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Cross-national Learning Assessments: Relationship to Educational Policy, Curriculum and Capacity Development in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa

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A Research Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Department of Psychology

School of Human and Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Godfrey Mulongo

May, 2017

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. It is being submitted for a Ph.D. degree in the area of Social Development, in the School of Human and Community Development, at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signature_____Date _____

Godfrey Mulongo

This thesis has been submitted with my approval as the university academic supervisor.

Signature_____Date _____

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANA	Annual National Assessment
ANFEDP	Adult and Non-formal Education Development Plan
APHRC	Africa Population and Health Research Council
BTDP	Basic Teachers Diploma Programme
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DEB	District Education Boards
DFID	Department for International Development
DoE	Department of Education
EAC	East Africa Community
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessments
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessments
FDSE	Free Day Secondary Education
FEMSA	Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa
FPE	Free Primary Education
GCDE	Grace Community Development and Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio

GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HDI	Human Development Index
HEDP	Higher Education Development Programme
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIVOS	Humanistic Institute for Development Cooperation
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement
ILT	International Literacy Tests
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KESSP	Kenya Education Sector Support Programme
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
KNQF	Kenya National Qualification Framework
LANES	Literacy and Numeracy Education Support
LLECE	Laboratorial Latinoamericanode Evaluaciondela Calidadde LaEducation
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MALP	Monitoring of Learning Achievements in Lower Primary
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

MOHEST	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology
NACTE	National Council for Technical Education
NASMLA	National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NDP	National Development Plan
NECTA	National Examinations Council of Tanzania
NEEDU	National Education and Evaluation Development Unit
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASEC	Protect Against Sexual Exploitation of Children
PEDP	Primary Education Sector Development Programme
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMO-RALG	Prime Minister's Office, Local Government Authority
PRMRI	Primary Math and Reading Initiative
PSLE	Primary School Learning Examination
QCTO	Quality Council for Trader and Occupations
RTI	Research Triangle International
SACE	South African Council of Education
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SADC	South African Development Community

SEDP	Secondary Education Development Programme
SGBs	School Government Bodies
SSME	Snap-short for School Management and Effective
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
STIM	Science Technology Innovation and Mathematics
SWAPP	Sector Wide Approach Programme Planning
TDMS	Teacher Development and Management Strategy
TIE	Tanzania Institute of Education
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science
TLEP	Teaching Literacy Education Project
ToC	Theory of Change
TVEDP	Technical and Vocational Education Development Programme
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

Abstract

Utilizing the theories of change and social development, this study analyzes the extent to which participation in cross-national learning assessments has influenced educational policy and curriculum reforms in three African countries: Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The study also interrogates structural reforms and exchange of technical capacities and evaluates the culture of learning assessment in these countries. To collect data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants drawn from the Ministries of Basic Education, national examinations councils, civil society organizations and curriculum development institutions in the three countries. In total, 17 key informant interviews were conducted (five in Kenya and six a piece in Tanzania and South Africa). The interviews were complemented by summative content review of policy/strategic papers. This study shows that overall, at least 18 policy/official strategic documents were formulated in these three countries (seven in Kenya and six in Tanzania and five South Africa) as a consequence of participating in the cross-national learning assessments. Five curriculum reforms attributable to the participation in the cross-national learning assessments are also recorded. However, the findings of the current study suggest that these curriculum reviews have not critically considered learning outcomes and are limited in relation to content, design, delivery mechanisms and assessment of literacy and numeracy programmes. As far as teacher capacity is concerned, the study has established that teachers in these countries lack skills in measurement mainly due to the limited training or lack of coverage on psychometrics in the teacher training curricula. Capacity to implement own national learning assessments is varied across the three countries. South Africa and to some extent Kenya have demonstrated improved capacities to implement independent large-scale learning assessments. Much progress has however been made by South Africa in resourcing and implementing independent large-scale learning assessments, an indication of commitment to sustain the culture of monitoring of learning outcomes. There is also much variation in policy and programme formulation and resource investment in literacy programmes across the three countries; at least three programmes/initiatives in South Africa and one each in Kenya and Tanzania have been launched to respond to learning challenges especially in lower grades, with at least $USD 645.2 million invested between 2010-2015. However, the programmes in Kenya and Tanzania are technically and financially donor driven. In terms of structures, South Africa and Kenya have put in place official structures that could support the sustainability of the system of monitoring learning outcomes. For sustainability, a recommendation is made that learning assessments be decentralized and collaboratively managed with stakeholders at the provincial and county/local council levels. The study concludes by discussing the social development implications of these findings.

Key words: Learning outcomes, learning assessment, literacy, policy development, social development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter contextualizes the research topic/issue within the subject of learning by presenting the background to cross-national learning assessments, the rationale for conducting the study, its potential contribution and limitations. The chapter further operationalizes the key terminologies as used in the research study. The final section of the chapter explains how the entire thesis is organized.

1.1 Background

Stakeholders in education are currently more than ever concerned about the returns of investing in education and monitoring the relationship between access, equity and quality. Monitoring the latter has created the need for comparative empirical information on student achievement and its relationship with resources invested, that is, input versus output and thus, the learning assessments (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization-UNESCO, 2006). There are two major reasons that rationale implementing large-scale learning assessments, namely; to monitor the quality of education and to provide information that informs and assists regulatory and policy reforms for countries (Kanjee, 2013; World Bank, 2004).

According to UNESCO (2006), major shifts in monitoring of the quality of education occurred in the 1990s when governments, academicians and international agencies realized that achievement of education milestones related to access to universal basic education needed simultaneous improvements in measuring 'quality'. Moreover, the increasing attention and investment in education by multinational agencies (Mulongo, 2013b, p. 6) needed greater

scrutiny and accountability which would be achieved through strategies such as cross-national learning assessments. Perhaps the turning point as far as systematic international monitoring of learning outcomes occurred during the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education and the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum, which called upon countries to broaden their conceptualization of education from mere 'access' to more focus on quality as denoted by measurable learning outcomes (Tikly, 2011), and thus learning assessments. However, the history of large-scale cross-national, comparative learning assessments can be traced way back to 1958, with the UNESCO Institute for Education in Germany as the brainchild.

However, the first successful large-scale quantitative international study in mathematics was conducted in 1965 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA) and included Australia, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Scotland, Sweden, and the United States (*Suter*, undated). Between 1965 and 2001, the IEA sponsored studies of mathematics, science, reading, civics and technology. The Educational Testing Service conducted an International Assessment for Education Progress in science and mathematics in 1990.

At the beginning, the trailblazers of IEA were against any form of comparisons of national systems arguing that each education system was unique in context, environment and culture. However, with passage of time, a new school of thought emerged that viewed education systems as interdependent and part of a common global economy. Therefore, from the 70s, the concept of cross-national comparisons gained traction and was largely seen as valid forms of assessing learning outcomes. The 90s witnessed OECD growing its coverage from a few countries to covering most of the world (Addey, 2014).

Perhaps the most popular large-scale testing is the joint UNESCO/UNICEF project on Monitoring Education-For-All (EFA) with focus on learning achievements which began in September 1992. This was an immediate outcome of The World Declaration on Education-For-All adopted at Jomtien in March 1990. It pointed on the need to define acceptable levels of learning acquisition for educational programmes and to improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement. The understanding was that merely improving the supply of education--quantity -- was not enough, and that an improvement in quality was considered vital, so was the means to assess such progress (UNESCO/UNICEF, 1994). Therefore, post Jomtien witnessed the Second International Reading Study (SIRS) between 1990–91 , the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (Trends in International Mathematics and Science –TIMSS (1994), TIMSS Repeat in 1999, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000/02, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2001, TIMSS study in 2003, PISA of 2003 and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) I (1995-99) and SACMEQ II-2000-2004. Therefore, between the first real cross-national study and the SACMEQ II, about twelve different international tests of math, science, or reading were administered to a group of volunteering countries (Hanushek & Wößmann, 2012). SACMEQ III was conducted between 2006 and 2011. SACMEQ IV is currently underway.

Today, the main international assessment programmes include the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement, or IEA (for TIMSS and PIRLS), the Convention on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (for PISA),the Laboratoria Latinoamericano de Evaluacion de la Calidadde la Education or LLECE (for

example TERCE), Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs des Pays de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), SACMEQ and Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project.

Concerning the utility of learning assessments, Greaney and Kellaghan (2008) argue that information on learning outcomes assists countries in making informed decisions about interventions to improve educational quality and help policy makers monitor trends in the nature and quality of student learning over time. They also allow for the benchmarking of student performance against corresponding standards (UNESCO, 2006). According to UNESCO (2005), the cross-national assessments have gained a lot of focus and international interest due to globalization and also because few countries have in place the policies, structures, practices, and tools that would constitute an effective student assessment system (Hoxby, 2002; Wolff, 2007 cited in World Bank, 2012). The cross-national learning assessments are also credited with the inherent ability to document the performance of a country relative to others which could possibly provoke a country to reform its policies in favor of better quality education (as a strategy in human capital development). Moreover, the comparative results from the cross-national learning assessments can motivate teachers from low performing countries to improve their instructional techniques by investing in efforts to change pedagogy through systematic professional development (Mulongo, 2014; Wagner, Lockheed, Mullis, Martin, Kanjee, Gove & Dowd 2012).

Experts also assert that these assessments provide opportunities for further data analysis, which is important in elaborating both the effects of student achievement and its determinants (Wagner et. al., 2012). These assessments inform reforms, regulatory and behavioral policy initiatives in teaching and learning; they provide an opportunity for assessment

practitioners to improve their technical competencies; and they increase transparency and accountability regarding education outcomes and investment (Wagner et. al., 2012).

Furthermore, UNESCO (2005) posits that the principal aims of the cross-national learning assessment programmes is to provide data for educational monitoring, particularly of EFA goals, as input into policy-making in multilateral institutions and funding agencies. UNESCO further indicates that the aim is to achieve measures of literacy which are more reliable, which mean something in terms of the national reality they represent and which enable a sensible comparison for the purposes of allocating resources and effort. The assessments also help integrate hitherto isolated national education systems into a global network. The intention of this is to facilitate wider exchange of experiences and spur policy discussions (UNESCO, 2006) based on benchmarking against best practices or best performing education systems. Additionally, compared with national examinations, only cross-national assessments can provide information on whether school organizations in other countries have fewer disparities in quality of instruction, socio-economic, gender and ethnicity and if these factors have positive or negative influence on learners (UNESCO, 2006).

