments
  - ✓ focus on only one sub-sector – primary system
  - ✓ target just one grade [e.g. SACMEQ targets standard 6 only]
  - ✓ they have long intervals [e.g. SACMEQ has an interval of more than 5 years]
  - ✓ do not directly deal with teaching and learning .

Where are we coming from?: Limitations (Cont.)

- MANEB end-of-cycle exam results
  - ✓ no performance standards [pass marks are arrived at through normative techniques (Khembo, 2005)]
  - ✓ Questionable to use one exam for several purposes [test scores have high validity for one purpose, but low validity for another purpose (Messick, 1989; Standards for Education and Psychological Testing, 1998)]
  - ✓ Scores not equated [rendering their comparability across years meaningless (Chulu, 2006)].
  - ✓ Tests measure low-order skills (Khonje, 1984, Mwanza & kazima, 1999; Mapondera, 2006).

Institutionalization Strategies

- Continuous Assessment Projects
  - ✓ Improving Educational Quality (IEQ/Malawi) Project (2001 – 2003)
  - ✓ The Malawi Breakthrough to Literacy (MBTL) (2004 – 2005)
  - ✓ Literacy Across the Curriculum (LAC) (2004 – 2006)
- Integrating assessment into curriculum reforms
  - ✓ Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) (2007)
  - ✓ Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (SSCAR) (2009)

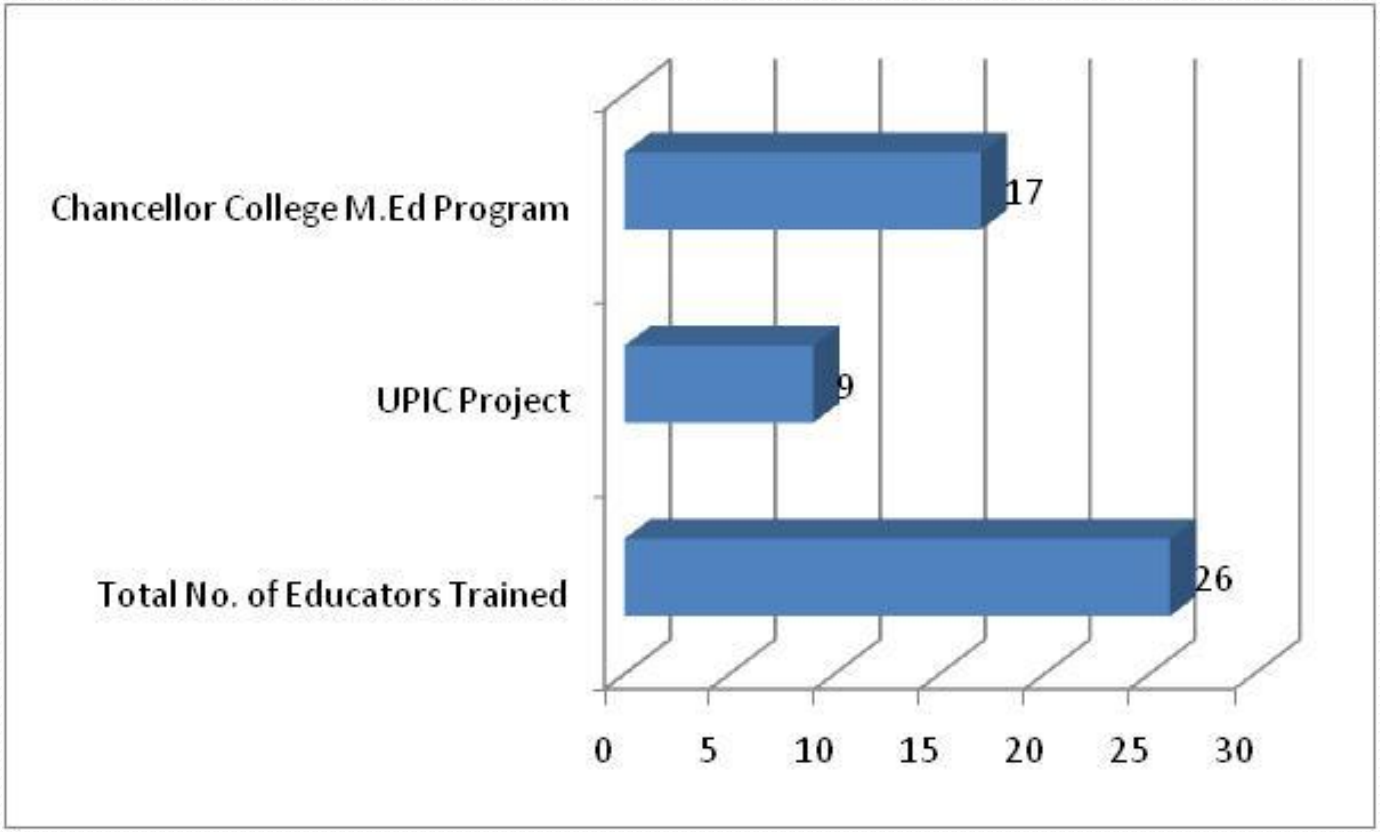
Institutionalization Strategies (Cont.)

