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Capacity

Developing Sustainable Assessment Systems in Africa: Malawi

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ROBUST GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES UNDERPIN MALAWI'S SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM



ASSESSMENT TEAM

- The **Malawi National Examination Board (MANEB)** commissioned by the **Ministry of Education** is responsible for **developing and administering national examinations** for purposes of certification, selection and placement.
- The core assessment team is led by the Director of Examination Development, supported by Principal and Senior Examination Development Officers, and Research and Evaluation Officers.
 - Examination Development Officers coordinate test item development, moderation, compilation, and proofreading.
 - Research Officers lead on trial testing, item data assembly, interpretation, and final analysis



TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

- Subject Syllabus Committee:
 - Composed of MANEB officers, Ministry of Education officials, curriculum specialists, university lecturers, and school teachers.
 - Responsible for designing test formats, tables of test specifications, and ensuring alignment with curriculum standards.
- Grading Committees
 - Multidisciplinary teams including curriculum specialists, quality assurance officers from the Ministry of Education, university lecturers, and experienced teachers.
 - Oversee the grading processes, converting candidate scores into standardized grades, ensuring comparability across assessment cycles.



STEERING COMMITTEE

- Ministry of Education through Quality Assurance Officers (Inspectors) plays a key role in validation and policy alignment of assessments.
- **MANEB's senior management**, particularly the Executive Director, had the **final approval for examination materials and processes**.

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT COVERAGE FOR NATIONAL LEVELS

MANEB administers an extensive range of national examinations at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS	REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS	INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS
• PSLCE (<i>Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education</i>) - Conducted every year; assesses all curriculum subjects in Grade 8. • JCE (<i>Junior Certificate of Education</i>) - Conducted every year; all curriculum subjects in Grade 10 (Form 2). • MSCE (<i>Malawi School Certificate of Education</i>) - Conducted every year; all curriculum subjects in Grade 12 (Form 4).	• <i>Not part of MANEB mandate.</i>	• <i>Not part of MANEB mandate.</i>



One of the greatest challenges that we have as an institution is the financial one. There are times we may want to do things the way they're supposed to be done, but we fail because we are restricted by the financial challenges we face.

ADDRESSING ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES THROUGH STRATEGIC CAPACITY BUILDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

MANEB encounters several technical, logistical, and financial challenges in assessment management, yet actively pursues strategic partnerships and internal capacity development to overcome these.



CHALLENGES

- **Funding limitations** due to reliance on government funding which is often insufficient to cover extensive assessment activities.
- Challenges in **printing, distributing, and collecting examination papers**, especially in rural and remote areas.
- **Security concerns** related to the secure handling of examination materials.



POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

- **Strengthening partnerships** with the Ministry of Education, universities, and other **stakeholders to leverage shared resources and expertise**.
- **Advocating for multi-year financial plans** and exploring diversified funding sources, including public-private partnerships.

Source	Description	Frequency	Duration	Participation
Internal (MANEB Officers)	Data analysis for Research using STATA, R, SPSS, etc.	One day, weekly	2hrs 30mins	20 REOs & EDOs
ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research)	Item analysis using Item Response Theory (IRT)	Once off (on demand)	3 weeks	30 REOs, EDOs, & CPAs
MANEB Officers	Training on data analysis and how to effectively communicate results	Twice a year	4 weeks	30 REOs, EDOs, & CPAs

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As for the international assessments, mostly we don't participate – not because we don't have experts, but because of the resources. I would give the example of PISA: with the aid of a certain project, we tried to register for PISA, but we failed because the money was too little to do that. But we are aware that there is PISA.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING ASSESSMENT IMPACT

Recommendations for International Organizations:

Start Doing	Stop Doing
Utilize collaborative approaches to actively engage in joint assessment design and implementation.	Not applicable due to limited interactions with international organisations.

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When coming up with assessments, they should try to target all the training domains – that is, the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Most of the test items or examination we administer mostly target the cognitive domain. But looking at the way the world is going, we need to also focus on practical skills – especially those that exam takers could use after graduating from schools or colleges.