Technical reports and studies (for instance Hanushek & Kimko, 2000; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; OECD, 2004; UNESCO, 2005) indicate that there is indeed a strong correlation between the quality of education in a particular country (measured by test scores as a proxy indicator) and influence on macro and micro-developments of communities and individuals (see also Mulongo, 2013b). Hanushek and Kimko (2000) posit that there is a strong correlation between the quality of a labor-force and performance on learning outcomes as measured by the international mathematics and science test scores. It is therefore upon this premise that

governments have shown increasing interest and financial support for these assessments based on the general assumption that better literacy and numeracy among the working population result into improved quality of life and enhance economic competitiveness (UNESCO, 2006). Moreover, better learning outcomes are correlated with achievement and productivity growth at the national level (Postlethwaite, 2004).

Addey (2014) points out that the cross-national learning assessments have significantly contributed to theoretical and conceptual advancements in education and are the most appropriate means of measuring learning outcomes (literacy, numeracy and life skills). Wagner et. al. (2012) and Postlethwaite (2004) posit that cross-national learning assessments encourage: investments in educational, curriculum reforms, establishment of new standards, review of teacher training programmes and inspire reallocation of school resources in favor of disadvantaged students.

1.2. Rationale for the Study

Citing evidence from the four evaluations of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) assessments across low- and middle- income countries as well as three evaluations of SACMEQ in sub-Saharan Africa, Wagner et. al., (2012) postulate that large-scale cross-national learning assessments motivate regulatory and behavioral policy reforms around the content of teaching and learning. They further posit that they create a learning environment in which assessment specialists can improve their technical skills and related performance, that the assessments increase transparency regarding the education system and human capital development a cross-national context. Best, Knight, Lietz, Lockwood, Nugroho and Tobin (2013) point out that the main objective of conducting learning assessments is not

just to avail information on a country's educational outcomes, but also as tools to support policy makers and other stakeholders in education as far as policy formulation and resource decisions are concerned. However, Wagner et. al., (2012) point out that concrete evidence to prove that cross-national assessments have had an impact on policy and capacity in developing countries is relatively limited. They further indicate that the little available evidence is largely based on non-scientific surveys and anecdotal data.

This study is therefore a response to the challenge for further research (Kellaghan, Greaney & Murray, 2009; Wagner et. al., 2012; Mulongo; 2014) to address this gap, by systematically analyzing education practices and policies to explore the nexus between participating in the international large-scale learning assessments, policy formulation and investment in education. Moreover, according to UNESCO (1994), the international learning assessments are meant to equip participating countries with technical expertise to design their own assessment models. This study therefore also sought to analyze the extent to which participation in international learning assessments has impacted upon technical improvement in implementing country based learning assessment models.

1.3. Anticipated Significance and Potential Contribution of the Study

Whilst evaluation studies have been conducted in various countries attributing significant educational development outcomes to cross-national learning assessments, some countries have little evidence of change or there is lack of recent evaluation data. For instance, in Mauritius, an external review team reported that relatively little had been done to act on policy suggestions made in three separate large-scale assessments. Respondents to a World Bank study

in Ethiopia and Nigeria also reported that the assessment results had not been used in the formulation of educational policy (World Bank, 2004).

One of the main reasons for initiating and implementing cross-national learning assessments is so that the results can inform decision making as far as curriculum reforms and policy formulation is concerned (UNESCO, 2006). However, even after years of implementation, there is little empirical data and literature on the optimal use of the assessment findings and the effects they have had on policy and curricula decisions especially in developing countries (Kellaghan et al., 2009). This current study attempts to address this gap of information in three African countries.

Moreover, although the World Bank (2004) provides important information about the impact of the cross-national learning assessments on education developments in selected countries, it neither profiles the policies in question nor elucidates the success of the reforms in equipping educationists with sustainable skills to initiate and sustain national learning outcome assessments. It focuses mainly on regulatory reforms-that most often, are reactive. The paper also does not examine whether the culture of learning assessments is now embedded into the education systems of these countries. The present study sought to address these gaps in research by looking at Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa as case studies and could provide important information to policy makers, donors and educationists on the preparedness of these three countries to sustain the culture of monitoring learning outcomes. Additionally, the study provides practical recommendations to implement in order to achieve a sustainable monitoring and evaluation system for learning outcomes.

As discussed in section 1.1, one of the aims of the cross-national learning assessment programmes is to provide data for monitoring Education for All (EFA) goals, particularly goal 6 on improving the quality of education as denoted by measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2005). As the EFA dispensations comes to an end and ushers in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this study could further provide a framework for monitoring elements of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 - of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2016).

Best et al. (2013) conducted a study related to the current one. However, Best et al.'s (2013) study adopted a different methodology, using *a priori* conceptual framework and relied on published policies/literature, mostly available online to fulfill the objectives. The scope of the study was also wide (it covered developing countries) and ended up making general conclusions that are not necessarily country specific. In contrast, this current study is more specific by narrowing the focus to three countries only, carries out a more in-depth evaluation and utilizes key informant interviews to triangulate the data. The current study provides an opportunity to compare with and further interrogate Best et al.'s (2013) research findings.

A further rationale for this study is that it could inform academicians, education planners and policy makers on the relationship between learning assessment, social development and human capital development. Based on the findings of this study, arguments are presented for education planners to consider while contemplating the essence of education and the nexus between learning assessments, quality education and social development. Exploring this nexus is important because of the limited literature in this area. Available literature has dwelled on the

relationship between *education* and social development in general terms. An example, Türkkahraman (2012) examines this issue and avers that education and social development have a symbiotic relationship: the author argues that social development cannot occur without education because education can multiply sufficient numbers of competent people with improved living standards who will in turn transform their societies. Similarly, Abdi and Guo (2008) assert that education provides societies and individuals the possibilities of better livelihoods and offers them choices in this world. Furthermore, education offers people the opportunity and freedom to make decisions (Venkatraja & Indira, 2011), to diversify assets and activities (Burchi, 2006) and thus improving their well-being (Abdi & Guo, 2008). Education is further correlated with increased productivity and better nutrition in the agricultural sector (Burchi, 2006).

From these example literature, it is evident that education in its general and holistic understanding has been given much attention. The literature however fails to acknowledge the variation in the quality of education that different societies are exposed to and therefore assumes that *education* is uniform. This current study goes beyond this generalization by exploring the social development dimension of quality education as denoted by improved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life-skills.

1.4. Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to a sample of only three countries; however, many countries especially in Africa have participated in one form of cross-national learning assessment or the other. Resources permitting, it would have been interesting to analyse the situation in all these

countries. Similarly, the informants within the sampled countries were purposively sampled; this sampling may not necessarily have been the most representative. In addition, apart from a limited sample, only few variables were investigated which included policy/structural changes, capacity and the culture of learning assessments. The researcher acknowledges that there could be more intended and non-intended outcomes accruing from the participation in the cross-national assessments which were not documented in the study.

Moreover, qualitative techniques are often contentious as far as reliability and validity are concerned. For instance, the Department for International Development (DFID, 2012, p. 55) asserts that "the 'making a difference' causal question does not offer an explanation for how the intervention caused an impact or made a difference". However, it is important to note that this study endeavored to analyze the 'what' and if possible, the 'how' of the intervention and the difference it made. Finally, the study did not consider the baseline status in these countries and assumed that socio-economic factors are uniform. It would have been more expedient to control for these factors. Therefore, in order to avoid non-objective generalizations, the researcher disaggregated data and their presentation by each country and made inferences/conclusions specific to such data only.

The definition of *resource allocation* as used in this study is narrow and only referred to financial investment to conduct country specific learning assessments as well as to initiate and implement projects and programmes that support literacy development. Best et al.'s (2013) definition is more holistic and includes monetary, human and physical resources to schools such as expenditures per student, equipment and teacher development. Analyzing all these investment related items requires significant resources in time and money, both of which were

limited in this current research study. The researcher however acknowledges that adopting a narrow definition of resource allocation could have excluded important investments that might otherwise have been highlighted in this study. The resources indicated in this research study as having been invested in each of the three countries could therefore be higher. This is particularly true for Kenya and Tanzania where the Ministry or Education's data were not sufficiently disaggregated to show how much funds were set aside for literacy programmes and the accompanying assessments. Moreover, the Kenyan and Tanzanian figures do not include the amount of money that went into, for instance, the National Assessment Centre. The total amount of funds for Tanzania only shows that which was invested in the LANES programme through external donors and does not indicate the amount invested into literacy activities by the central government.

Additionally, the researcher only conducted content analysis on the 18 policy instruments that were attributed to large-scale learning assessments. However, the researcher did not focus on the analysis of the cons and pros of these policy documents nor did he investigate their impact on learning outcomes. An evaluation of the extent to which these policies were implemented in the sampled countries was also not conducted. It would be of value to evaluate in a future study, the impact of these policies on education practice.

1.5. Clarification of Concepts

The **international large-scale** or **cross-national assessments** refer to assessments that involves multiple countries; utilizes tests that are uniform and standardized across countries in terms of content, administration process, timing and scoring; and involves large samples of test-takers who are scientifically selected from comparable populations across countries (Wagner et. al.,

2012). They can also be said to be comparative multi-country studies (which must contain a strong assessment component) using strictly equivalent definitions of target populations and a standardized procedure, with the objective to measure student achievement (UNESCO, 2006). "These assessments therefore differ from national assessments and examinations in scale, scope and purpose" (Wagner et. al., 2012, pp. 6-7). This study has adopted the terms international large-scale, cross-national assessments and large-scale assessments interchangeably.

The term **literacy** as used in this study stands for both 'reading', 'numeracy' and 'life-skills'. The term is therefore used to mean grade/age level competency in reading and numeracy. This definition is based on UNESCO's (2009, p. 13) definition namely that "literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts". Therefore, a learner is said to be functionally illiterate if he or she cannot read a short and simple text and extract meaning; and is functionally innumerate if he/she cannot translate graphical information into fractions or interpret common everyday units of measurement (Spaull, 2012). Literacy, therefore, is a learned skill. The same should not be confused with 'literacy rate', which is basically the percentage of persons aged 15 and above who can read and write (UNESCO, 2013). The same term (literacy) has been used interchangeably with **learning outcomes**. In this study, learning outcomes refers to skills that a learner acquires after exposure to a particular literacy enhancing educational environment/experience.