- Postgraduate training of leaders who can support the reform:
  - ✓ University Partners in Capacity Building (UPIC) (2001 – 2006)
  - ✓ Revitalized M.Ed (Measurement and Evaluation) Program at Chancellor College (2004 – present
- Undergraduate Course in assessment during pre-service and school-based teacher training

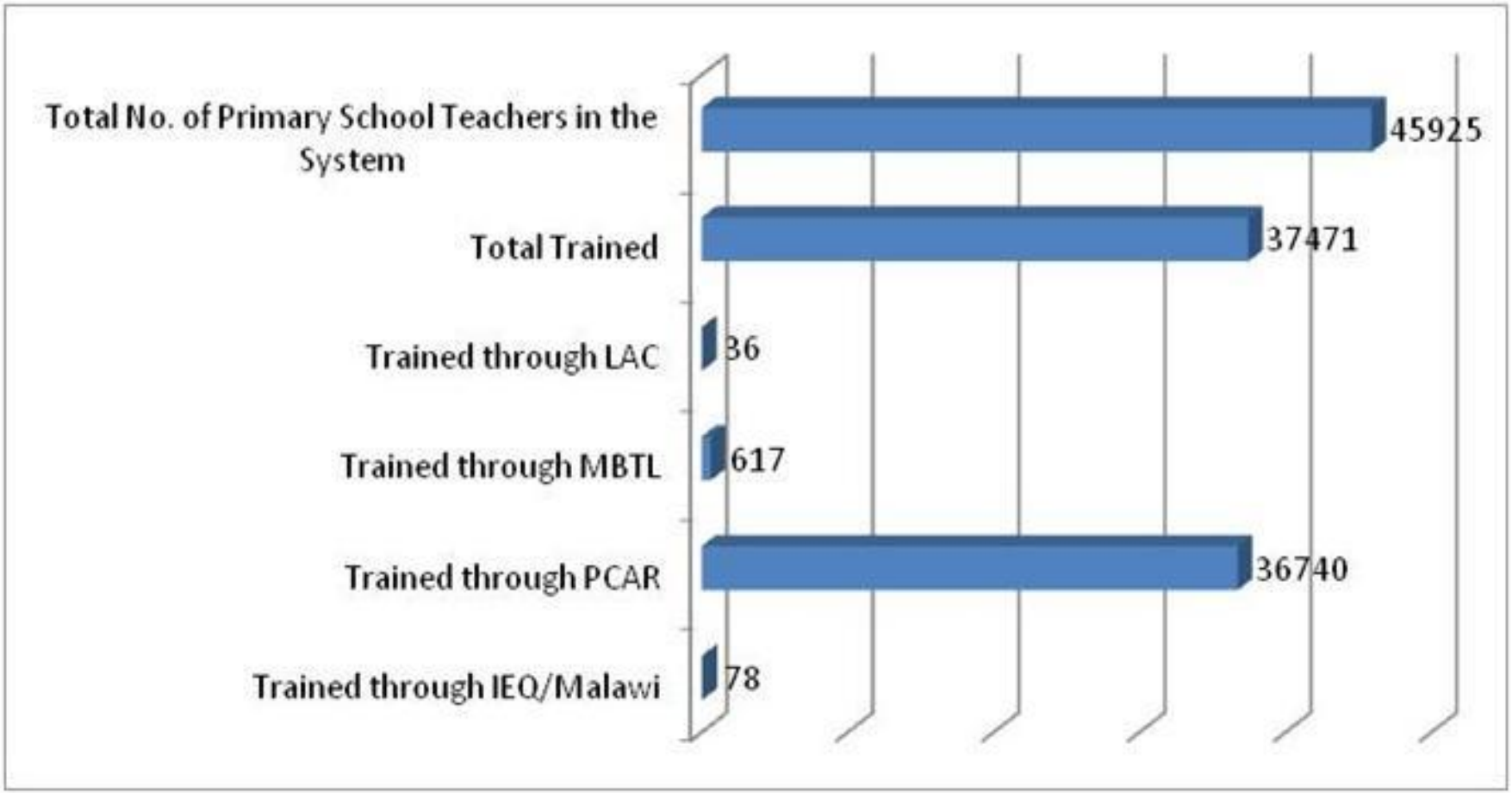
Success Stories

- Milestones include:
  - ✓ Introduction of Continuous Assessment (CA) in schools