The term **capacity** as used in the current study refers to the ability of a country to design and implement autonomous national large-scale learning assessments. This is measured by the number of national learning assessments independently conducted since 2000, availability of

technical experts to design and implement these assessments and evidence of strong government structures to continue supporting these initiatives. Relatedly, **knowledge transfer** as used in this study refers to the transmission of technical know-how from designers of cross-national learning assessments to national counterparts/institutions so that the latter can design and implement their own large-scale assessments. **Culture of evaluation** as implied in this study is therefore related to 'capacity development' and is measured by the number of national learning assessments independently conducted and those planned for the future, allocation of specific budget for learning assessments and programmes, commitment and capacity of national public institutions to autonomously conduct own learning assessments in a sustainable manner.

The terms **impact, effects and outcomes** are also commonly used in this thesis. Impact is said to be sustainable changes – positive/negative, intended/un-intended – generated by a project on the target groups – past and present – while outcomes are changes in the life conditions of beneficiaries in the medium-term-because of execution of project activities- and if these results are significant enough to address the primary needs of the beneficiaries (see Kusek & Rist, 2004; Retolaza, 2011). The terms '*impact'*, '*effect*' and *'outcome'* are used interchangeably in this study to refer to significant and sustainable changes occurring in structural and educational policy formulation, acquisition of requisite technical skills, commitment and culture of learning assessments by countries, as a direct consequence of participating in the cross-national learning assessments.

Identifying the *impact/outcome* of cross-national learning assessments on policy and curriculum reforms is central to this study. In determining what policies and curriculum reforms

were *impacted* or influenced by cross-national learning assessments, the researcher relied on a) testimony by key informants, attributing the formulation or content of a policy/curriculum to findings or recommendations emanating from the cross-national learning assessments b) citation of any of the cross-national learning programs within the policy or strategic paper (this is discussed in detail under sections 3.5 and 3.6). These were the key indicators considered under the theory of change adopted in the current study**. Indicators** are "tangible signs that something has been done or something has been achieved, often indicating the progress made in delivering an output or achieving an objective" (Stathers, David, Low, Mulongo and Mbabu, 2013, p. 295). This is discussed in detail under section 6.1)

Resource allocation as used in this study refers only to financial investment to initiate and implement projects and programmes that support literacy development. This includes money invested in conducting country specific learning assessments and programmes initiated to address the low learning outcomes. This definition is narrow than that adopted by Best et al. (2013) whose definition included monetary, human and physical resources to schools such as expenditures per student, equipment and teacher development.

1.6. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters as described below:

Chapter 1

This chapter contextualizes the research topic/issue within the subject of learning by presenting the background to cross-national learning assessments, the rationale for conducting the study and its potential contribution. Definitions of terms used in the study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature. The chapter begins with the analysis of the impact of learning assessments on education policy and practice. The chapter further highlights the significance of the cross-national learning assessments. Recent education and policy developments in South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania are also presented in Chapter 2. The sub-section on recent education and policy developments in the three target countries provide a preliminary landscape analysis of education policies and initiatives between the year 2000 and 2015. A critical examination of the contents of these policy frameworks/initiatives and their relationship with the cross-national learning assessments (attribution/contribution) is done in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 2 further presents the status of learning outcomes in the three countries based on the available literature and a snap-shot is given of the capacity of these countries to design and conduct independent national learning outcome assessments. The discussion on capacity as presented in this chapter is not conclusive and is therefore revisited in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

Finally, the theoretical basis underpinning the study are introduced in this chapter, namely, the theories of change and social development and a conceptual framework that explains the key parameters involved in technology transfer. These theories are then adopted in chapter 6 to discuss the findings of the study: The theory of change is adopted to explain that the interventions/inputs such as human labor/expertise and financial resources invested to conduct the cross-national learning assessments have produced significant outcomes in the form of policy and curriculum reforms, have motivated investments in literacy programmes and have contributed to capacity building within the participating countries; the theory of social

development has also been adopted in Chapter 6 to argue in support of investing in literacy programmes by demonstrating the nexus between literacy development, especially in early grades, and school related outcomes and socio-economic outcomes such as well-being and maternal health nutrition, fertility rates, and infant morbidity. The study adapts the conceptual framework of 'technology transfer' (Bozeman, 2000, pp. 3, 4) to explain the contribution of the cross-learning assessment on technology transfer, that is, the transmission knowledge to equip national counterparts to design and implement their own large-scale national assessments.

Chapter 3

This chapter covers the research objectives and the methods adopted in this study. The chapter outlines the design of the study and sampling techniques. The techniques of data collection adopted by the study are also discussed in this chapter, namely; review of literature, summative content analysis of policy documents and in-depth interviews with key informants drawn from the Ministries of Basic Education, curriculum development centres, national examinations bodies and civil society organizations implementing large-scale learning assessments in the three countries. The ethical principles that underpinned the study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4

The results of qualitative data analysis (content review of policy/strategic documents and key informant interviews) are presented in this chapter. The study analyses the findings in the paradigm of outcomes that can be *attributed or* have been *contributed* by sheer participation in the cross-national learning assessments - including policies directly/indirectly formulated/influenced or those that cite cross-national learning programmes, capacities that

have been built and an assessment of the culture of evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes, showing how the investment in cross-national learning frameworks has been worthwhile. The findings from review of literature are triangulated with the findings emanating from content analysis of the policy/official/strategic papers and the views of the different education/policy experts who were key informants in this study. The triangulation enabled the verification of whether participation in cross-national learning assessments impacted on policy development, the culture of monitoring learning outcomes and on curriculum reform initiatives.

Chapter 5

In this chapter, an integrated summary of the key findings is given, based on the results presented in Chapter 4. A narrative description is provided of the findings relating to the three countries which were included in this study, followed by a summary description of the results in relation to the research questions presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6

The conclusion chapter highlights the contributions of the research study based on findings presented in Chapter 4. The contribution to knowledge is based on the theories of change and social development underpinning this research, which were introduced in chapter 2. Practical and policy implications of the study's findings are considered, suggestions for future research as well as the limitations and the conclusion of the study are presented in this chapter.

1.7. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has contextualized the research topic/issue within the subject of learning by presenting the background and highlighting the subject of the study, the gap the study potentially fills, its possible contribution and limitations. Operational definition of key

terminologies used in the study has also been presented in this chapter. The chapter ends with a synopsis of the thesis and its layout. A summary has been provided of the content and focus of each of the six chapters that constitute the thesis.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature. The chapter begins with an analysis of debates surrounding learning assessments. An overview of the impact of the cross-national learning assessments on education policy and practice in both developed and developing economies is then presented. Recent education and policy developments in South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania are also outlined. The chapter further presents the status of learning outcomes in the three countries and capacity to conduct autonomous national large-scale learning assessments. Finally, the theoretical basis underpinning the study are explored at the end this chapter.

2.1. The Debates Surrounding the Learning Assessments

UNESCO, the premier centre for monitoring learning outcomes acknowledges that the need for comparability (a feature of international assessments frameworks) leaves open the question of what is to be assessed in different contexts and whether the results can be comparable within and between countries. Moreover, the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002 drew attention to this, as well as to the question of how far local (that is, sub-national) realities should shape assessment processes (UNESCO, 2005). These are questions that have to do with the validity and reliability of the test instruments. Shepard, Kagan, and Wurtz (1998) adding voice to this, argue that being high stake accountability assessments, the technical standards for reliability requires that the instruments used for international testing be sufficiently accurate to ensure that important decisions being made are not as a result of measurement error and that when the results are released, it is important that the authorities concerned release item-reliability-

indexes as well. Moreover, there are also other issues under debate as far as the contextualization question is concerned: UNESCO cites three issues; the cultural specificity of the test items; the techniques used to derive a score; and the statistic used in the presentation of the findings (UNESCO, 2008). Addey (2014, p. 39) argues that literacy is context and culturally specific and "cannot be measured as a universal, decontextualized skill" and that cross-national learning assessments are narrow in their measurement and construction of this form of literacy.

Carney (2003, cited in Addey, 2014) considers the assessments a form of westernization, where the assessments place a premium to cognitive accomplishments rather than local values. The transparency of the cross-national assessments has also been questioned. Ozga et al. (2012, cited in Addey, 2014) argues that because of the desire to maintain usability of the tests, the cross-national learning assessments do not make the tests public and that this violates the principles of transparency in educational systems.

Another issue of concern is the question of thresholds, or the definition of what is considered a sufficient level of literacy along the continuum of competencies, to cope with knowledge of society's demands. International literacy assessment scores are grouped into five levels, with level three representing 'a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society' (OECD 2000, p. 11). This has moved literacy from a dichotomy of literate/illiterate to literate/not sufficiently literate, or as Atkinson (2013) suggests, worthy individuals/unfit neoliberal subjects. Atkinson suggests that the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) level three also has the power to 'conflate subjects' interiority — the measure of their cognitive processing — and exteriority — the value of their

very bodies as human capital — while erasing the context in which these minds and bodies exist' (Atkinson, 2013, p. 5).

As a further indication of the disagreement amongst experts on the issue of measurement scales, Wagner (2003) outlines the following: (a) scales of literacy achievement (from dichotomous, to five levels, to many levels); (b) determination of when a 'level' is achieved (for example in International literacy tests (ILT), -see Levine, 1998); (c) what is included in the operational definition of literacy; (d) effectiveness of the use of proxy measures (Murray, Kirsch, & Jenkins, 1998; and (e) determination of which populations are, or are not, included in the population survey (for example ethnic minorities, and their languages/literacies).

Goldstein (2004) hypothesizes that the international numerical achievement targets/assessments neglect complex, often culture specific and political nature of education as a social practice. He particularly raises concerns about the comparability and reliability of the data, and the methodological and operational differences between the various countries arising from these international assessments. The writer further observes that the adoption of these frameworks can be viewed in a hegemonic form of centralized control of national systems by institutions such as the World Bank, which could lead to demoralization of poor performing countries and also allow the external imposition of systemic reforms under the heading of 'remedies'. He strongly recommends that each educational system should consider "developing different criteria for assessing quality and enrolment instead of monitoring progress towards an essentially artificial set of targets" (Goldstein, 2004, p. 9). Kanjee (2013) posits that large-scale learning assessments in South Africa were for a long time linked with the oppressive apartheid

regime, with the tests used to demonstrate the intellectual differences between the races. This raises significant ethical issues.

Citing the example of Lao PDR that has seen an exponential increase in the number of learning assessments in the country, Addey (2014) argues that some of these developments are not motivated by national interests, but are meant to attract funds from donors. Kamens and Benavot (2011, cited in Addey, 2014) observe that by 2009, only 29% of countries were participating in the cross-national learning assessments. With insight, it appears that numbers begun growing exponentially when financial institutions such as the World Bank and organizations such as the OECD and UNDP stepped in with financial and technical support.

While attempting to reconcile these debates, Mulongo (2014) observes that Goldstein (2004) is justified to suspect hegemonic tendencies in the way the cross-national assessments are implemented. He argues that engaging a few national officials in test development does not necessarily imply that policy makers will adopt the findings to review/formulate policy and that UNESCO should find better mechanisms to engage education planners to a) first understand the significance of these assessments, b) showcase how they (cross-national assessments) have influenced policy in other countries. This study therefore has a potential contribution to make since researchers agree that there is little empirical data in this area of inquiry.

Moreover, Mulongo (2014) postulates that the debate about validity and reliability of the international test instruments is worthwhile and further observes that although the tools within an assessment package as applied by international/regional assessment frameworks are often standardized, issues such as cultural, regional and learner differences will always pose challenges to effective standardization. It is for this reason that he advocates for locally relevant

assessment frameworks but cautions that their context-specific nature makes them less meaningful for comparative and generalization purposes.

Mulongo (2014) however finds an issue with the argument that adopting cross-national learning assessments promotes rote learning, puts pressure on schools, learners and teachers to "maximize scores in pen and paper tests, irrespective of whether this enhances useful learning outcomes" (Barret, 2009, p. 3). Mulongo (2014, p. 9) observers that such an argument is not well founded given that these assessments are "neither targeted for improving the individual performance of students nor the individual effectiveness of teachers or schools because they are typically sample based".

While commenting on the argument that recognition of high performing countries inevitably goes hand in hand with discrediting and exposing of low performing countries, Mulongo (2014) recommends that performance on these assessments should be construed in relative terms and that countries participating in the cross-national assessments should not be ranked or if they must be ranked, it should be relative to a national baseline. Finally, he recommends that EFA should clearly define their indicators and consider reducing the dichotomous scales/levels of measurement from the current five to four to reduce instances of unnecessary contentions (for instance, the Ministry of Education in Kenya adopts the four-scale grading system from level 1 - pre-reading; level 2 - emergent reading; level 3- basic reading; level 4 - reading for meaning). While taking a normative approach, the researcher concludes that the cross-national learning assessments may not be perfect but have remarkable power in measuring performance if well designed and implemented.

2.2. What is the Impact of the Cross-National Learning Assessments?

There are mixed views on the impact and significance of cross-national learning assessments to participating countries. Those that support these assessments cite the ability to document the poor performance of a country relative to others at similar levels of economic development and help such countries to reform their policy and inform investments for the sake of human capital development (see Greaney & Kellaghan, 2008; Wagner et. al., 2012). Moreover, others observe that cross-national studies provide hands-on training and equip national staff of participating countries with skills to design and use data collection instruments and other related skills such as computer-based management and analysis of data, policy analysis and development and report preparation (UNESCO 2006). On the other hand, pundits that argue against the cross-national learning assessments indicate that by adopting these quantitative targets; learners, teachers and countries are encouraged to adapt their behavior to maximize perceived rewards even when there are dysfunctional education systems. The near impossible challenges of creating achievement tests that are culturally or educationally specific, hegemonic control of individual systems by multinational and donor institutions and demoralization of poor performing countries are other drawbacks postulated by the opposing arguments (Barret, 2009; Goldstein, 2004). These issues are discussed in further detail under section 2.1 of this chapter.

Education and development experts unanimously agree that learning outcome assessments are not an end in themselves and that these endeavors should inform policy reforms to improve the quality of education (see Wagner et. al., 2012; World Bank, 2004). However, to achieve this, World Bank identifies “the need for expertise in translating assessment data into policy and instructional procedures….” (World Bank, 2004, p. 5). This is a

critical issue that is explored in this study. The issue also informs one of the key research questions set out for this study that is, to what extent has data/information (as a consequence of participating in large-scale cross-national learning assessments) translated into regulatory, investment and educational policy reforms in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa? Some examples of how data/information and recommendations resulting from these cross-national learning assessments have informed educational reforms/practices in other countries are discussed below.

2.2.1 Impact in Developed Countries

A number of studies have been conducted (see Baird, Talia, Johnson, Stobart, Yu, Sprague, & Daugherty, 2011; Breakspear, 2012; Figazzolo, undated) to systematically analyze and document the impact of cross-national learning assessments (especially PISA) on policy reform and education practices in participating countries. The findings are varied and sometimes controversial. Baird et al. (2011) argue that the cross-national learning assessments have been greeted only with 'political rhetoric' in France and England. On the other hand, Knight, Lietz, Nugroho and Tobin (2012) assert that the influence of PISA on policy formulation is increasing over time at both the national and local levels. Breakspear (2012) concludes that there is credible evidence that indeed PISA methodologies have been embedded within national/federal systems for assessment and evaluation and that a number of countries have provided large-scale evaluation for systems that did not previously conduct national/federal assessments and that PISA has stimulated increased scope of national assessment systems, has complemented national data and helped to validate national results against an international benchmark.

Breakspear (2012) goes on to indicate that some policy-makers have used the PISA assessment frameworks and instrument as a best-practice 'model' or 'guide' in formulating improved national/federal assessment policies and practices and that some countries have explicitly sought to incorporate and emphasize PISA-like competencies in revised national standards and curricula. More importantly, Breakspear (2012) cites specific examples of the influence of PISA: for instance, both Switzerland and Germany initiated significant education policy reforms in response to lower-than-expected results. New Zealand, inspired by the high performance on PISA reinforced existing policies and the USA, with a substantial domestic evaluation programme that had already raised public awareness of its poor educational outcomes, suffered no major external shock.

In specific terms, Germany used the PISA results to justify a new focus on "testing testing testing", in other words, "result-based evaluation" (Figazzolo, undated, p.14). Other initiatives in response to these results include the launching by the education ministers of the so-called "seven action areas" meant to improve the quality of schooling and learning. These seven priority areas of the *Kultusministerkonferenz* with regard to the results of PISA are: (1) improvement of language competence as early as pre-school education, (2) strengthening of the link between the pre-school sector and primary school with the aim of an early school entry, (3) improvement of primary education and the continuous improvement of reading literacy and basic understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts, (4) efficient support of educationally disadvantaged children, (5) thorough development and assurance of the quality of teaching and schools on the basis of binding educational standards and result-oriented evaluation, (6) improvement of professionalism in teaching with particular regard to diagnostic

and methodical competence as an element of systematic school development and (7) expansion of the provision of school and non-school activities for the whole day with the aim of increasing opportunities for education and support with particular regard to pupils with educational deficits and especially gifted pupils (Figazzolo, undated, p.14).

The author further states that Mexico (as an example of a developing country), using PISA as a point of reference, decided to directly involve the Convention on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the formulation and implementation of her policy *The Alliance for educational quality* which was launched in 2008. This was lauded by experts as "a very peculiar reform, as it is based, for the first time, on an agreement between the government, the education union and the OECD itself (Figazzolo, undated, p.12). In concluding remarks, the author asserts that PISA results greatly affected the education policy debate both within the global and national contexts: PISA has continuously constituted the point of reference for governments in their educational reforms especially in testing pupils, evaluating teachers, with reforms inspired by efficiency or competitiveness criteria. However, PISA has also been employed by unions and opposition parties to lay blame on government departments and to criticize their educational policies.

Breakspear (2012) asserts that though specific policy initiatives were not immediately available; Hong Kong-China, Spain, Canada, Norway and Poland increasingly valued the skills assessed in PISA and that these countries adopted the PISA instrument to monitor their own performance and equity. Baird et al.'s (2011) exploratory case study for six countries (Canada, England, France, Norway, Shanghai-China and Switzerland) conclude that there was evidence of some form of national pressure for extra congregated structures or data collection in Canada but

that there was little information about the policy response in Shanghai-China, in substantive terms as far as response to PISA is concerned.

Best et al. (2013) conclude that the large-scale assessments have impacted on the ways in which analytical political decisions, strategies and policies are constructed. Citing the example of Morocco, Gilmore (2005 cited in Best at.al, 2013) indicates that the country changed its orientation and perception of the cross-national learning assessments as a mechanism of sanction and instead focused on improving the quality of education in the country.

2.2.2 Impact in Africa

A paper by the World Bank titled *Assessing Student Learning in Africa* (2004) provides examples of outcomes of cross-national assessments in the context of Africa. For instance, the paper citing SACMEQ indicates that results from these assessments have been utilized in areas of policy debate and featured in presidential and national commissions. Zimbabwe and Namibia, prime ministerial and cabinet reviews of educational policy in Zanzibar, national education sector studies in Zambia, and reviews of national education master plans in Mauritius are cited as examples. Moreover, in Mauritius, SACMEQ data were used in a debate on strategies to mitigate the harmful role of the Certificate of Primary Education and to support improvement in the pupil-to-book ratio. In Seychelles, SACMEQ results initiated a debate on streaming and caused education managers to reappraise the adequacy of the resources provided for education. Kenya, for example, introduced benchmarks—such as desks per pupil and books per pupil—for the provision of classroom facilities.

The aforementioned World Bank paper goes on to indicate that results from Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) were used in the preparation of education reform programmes in

Malawi and Uganda, and that PASEC results were used in country analysis reports in Burkina Faso and Niger. Further, in Kenya, education indicators adapted from SACMEQ were used to supplement the educational statistics collected by the Ministry of Education (UNESCO, 2006), and in 2002, World Bank's Educational Sector Analysis made extensive use of SACMEQ's findings to develop proposals aimed at addressing deficiencies in the Kenyan education system. This led to the establishment of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (Government of Kenya, 2005). Moreover, the same results were useful in informing the development of the Public Expenditure Framework (UNESCO, 2006). Participation in these assessments also helped to build the capacities of Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, and Morocco, countries that later carried out their own assessments. The World Bank (2004) further argues that in Kenya and Zimbabwe, data cleaning methods used in SACMEQ were adapted for school census data and that participant countries in the PASEC programme improved their capacity in test construction and in the design and execution learning assessments.