  - ✓ Integration of teacher-generated CA information into the MANEB results to support high-stakes decisions.
  - ✓ Production of Continuous assessment manual through IEQ/Malawi project
  - ✓ Production of assessment guidelines by MOE through PCAR
  - ✓ Assessment has now become one of the capacity areas for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

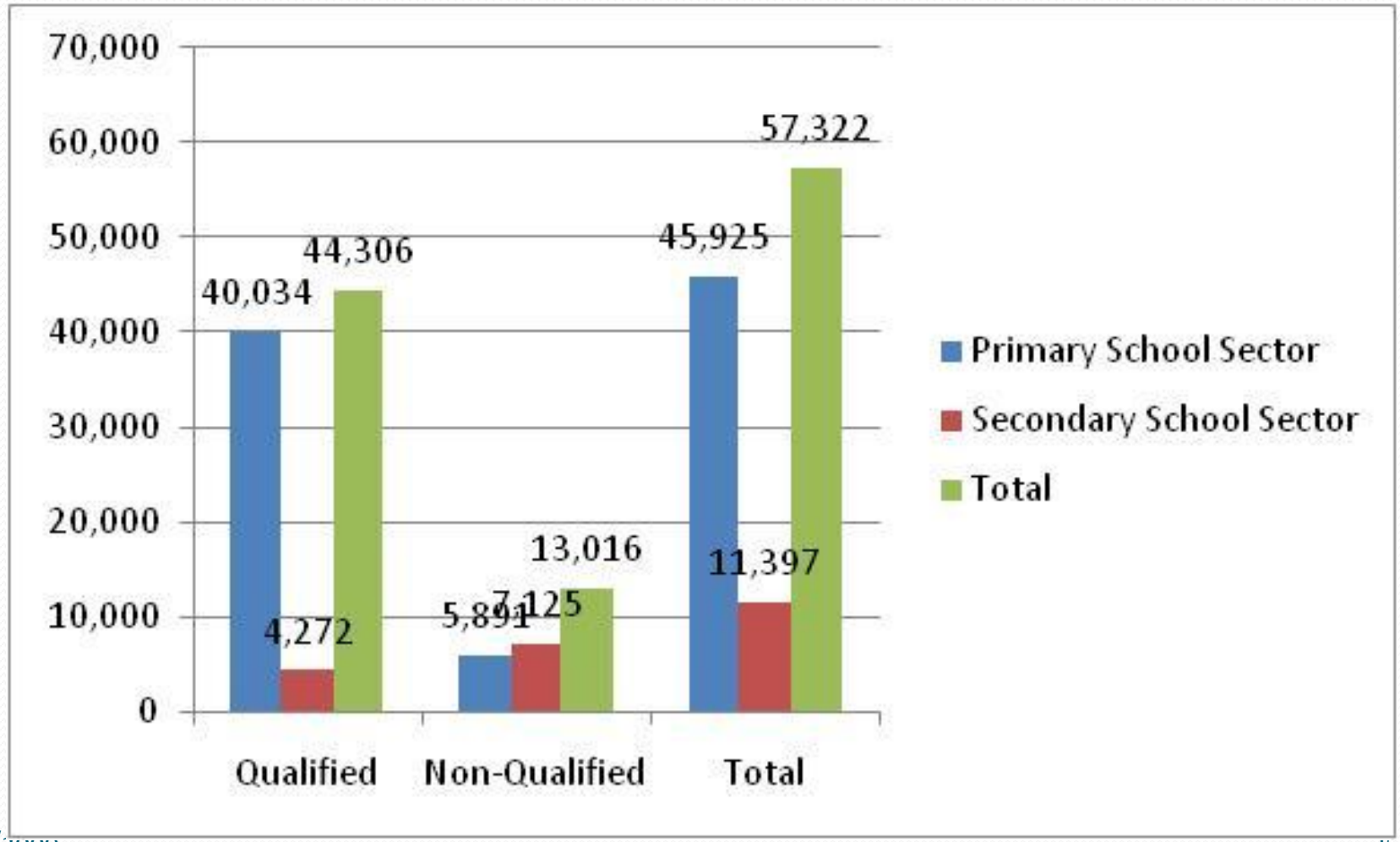
Success Stories: Postgraduate Training Since 2001