Wagner et. al., (2012) also offer an analysis of the impact of the international learning assessments on education development in developing countries. They postulate that these assessments have motivated regulatory and behavioral policy reforms, have helped create a learning environment in which assessment specialists have improved their technical skills and related performance and that they have helped increase transparency regarding education system outcomes and human capital development in the participating countries. However, Wagner et. al., (2012) add a disclaimer that concrete evidence on the impact of these assessments in policy development and implementation in developing countries is relatively limited and that information available is largely based on non-scientific surveys (Wagner et. al.,

2012). This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the contribution of cross-national learning assessments on educational policy development and implementation in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

Moreover, as far as policy is concerned, Ross and Genevois (2007) indicate that results from cross-national assessments (especially SACMEQ) featured in presidential and national commissions, in cabinet policy plans and informed planning in education. Prime ministerial and cabinet reviews of educational policy in Zanzibar and reviews of national education master plans in Mauritius are cited as examples. Furthermore, in Namibia, results from SACMEQ inspired the introduction of interventions such as the English Language Teacher Development Programme (ELTDP), an expansion of the Basic Teachers Diploma Programme (BETD), introduction of the Efficiency Programme Management Policy Coordinating Committee and the 5-year (2001-2006) Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture strategic plan (UNESCO, 2006). In addition to these contributions, the results from these assessments are alleged to have justified the granting of donor support. In Guinea, for example, the results of the PASEC prompted the government and the World Bank to develop a programme to promote instruction in local languages in the early grades.

As far as capacity building is concerned, the World Bank (2004) asserts that following the MLA project, several countries, including Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, and Morocco carried out their own assessments. Citing practical cases in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the paper argues that data cleaning methods used in SACMEQ were adapted for school census data and that participating countries in PASEC improved their capacity in test construction and in the design and execution of learning assessments. Commenting on SACMEQ, Best et al. (2013) observes that these

assessments have been hugely successful in influencing policy and the authors recommend further investigation to gain deeper understanding of what contributed to the success of this assessment programme.

This discussion has shown the positive impact of participating in the cross-national learning assessments. However, information from certain countries may not be as positive; a World Bank study (2004) in Ethiopia, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda concluded that while the findings of national assessments were sometimes covered in the media, in none of these countries did they feature in parliamentary debate. In only one country were the findings used to justify the granting of additional resources to schools. In four countries, the results were shared with curriculum authorities, but only in two countries was feedback provided to teachers or schools, and in only one country was feedback provided to textbook publishers.

The World Bank (2004) further asserts that respondents in Ethiopia and Nigeria indicated that the assessment results had not been used in the formulation of educational policy. However, looking at these discussions as pertains the impact of the cross-national learning assessments, there seems to be a conceptual misunderstanding of the term 'impact': for instance, phrases such as 'results were used in national debates on quality of education', 'the minister gave a speech citing results of the assessment', ' results featured in presidential and national commissions' have been used commonly to describe the impact of the assessments in the participating countries (see World Bank, 2004 & World Bank, 2007). A keen observer will note that the 'so why/what?' is missing in most of these impact reports. In other words, what the writers are identifying as results/impacts are not. For instance, increased national debate or

results presented to a commission of education are not impacts. In this example an outcome would be the action taken/implemented after the said debate or presentation to the commission - for example were there any changes in education practices as a result of the heated national debate? Or did the commission of inquiry result in any policy recommendation or formulation? The current study therefore goes beyond these low-level results by analyzing the contribution of cross-national learning assessments on educational policy and curricula formulation, programmes and structures in three countries as case studies. Moreover, the study analyses these impacts in the realm of social development and transnational diffusion of policy.

2.3 Education Policy Development in South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania (2000-2015)

2.3.1 South Africa

Sayed and Ahmed (2011) postulate that the breadth and depth of policy change in **South Africa** is extensive especially as the country made the transition to a democratic state. Citing from the Department of Education website, the authors narrate that between 1994 and 2007, seven white papers were formulated, three green papers, 26 bills (of which 17 are amendment bills), 35 Acts (of which 22 are amendments of existing laws), 11 regulations, 52 government notices and 26 calls for comments on the education sector from basic to higher education. Additionally, OECD (2008) cites initiatives and developments such as the 'Dinaledi' schools, the Education Management Information System, the Integrated Quality Information System, the National Education Evaluation Development Unit, better remuneration and training of principals and the policy on bursaries for initial teacher training. Other recent education policy initiatives include the National Education Infrastructure Management System (to document, track and upgrade

school infrastructure) and dedicated bursaries for initial educator training and ongoing professional development of educators (OECD, 2008). Moreover, the education expenditure increased from ZAR 31.1 billion in 1995, to ZAR 59.6 billion in 2002 and to ZAR 105.5 billion in 2007 (cited in OECD, 2008). Other developments include the establishment of the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS); (Department of Education, 2008) which guides inclusive education policy and the Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012).

Perhaps the most popular policy in South Africa is that on Inclusive Education as underscored in Education White Paper 6 of 2001 (Department of Education, 2001) which highlights the significant relationship between EFA and Inclusive Education by attempting to address the diverse needs of the entire learner population to embrace a holistic education that facilitates learning for all (Tyobeka, 2006; Department of Education, 2001). This policy has experienced some successes; including significant awareness/attitude change for learners with disability, increased enrolment signifying improved parental awareness, about half a million teachers have been trained on principles on inclusion and strengthened community support networks (Ladbrook, 2009; Tyobeka, 2006). However, the implementation of the policy has also faced quite some challenges including lack of adequate central funding, un-even and delayed implementation because of varied interpretations caused by the policy of decentralization (Ladbrook, 2009) and obstacles with entrenching the concept of the centrality of the principle of inclusive education in the education transformation agenda (Tyobeka, 2006).

The process of formulating this policy has also come under scrutiny. Donohue and Bornman (2014) questions how the cost effectiveness of inclusion as espoused in the document can be achieved without providing provincial Departments with substantial increases in funding allocations. Moreover, Odhav (2009) asserts that White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) is devoid of a strong component on how to assess the system, lacks clear guidelines and methods of implementation and fails to clearly make choice between equal opportunity and equity. Odhav (2009, p. 42) further observes that this policy document remained too cautious about budget costs and fails to consider equity in pre-higher education. He further avers that the policy document failed to broaden the parameters of development, and did not articulate the functions of science and technology, and of reconstruction and development. It also failed to locate its place in a differentiated economy, which needed differentiated skills and knowledge structures.

Another key feature as far as education policy reform in South Africa is concerned is the curriculum reform project referred to as Curriculum 2005 (C2005). The idea for the development and implementation of Curriculum 2005 was to implement radical changes as a pedagogic route out of apartheid education that was regarded as promoting 'rote learning' (content-laden, prescriptive, examination oriented, elitist, Eurocentric-see Jansen, 2003) to one that emphasizes learning achievement and outcomes at all key stages (Barwell, Bishop, Erduran, Halai, Iyamuremye, Nyabanyaba, Rizvi, Rodrigues, Rubagiza & Uworwabayeho, 2007). Jansen (2003) observes that the C2005 had a strong political investment and support and was highly regarded by the ruling party (African National Congress-ANC) as 'progressive'. However, the initiative also received criticism in equal measure due to perceived weaknesses. The dissenting voices cited

challenges observed around C2005's enablement of teachers to re-contextualize their adoption of the curriculum in their different contexts (Barwell et al., 2007). With these strong dissenting voices, the government introduced, in 2002, a more streamlined curriculum (simpler version of C2005) by eliminating some of the troublesome language constructs.

The Department of Basic Education (2012) introduced a National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which, according to the DBE's website "is a single, comprehensive, and concise policy document, which will replace the current Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12". According to the DEB, CAPS comes into effect aiming to identify and address the challenges, obstacles and pressure points that have negatively impacted on the quality of teaching in schools and to propose mechanisms that could address these challenges. The DEB further goes on to indicate that CAPS is a response to concerns raised by those who faced various challenges in the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*.

Other policy initiatives include Training Colleges Act of 2006 which superseded the *Further Education and Training Act of 1998* whose aim is to regulate tertiary education and training (OECD, 2008; The Adult Basic Education and Training Act, no.52 of 2000. This legislation provides for the establishment of public and private adult learning centres, funding, governance and quality assurance mechanisms" (OECD, 2008, p. 40). The South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act of 2000 aimed at registration and professional development of educators. The revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) adopted in 2002 (Department of Basic Education, 2002) focuses on developing the full potential of all learners as citizens of a democratic South

Africa by creating lifelong learners, “confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled”- (OECD, 2008 p. 41) is another policy that needs to be noted.

The National Protocol on Assessment, which regulates the recording and reporting of learning outcomes for grades R to 12 was also gazetted, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa of 2007 which aims to provide an overall strategy for the successful recruitment, retention, and professional development of teachers was also enacted. Overall, education experts in South Africa agree that extensive policy development and reform initiatives have taken place in this country in the past few decades (OECD, 2008; Poutiainen, 2009).

The main objectives that informed policy reforms in education in South Africa include the desire to make education in the country more efficient and of high quality (Zenex Foundation, 2013) and to redress the inequalities created by the apartheid (Poutiainen, 2009). The policy reforms have generated mixed results; some of these intended, while others are unintended (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). OECD (2008) outlines some of the achievements, namely, hitherto uneven and racially duplicated institutions of the apartheid era have been made somewhat coherent and brought into unity, witnessing the replacement by a single national system comprising nine provincial sub-systems. Moreover, marginalized and other vulnerable groups have been given a little more consideration in the form of inclusive education programmes and school fee exemptions. The policies have also resulted in increased financial resources being redirected specifically towards programmes meant to address the issues of equity and redress accessibility and affordability. OECD (2008) further observes that the policy reforms have led to

the decentralization of school governance resulting into better and faster decision making, improved accountability and greater autonomy.

On curriculum, the reforms have led to the introduction of a new curriculum that gives more focus to knowledge acquisition and skills. Pundits observe that this re-aligns well with the values espoused in the South African Constitution (OECD, 2008; Poutiainen, 2009). Moreover, Zenex Foundation (2013) postulates that the curriculum has been increasingly filled with subject content and scripted; and delivery in the classroom checked by more systemic monitoring and assessment. At the same time, greater attention has been paid to teacher development on learning outcomes, a matter that OECD (2008) agrees with and indicates that the country has put in place mechanisms and procedures to continuously monitor educational quality. The higher education system has been reformed and rationalized, and a new further education and training system put in place. OECD (2008, p. 14) summed up the achievements by arguing that "in the space of 14 years, a far more equitable, efficient and better quality system of education has been created; nevertheless, apartheid's many inequalities have not yet been eradicated".

2.3.2 Kenya

Formulation of education policy in Kenya has mostly been motivated by a desire to attain EFA goals, in particular, Universal Primary Education (Atieno, 2009). Wasanga, Ogle and Wambua (2011) posit that in response to international commitments to Education for All goals (EFA), the Government of Kenya launched the policy of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. The implementation of this policy witnessed the enrolment of children from 6 million to about 9 million in a span of a few years and a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 108.9% and a corresponding Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of 92.5% for primary education (Mulongo, 2013).

However, with these significant results, the FPE policy has been encumbered with a myriad of challenges calling to question the quality of learning taking place in schools. Oketch and Somerset (2010) conclude that though access to primary schooling may have improved, the quality of what the learners have access to has deteriorated especially in public primary schools and that at higher levels, improved access has been accompanied by no reductions in the unequal chances of proceeding to higher levels.

The FPE policy was then followed by the drafting of the Sessional Paper No. 1 (Republic of Kenya, 2005a) which became the basis for the development of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), which was meant to address the quality and access issues linked to the provision of the free basic education (Wasanga et al., 2011). The achievements of this programme are varied: For instance, Godia (2012) indicates that KESSP and other similar plans such as Ministry of Education, Science and Technology strategic plan (2008) and Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2009) served the education sector significantly since their launch and implementation. Godia (2012) postulates that these policies have enabled the country to make tremendous achievements in the education sector in terms of improving access, equity, quality, relevance and sector management. Godia (2012) is however keen to add a disclaimer that these achievements have been bedeviled by a lot of challenges related to training, research and innovation. Additionally, Wasanga et al. (2011) indicate that it is through the KESSP, that the Ministry of Education established the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) which provided the framework for conducting the national learning assessment and the third phase of the SACMEQ study.

Wanyama and Koskey (2013) also provide an in-depth analysis of recent educational reforms/initiatives in Kenya: The analysis begins with the Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research for 21st century in Kenya. According to the authors, this framework provides reforms or new directions for the provision of education and training at all levels such as strategies to improve education access; quality; equity completion rates and Universal Primary Education (UPE). Another policy cited in the paper is the national education policy framework for special needs of education of 2009 which addresses critical issues as far as special needs education is concerned. But practically, the new initiative proposes quarterly grands for boarding of about USD 200 for tuition annually and the support of curriculum activities at the different levels of administration. Other policy initiatives include the Reform Policy on University Education (2012) - which among other things introduced the double student intake of the 2010 and 2011 Kenya Certificate Secondary Education (KCSE) candidates, - the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme that mandates constituencies that receive community support to recruit ten ECD teachers and pay them from the CDF grant (from December, 2011) and the Education Reform on Child Friendly Schools (came into force in 2010). The latter policy is meant to develop 'child friendly' schools that are barrier free and that enforce hygiene by upgrading their sanitary facilities by providing sanitary towels to girls to improve retention.

Another policy designed and implemented between 2000-2015 includes the ECD Service Standard Guidelines for Kenya (2006). This policy was meant to operationalize the National ECD Policy Framework and the Children Act (2001) by providing specific Service Standard Guidelines to ensure that all ECD service providers including parents, communities, Community Based

Organizations (CBOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), government ministries, multi-lateral and bi-Literal partners, universities and those in the private sector provide quality ECD services which are accessible and equitable for all young children in Kenya (The Government of Kenya, 2006). The Public Procurement Manual for Schools and Colleges (2009) provides specific guidelines in procurement for schools and colleges and operationalizes the Public Procurement and Disposal Act (2005) and the Disposal Regulations of Kenya (2006). The Health and Nutrition Policy of 2011, the Gender Policy in Education of 2007, the education sector on HIV/AIDs of 2011 and the Policy Framework for Nomadic Education in Kenya (Government of Kenya- GoK, 2012) are examples of other policies formulated during the same period.

Godia (2012, p. 22) cites the following additional policies and reforms during the same period:

a) The Education and Training policy framework (2012)

b) Science, Technology and Innovation policy framework (2012) to address science and innovation Issues,

c) Basic Education Bill, 2012 whose main intention is to mainstream pre-primary into basic education through appropriate funding and to address health and nutrition issues including the provision of teachers for that level,

d) Kenya National Examinations Bill, 2012 which seeks to strengthen the Council with an appropriate legal framework in order to comply with the provisions of the new Constitution (2010) and that those vested with administering education do not go on strike during examination period (s),

e) Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act, 2013 which gives this body a high priority at the National Economic and Social Council to ensure that

the Government of Kenya obligates 3% of its national budget to TVET for the purpose of improving access, equity, relevance, quality and marketing,

f) University Act, 2013- The intention is to restructure the Commission for Higher Education and strengthen it with expanded mandate for accreditation, quality improvement and quality assurance in all Kenyan Universities,

g) Science, Technology and Innovation Act (STI), 2013- which among other functions is a framework to support and coordinate ideas on innovation and commercialization of the products, to demystify science and technology at all levels and to facilitate the creation of Science Centres in Counties,

h) Kenya National Qualification Framework Act (KNQF), 2013, which among other things is meant to facilitate the regulation, structuring and coordination of national qualifications in Kenya,

i) Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development Act, 2013 which is meant to mainstream the Curriculum Development Institute with a facility to enhance the development of curricula, in terms of laboratories (for sciences and languages) and workshops.

With these policy changes, Godia (2012) delineates some key educational achievements/outcomes which include an impressive increase in school enrolment from 5.9 million in 2003 to 9.4 million in 2012. Similarly, the policy on Free Day Secondary Education saw the rise in enrolment from 800,000 to 1.7 million students in 2011. Other achievements include the integration of HIV and AIDS education into a core subject which "has contributed to increased knowledge among learners" (Godia 2012, p. 14), formulation and dissemination of the

HIV and AIDS education sector's policy, formulation of life skills curriculum for primary, secondary and teacher education and development of the policy framework for Nomadic Education in Kenya to provide guidelines for the coordination of educational services for the nomadic communities.

2.3.3 Tanzania

In **Tanzania**, the most recent development in education is the launch by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) of the Education Sector Development Programme (PEDP III) blue print. This programme focuses on six areas: (1) Access and Equity; (2) Quality Improvement; (3) Capacity in Governance and Management; (4) Cross-cutting Issues; (5) Research, Monitoring and Evaluation; and (6) Institutional Arrangement. The PEDP III seeks to raise competencies, increase participation and completion, and prepare children for life in a multicultural society (MOEVT, 2012). Educational policies/initiatives formulated/introduced include the decision to abolish primary school fees in 2001 and the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) in July 2002. This policy aimed at the rapid expansion of primary education, with the objective of enrolling all 7-10 years olds by 2005 (see also SACMEQ, 2011).

SACMEQ (2011) observes that PEDP I succeeded on various fronts including the expansion of school enrolment with the Gross Enrolment Ratios (GERs) and Net Enrolment Rates (NERs) reaching 112 percent and 97.3 percent in 2007 respectively, compared to GERs and NERs of 84.0 percent and 65.0 percent respectively in 2001. Other outcomes include the increase in the number of primary schools from 11,873 in 2001 to 14,700 in 2006; raising the transition rate from primary to secondary school from 22.4 percent in 2001 to 49.3 percent in 2005; improvement in school and teachers' facilities; improved learner retention rates (see United

Republic of Tanzania, 2008); and training of 50,800 under-qualified teachers in order for them to attain the minimum qualifications for Grade A teaching. However, with these achievements, the United Republic of Tanzania acknowledges that the actual number of classrooms available is only 55% of the total need, and that the available teachers' houses can only meet 19% of the requirements and that the school dropout and the repetition rates still remain persistently high (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).

However, based on the successes and lessons derived from PEDP I, PEDP II was inaugurated with seven key focus areas: (1) Enrolment expansion with a focus on ensuring access and equity, (2) quality improvement, (3) capacity building, (4) cross-cutting issues, (5) strengthening institutional arrangements, (6) educational research, and (7) monitoring and evaluation. Another recent policy is the government's National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (2005) which includes a focus on education as part of its second cluster that deals with social well-being and quality of life (World Bank, 2010).

In summary, other recent programme plans and strategies initiated in Tanzania include:

- Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP II) 2010-2014;
- Teacher Development and Management Strategy (TDMS) 2007 -2012;
- Folk Education Development Programme (FEDP) 2007 - 2012;
- Adult Education and Non-formal Education Strategy; 2003/4-2007/8;
- Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan;
- Higher Education Development Programme (HEDP) 2010-2015;
- Technical and Vocational Education Development Programme – TVEDP;
- Technical and Higher Education Sub Master Plan, 2003–2018;

- Gender Strategic Plan (2010/11 – 2014/15);
- HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2008/09 – 2011/12);
- Environmental Education Strategy (2010-2014);
- Human Rights Education Strategy (2012-16);
- Inclusive Education Strategy (2009-2017);
- The 2003 Tanzania National ICT Policy and
- The 2007 ICT Policy for Basic Education.

2.4 Status of Learning outcomes in South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania

Having highlighted the education policy reforms, the landscape of learning outcomes in these three countries is examined. In other words, is there empirical evidence that learning outcomes are improving given investments in education and the spirited policy formulation?

In **South Africa,** Barwell et al. (2007) assert that the quality of learning outcomes in the form of good pass and satisfactory completion rates has remained unaffected despite the significant investment of resources since 2002. The authors further observe that African schools from the poorest quintiles of South are worse affected. In terms of empirical evidence, OECD (2008) found out that in 2002, grade 3 students scored 68% for listening comprehension, but only 39% could read for comprehension, 30% were competent in numeracy, and 54% in life skills.

Two years later, in 2004, grade 6 students garnered averages of 38% for language, 27% for mathematics and 41% for natural science. Furthermore, in 2007, the overall country pass rate for the Senior Certificate (grade 12) examination was 65.2%. OECD thus concluded that the learners' levels of achievement in South Africa were quite wanting and that of the 12 African

countries participating in the 1999 MLA project, South Africa scored the lowest average in numeracy, the fifth lowest in literacy and the third lowest in life skills. These results were further reinforced by SACMEQ's study findings (SACMEQ, 2011) which indicated that in 2007, the average achievement of learners in numeracy and reading for grade 6 pupils (497 and 510 respectively) was marginally below the required grade level competence (of 512). Traced back to 2000, the study established that seven years later (in 2007), learning achievement presented a mixed picture with regions such as Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape declining tremendously. Overall, SACMEQ (2011) concluded that the percentage of learners achieving grade level competence in both reading and numeracy was significantly low in South Africa despite increased investments/inputs in education (Barwell et al., 2007). See also section 2.5.1. for more results on learning achievements in South Africa.