Success Stories: Primary School Teachers Trained Since 2001



Success Stories: Trained through Pre-service & School-based Training



Utilization of Skills: Trained Primary & Secondary Teachers

- Difficult to document in the absence of the monitoring and evaluation mechanism
- So far, I have come across no study on the issue.
- The trainers themselves (MIE & TTCs, and University Colleges) are in the dark
- Only those who have gone through the postgraduate program since 2001 can be documented.

Utilization of Skills: Distribution of Trained Experts

- Trained measurement experts are working for the following institutions:
  - ✓ Chancellor College
  - ✓ Domasi College of Education
  - ✓ Catholic University
  - ✓ Teacher Training Colleges
  - ✓ MANEB
  - ✓ Malawi Institute of Education
  - ✓ TEVETA
  - ✓ MOE

Utilization of Skills: Distribution of Trained Experts (Cont.)

	Umass Trained	Chanco Trained	Total
Teachers in Secondary Schools		3	3
Ministry Headquarters		1	1
Curriculum Officer at MIE		1	1
Teacher Trainers in Colleges/Universities	5	1	6
Examination Officers/Researchers in Examinations Boards	2	11	13
M&E Officers in Non-Governmental Organization	2		2
TOTAL	**9**	**17**	**26**

Utilization of Skills: Distribution of Trained Experts (Cont.)

- Those working for MANEB's and TEVETA's examinations and research departments:
  - ✓ directly deal with examinations.
  - ✓ they, therefore, stand a good chance to directly apply their skills to improve assessment practices and bring positive change
- Those teaching in secondary schools
  - ✓ Mostly teach math
  - ✓ This is an example of misallocation of skills

Utilization of Skills: Distribution of Trained Experts (Cont.)

- Those teaching colleges
  - ✓ Some teach relevant courses in educational measurement (both graduate and undergraduate)
  - ✓ Others teacher math – therefore misallocated
  - ✓ Facilitates workshops in educational assessment in other institutions (so far: Malawi Institute of Tourism, Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, Montfort Special Needs Education College, University of Malawi (Bunda College), University of Malawi (Kamuzu College of Nursing), the Malawi College of Health Sciences and St John of God College)

Challenges

- *Logistic problems*
  - ✓ e.g. assessment handbook is not yet in schools after introducing the curriculum in 2007.
- *Who Said I Cannot Do it?*
  - ✓ Assessment is viewed by MOE officials as something that does not require specialized training on their part. It requires training for others.
- *Inappropriate use of existing capacity*
  - ✓ allocation of the few qualified people do not always match with their expertise.
  - ✓ Some experts are teaching Mathematics at Domasi College of Education, and in secondary schools.

Challenges (Cont.)

- *Under-utilization of existing capacity*
  - ✓ the available measurement expertise are not recognized and therefore, not fully utilized in the system.
  - ✓ People who are recommended to advise examinations boards or carry out M&E, for instance, are not measurement experts.
- *Piecemeal reform strategies*
  - ✓ Training strategies mainly through projects (IEQ/Malawi, MBTL, LAC).
  - ✓ Not sustainable, small scale and no lasting impact on the system
- *Inadequate training time*
  - ✓ Since the training in assessment is done as part of training for the new curriculum in PCAR, only 1 hr is allocated to assessment issues.

Challenges (Cont.)

- *Lack of consensus on Continuous Assessment (CA)*
  - ✓ No consensus between MOE and MANEB regarding how best to integrate CA information from teachers into the end-of-cycle examination results.
  - ✓ The proposed 60% Examination and 40% CA results was rejected by MANEB. In turn, the board is proposing 90% Examination and 10 CA results because of security concerns.
- *Lack of political will*
  - ✓ No regular review of the undergraduate courses in pre-service training programs so that they reflect changing practice
- *No M & E or tracer studies*
  - ✓ There is no M & E mechanism built in to the institutionalization process to report on how the CA policy is, in fact, being implemented in the system.

Lessons

- Integrating assessment and curriculum reforms may force a country to implement necessary reforms.
- Supporting capacity development efforts using local M.Ed and CPD programs is sustainable.
- CA is the way to go - unless strengthened, monitoring the education quality using end-of-cycle examination results and indicator only is inadequate .

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