In **Kenya**, utilizing data from a sample of 2742 learners drawn from three regions, Mulongo (2003c) established that boys garnered a mean-score of 52.94 against 50.81 girls on a literacy test conducted in 2011. The study also established that majority of the learners (47.12%) exhibited reading difficulties while 25.4% were average (level 2), and only 12.9% were proficient at their level. The study concluded that those learners who did not attend preschool had the most reading difficulties (51.7%) compared with those that attended preschool (46.3%).

A study conducted by Uwezo in 2009 established that literacy levels in Kenya were lower than the recommended standards (Uwezo, 2010). The study established that almost 50% of grade 4 learners in Kenya were unable to read a grade 2 level story and that only about 50% of learners in primary schools had acquired the highest numeracy competency expected of Standard 2 learners. Another follow-up study conducted by Uwezo in 2011 and covering three

East African Countries concluded that “performance across the three countries was poor, very poor in fact’’ (Uwezo, 2011, p. 2) and that most of the children in Standard 3, who ought to have mastered Standard 2 level competence, were unable to complete the literacy tests. Uwezo (2014) indicated that the situation had not changed by 2013, with only 30% of standard 3 children able to do class 2 work. Moreover, the SACMEQ (2007) survey established that since 2000, only three regions in Kenya (out of a total of eight) registered improvements in reading and only one region improved in average numeracy scores. Five other regions registered insignificant changes. Overall, the survey concluded that numeracy scores in Kenya declined between 2000 and 2004 (SACMEQ, 2011).

The Kenya National Examinations Council’s (KNEC) also conducted learning assessment of Standard 3 learners in numeracy and literacy and reported poor learning achievement. The study indicated that achievement in both reading and numeracy was below the standardized mean (Bunyi, Wangia, Magoma, Limboro, & Akyeampong, 2011; KNEC, 2010). Uwezo (2010), KNEC (2010) and Bunyi et al., (2011) conclude that the exponential increase in enrolment in Kenya has not been matched by increase in learning.

Like her East African (E.A) counterparts, **Tanzania** has implemented the free primary education policy in tandem with EFA goals and is investing about 4% of its GDP on primary education alone (Uwezo, 2011). However, a learning assessment survey by Uwezo (2010) covering 38 of 133 districts and a sample of 42,033 children found out that the Tanzanian learners performed the worst in both literacy and numeracy when compared with their counterparts in Uganda and Kenya. The study established that children in Kenya (who were not necessarily better, based on an international yardstick) performed twice as well as those in

Tanzania. However, one of the most surprising results was when the Kenyan learners outperformed Tanzanians in the Kiswahili test, a language that is most spoken in Tanzania. “So even on a test in which children in Tanzania ought to have an advantage over children in Kenya, Tanzanian children performed worse” (Uwezo, 2011, p. 11). The scenario remained unchanged two years later: Uwezo (2012) established that nationally, only 1 in 4 children in Standard 3 could read a Standard 2 level story in Kiswahili, 4 out of 10 were unable to do multiplication at Standard 2 level and that less than 1 out of 10 children in Standard 3 could read a Standard 2 level English story. Uwezo (2012) concluded that the general increase in access to education in Tanzania has not been matched by improvement in learning outcomes. “Despite attending school, many children are not being equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Government statistics, national examinations and parents’ perceptions all point to a marked decline in the quality of education offered to children” (Uwezo, 2012, p. 4).

The low learning achievements in Tanzania were reflected in the 2012 ordinary- level examinations where about 60% of students that sat the national examination that year failed (The East African Newspaper-2013), triggering a huge public debate and the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate this issue (Sabahi, undated). Conducting a baseline survey on behalf of the Education Quality Improvement Programme in Tanzania (EQUIP-T), Pettersson, Rawle, Outhred, Brockerhoff, Wills, Nugroho, Jasper, Kveder and Beavis (2015) established that close to half of the schools they sampled (100 schools) failed to score even a 25% on the primary school leaving examination. More importantly, they found that 38% of pupils sampled had not achieved the lowest emergent level in Kiswahili and 7% had not achieved even the emerging skills at standard one level in mathematics. Pettersson et al. (2015) conclude that the low

learning achievements in this study serve to indicate the need for urgent, large-scale reforms in the education sector of Tanzania.

2.5 Capacity to Conduct Own Learning Outcome Assessments

Snyder, Kamanga, Tate and McLaughlin (2010, p. 2) provides a comprehensive definition of the term **capacity** by asserting that it "includes the legal, institutional, organizational, and administrative conditions of potential effectiveness, as well as accessibility and management of human resources, financial support, facilities and maintenance, materials provision, equipment and commodities availability, and all the resources that are essential to carry-out the substantive programme agenda". In other words, capacity includes both 'soft' and 'hard' resources (available in the right mix) necessary to accomplish a task. The 'soft', resources include knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits necessary to fulfill an assignment and the same should be transferable, that is, development. These are resources the study focuses on to arrive at inferences, that is, to what extent has the cross-national learning assessment programmes impacted and successfully transferred knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits to participating countries to conduct own national learning outcome assessments?

How then is capacity development **measured**? Experts generally agree that measuring capacity development initiatives is not easy and quite contextual because "for many areas, there has been no underlying measure of performance" (Wing, 2004, p. 3). However, there ought not be difficulty in measuring capacity development if the foundations for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are well established, the M&E framework well designed and the evaluators have the requisite technical skills (see Mulongo, 2014, pp. 8-9 for details). For instance, in this study, the researcher looked at the number of independent national learning assessments

conducted by each country and availability of technical experts to design future tests as key indicators of capacity.

2.5.1 Capacity of the Three Countries to Conduct Own National Learning Assessments

As reported in section 2.5, this study looked at the number of national learning assessments independently conducted by each country since 2000 and the availability of technical experts and government structures to design future tests as key indicators of capacity. The study also considered the opinions of key experts implementing large-scale learning assessment programmes to arrive at conclusions, that is, conducting independent national learning assessment is not an adequate yardstick.

As far as independent learning assessments is concerned, preliminary review of literature indicates that **Kenya** has been able to conduct own large-scale learning outcome assessment (see section 2.4. for details). Wasanga et al. (2011) indicates that the Ministry of Education in Kenya established the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) which provided the framework for conducting the first national learning assessment (2009-2010). According to KNEC (2010), the NASMLA which is an initiative of the Ministry of Education and KNEC was designated to gather empirical data on educational standards at the national level in order to document the education system's abilities in various skill areas, and to target areas for improvement. The NASMLA was therefore initiated to supplement the national examinations by providing a much needed systematic framework for monitoring learners' progress through each level of the education system. The extent at which this objective has been met is therefore a subject of investigation in this study and the findings were crucial to arrive at inferences pertaining to capacity and culture of learning assessments in Kenya.

In **South Africa**, Buhlungu, Daniel and Southall (2007) identify three main national assessments: the MLA of 1999, Grade 3 Systematic Evaluation of 2001 and the Grade 6 Systematic Evaluation of 2004. The writers assert that though the former was an international assessment framework, its administration in South Africa was adapted in relation to design and the tools used and that the assessment was therefore regarded as being a national tool. More recently, in tandem with international stipulation in favor of standardized learning assessments and structures for sustainability, South Africa initiated the Annual National Assessment (ANA) framework as "a critical measure for monitoring progress in learning achievement as outlined in the Education Sector Plan, *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025"* (DEB, 2013, p. 2). The ANA, initiated in 2011 (Kanjee, 2013) has conducted at least 2 notable learning achievement assessments focusing on "assessing Mathematics and Language competencies, which are regarded as the foundational skills for further learning and teaching" (DEB, 2013, p. 1). In summary, the ANA 2012 results provided an empirical picture of levels of performance in literacy and numeracy at the key transitional stages of Grades 3 and 6 in the primary school, and for the first time in Grade 9. Meanwhile, the ANA 2013 pointed towards an upward movement of test scores for grades 1-6 in reading but the performance of learners was still generally low between the two years, especially so in numeracy (DEB, 2013). In summary, between 1996 and 2007, South Africa witnessed a growing number in large-scale learning assessments and Kanjee (2013) identified at least 12 different types of studies conducted with that period, namely:

a) Grade 9 Longitudinal Study (1996)

b) MLA project (1999)

c) District-wide Reading Improvement Programme (1999)

d) Evaluation of the Quality of Learning Programme (2000, 2001, 2003, 2004)

e) Grade 2 Systematic Evaluation (2001, 2007)

f) Assessment Modeling Initiative (2001, 2002, 2003)

g) Monitoring Trends in Education Quality (2002, 2010)

h) Grade 6 Systematic Evaluation (2004)

i) Primary Mathematics Research Project (2004)

j) Integrated Education Programme Evaluation (2004, 2005, 2006)

k) Assessment of Language and Mathematics Skills (2006)

l) SACMEQ (2001, 2007)

2.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations of the Study

This study is based on two theories which form the conceptual framework for the research:

a) The Theory of Change (ToC)

The relationship between research, policy formulation and practice in education has been high on the agenda of countries for a number of years now. Of significance, the debate and scrutiny has been in terms of the quality, relevance and impact of research on policy formulation and the overall link to improvement in education systems (Witty, 2006). This implies that experts are not satisfied with research for the sake of research but are becoming even keener to see that education research leads to tangible impacts in education. This study is thus premised on this thinking, that is, is there evidence that developments in educational policy, investment and technical expertise (if any) in East and Southern Africa is related to results and recommendations emanating from the cross-national learning assessments? The study therefore proposes to adopt the theories of change/ theory-based evaluation to draw these inferences.

Weiss (1995) defines theory of change as a way to describe the set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to the long-term goal and the connections between policy or programme activities and outcomes that occur at each step of the way. Retolaza (2011, p. 4) on the other hand defines theory of change as "a thinking-action approach that helps us to identify milestones and conditions that have to occur on the path towards the change that we want to contribute to happen". According to Leeuw (undated) these theories express an intervention logic of a policy: policy actions, by investing resources (these are inputs; in the case of this study, we infer inputs to include human labor/expertise and financial resources invested to conduct the cross-national learning assessments). The aim then is to produce planned outputs. The outputs in case of this study could be learning assessment reports and recommendations) through which intended outcomes are derived. Outcomes which refer to people's well-being and progress (which could happen as a consequence of policy action) are expected to be achieved (outcomes in this case denote improved quality of education). Leeuw (undated, p. 3) concludes that "theory based evaluation explores the mechanisms which policy makers believe make the policy effective and compares these with research based evidence".

The theory of change is an important approach in evaluation complex and dynamic social programmes and interventions (Van de Westhuizen & Abrahams, 2002). Among its benefits, the theory of change, "reduces the problems associated with causal attribution of impact, in that it clarifies, at least at a theoretical level, the links between cause and effect" (Van de Westhuizen & Abrahams, 2002, p. 3).

This study adopted the theory of change fundamentally because many policies and practices have been adopted in pursuit of EFA goals, varying from country to country and "an

assessment is required to determine the outcomes of these policies" (World Bank, 2004, p. 4). One such practice is the adoption of cross-national learning assessments as a proxy indicator for quality of education and the findings from these utilized to inform policy and education programmes (Wagner et. al., 2012). As EFA comes to the homestretch (of 2015), it is important that stock is taken of the impact of the work already done. This study adopted the theory of change, a tool that has been useful in analyzing *change* in the development arena. In other words, the study analyzed the policies that had been put in place, the recommendations that had been effected, the capacities that had been built and educational developments that had occurred, that are attributable to the participation in the cross-national learning assessments by Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

However, the politics of *attribution* and *contribution* are inevitable whenever adopting the theories of change: For the current study, outcomes that can be *attributed or* have been *contributed* by the cross-national *project* were considered as key outcomes of participating in the learning literacy assessments. In contrast with attribution (claims a liner relationship), Department for International Development (2012, p. 38) asserts that 'contribution', only makes a 'donation' causal claim about the results of an intervention which "usually involves verifying a theory of change in a way that takes account of other influencing factors and thus reduces uncertainty about the contribution the intervention is making". In other words, if there was evidence of policies directly/indirectly influenced by participating in the cross-national learning assessments or evidence of exchange of capacities and sustainable culture of monitoring learning outcomes (referred to as results, outcomes or impacts in this study), then the researcher was to conclude that there have been discernible results as a consequence of

participating in the cross-national learning assessments by the three countries in this study. The rationale for adopting this approach (both contribution and attribution), is to demonstrate unequivocally that development aid/interventions work, that is, the current study goes further than just delineating causality to explaining the nature of results. Department for International Development (2012) asserts that if the purpose of an evaluation is accountability, then demonstrating causality is adequate but if the purpose is lesson learning, then theory testing is necessary.

Application in the study

In Chapter 6, the researcher has drawn upon the theories of change to argue that participating in the cross-national learning outcome assessments has contributed to developments in education for participating countries and that these developments can be attributed to this participation. The application of the theory of change to analyze the impact of cross-national learning assessments on the dependent variables delineated in this study (policy and curricula formulation, programmes, structures and culture of evaluation) has not been done before. The current study has pioneered this is a potential contribution to the body of knowledge and the practice evaluation.

b) Social Development Theory

According to Beverly and Sherraden (1997), social development is the integration of improvements in human welfare with economic development and widespread participation in the process with proportionate enjoyment of the benefits of development. Midgley (2014, p. 13) defines social development as “a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic multifaceted

development process". The writer further observes that the concept has to do with social investment and the way this promotes the functioning of individuals, families and communities. Such investment should also be seen to generate benefits/returns to the economy and the wider community (Midgley, 2014). Abdi and Guo (2008) takes a much more holistic view and postulate that social development encompasses all forms of socio-economic, political, educational, technological, emotional advancements that impact people's lives.

While discussing social development and its relationship with social justice, Beverly and Sherraden (1997) contend that most countries, both developed and developing have failed to balance between economic and social development leading to 'distorted, uneven, unbalanced development', characterized by skewed distributions of income and wealth, absolute poverty, inadequate housing, poor health status, and the exclusion of certain segments of the population from full participation in development. Pundits however agree that a quality education is a great equalizer, able to address these socio-economic imbalances and that investment in "education and skills training are appropriate ways to link improvements in human welfare with economic development'' (Beverly & Sherraden, 1997 p. 2) and that literacy development, especially in foundational years, is a social justice and human rights issue (Mulongo, 2013c).

Social development also seeks to promote participation of people in development by removing obstacles that impede this participation. This is achieved through strategies that target and include excluded sections of the population (such those with disabilities, poor families and women) in the life of the society. To this extent, Midgley (2014) advocates for policies that address discriminatory practices and promote affirmative action and social rights. By addressing these obstacles through proper legislation and enforcement of rights, Midgley (2014) contends

that these disadvantaged, discriminated and oppressed groups can be brought into the development process and also enjoy the benefits thereof. One of the seven practical strategies that Midgley (2014) proposes includes the human capital strategy which promotes investment in skills and knowledge through quality education that consists of sufficient components on literacy training. The other strategies include the social capital and community development, employment and decent work, microenterprise, social protection and social planning. These are the exact issues that this study is promoting. Moreover, if the goal of social development is to produce social well-being that makes people capable of acting and making their own decisions (Homfeldt & Reutlinger, 2008), then quality education that ensures that learners gain the necessary grade level competencies in literacy (as already shown, this affects their grades in other subjects, retention rates and lifetime earnings) is a key ingredient/element of social development in any country.

Beverly and Sherraden, (1997) aptly summarize social development as applied in this study by observing that progress in human conditions should form the main objective of economic development and result in increase in the capacities of individuals to lead full, meaningful, productive, and self-fulfilling lives.

Application in the study

As demonstrated under section 1.3, a lot of available literature tends to regard *education* across different societies as uniform in terms of quality. There is also limited literature that explores the nexus between quality education (as denoted by improved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life-skills). Using the theory of social development, the current study endeavors to address this gap by exploring the role of quality education in social development.

Research indicates that education inequality (in terms of access, completion and pass rates, gender parity, learning/teaching facilities, teachers) between the rich and the poor, urban and the rural is overwhelming in Kenya (Mulongo, 2013b; UNESCO, 2005), Tanzania (Corno & Deana, 2005) and South Africa (Barwell, Bishop, Erduran, Halai, Iyamuremye, Nyabanyaba, Rizvi, Rodrigues, Rubagiza & Uworwabayeho, 2007). But more importantly, these authors reveal that literacy skills of school going children in these countries is also determined by the social economic and education levels of parents (Corno & Deana, 2005), gender of the learner (Runo, 2010), prior attendance of preschool and the region of origin (Mulongo, 2013c). For instance, Barwell et al. (2007) analyzed the status of learning outcomes in **South Africa** and observed that the quality of literacy competencies and satisfactory completion rates has remained unaffected despite the significant investment of resources since 2002. The authors assert that the situation is especially grim for the poorest quintiles of South African schools.

In **Kenya,** the 2007 SACMEQ survey established that since 2000, only three regions in Kenya (out of a total of eight) registered improvements in reading and only one region improved in average numeracy scores. Most of the poor performing regions were marginalized arid and semi-arid counties of North Eastern, Coast and Rift valley. Furthermore, in the Uwezo (2012) study, the top five positions were dominated by counties in Central Region and Nairobi while the bottom five positions were taken by the poorer arid counties. The Uwezo (2011) study also established that children in urban and private schools (which mostly serve the upper and middle class families) performed better than public rural schools.

Moreover, Uwezo (2012) concluded that the proportion of children passing both the literacy and numeracy tests in non-poor households in Kenya and **Tanzania** were approximately

double the pass rate of children in ultra-poor households. Still in Tanzania, by comparing mainland Tanzania with Zanzibar and rural with urban areas, Corno and Deana (2005) established that higher income inequality decreased both the probability to go to school and a child's education level, that the level of parental education had a greater impact on the child's educational achievements. The same study observed that the survival probability of a child to the first birthday was correlated with the parents' education level and that this level also determined the family's investment in health services and the child's tuition (Corno & Deana, 2005, p.12). Studies have also demonstrated that children from rural areas and low-income families in developing countries have poor access to equipment, books and facilities that are necessary to promote literacy (Smith & Dixon, 1995). These issues are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 with the researcher arguing that investing in sound policies and literacy programmes accrue immense benefits at the micro-level (individual) and macro-level (community/national), and that literacy is central to social development and at the core of profound human and historical developments.

In addition, drawing upon the ideals of social development, the researcher argues that quality education is a social justice issue and that access to school is no longer adequate in itself and should not be misconstrued with learning (Todaro & Smith, 2011). If *Social justice,* as used in this study, denotes upholding a just society; valuing diversity, promoting equity and equality, eradicating discrimination of all forms, supporting human rights and a fair allocation of resources is vital (Beverly & Sherraden, 1997; Robinson, 2009). From the previous discussion, it is apparent that children from rural/marginalized areas, public schools, poor families and parents with

limited education can have their rights infringed. These rights include access to quality education that promotes literacy development.

If education is 'a great equalizer', then with the evidence presented through the learning assessments conducted, education is doing the reverse by serving to widen the social economic gap between the rich and poor, regions, girls and boys, private and public schools in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. This is especially so as a learner's competency in literacy is strongly correlated with success in other school subjects, completion and repetition rates (Morrow, 2005; Mulongo, 2013c; Runo, 2010) and that children disadvantaged by the education system will ultimately be condemned to lesser professional and employment prospects (Mulongo, 2013c). This is a social justice issue and denying children, especially from poor families, rural or public schools the opportunity to access quality literacy enhancing education is contravening the right to education as embodied in Article No. 26 of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), EFA principles and Millennium Development Goal No.2 on the achievement of universal primary education (United Nations, 2015). In this study, it is argued that governments that are striving to improve the policy environment and technical ability of its citizens as far as literacy development and programmes is concerned, are directly enhancing social justice and guaranteeing access to certain forms of human rights.

Human capital development is a critical element in social development and central in this study. As Midgley (2014) observes, human capital is often associated with the acquisition of skills and knowledge through investment in education. In addition, in its broadest definition, human capital pays attention to social justice obstacles such as gender discrimination, child labor, inequality, lack of access to quality education and health. Midgley (2014) further observes that

governments and international development organizations generally agree that formal education promotes social and economic development and that there is a strong correlation between education and subsequent employment and career success (Mulongo, 2013b). However, studies have shown that many developing countries have paid too much attention to 'quantity of education' (with impressive enrolments recorded -UNDP, 2010), but with many children, especially in rural areas or from poor backgrounds, scoring very low on standardized literacy assessments. Therefore, based on human capital development theory, the research has argued that investment in progressive policy reforms and capacities to enhance literacy development is a direct investment in individuals and the nation at large.

c) Knowledge Transfer; a conceptual framework

According to UNESCO (1994), the primary objective of the EFA learning achievement project is to help countries design their own assessments models, appropriate and flexible and country specific (taking into account the different educational needs. This informs one of the research questions in this study, that is, to what extent has the participation in large-scale cross-national learning frameworks been successful in equipping educationists with technical expertise (what is referred herein as knowledge transfer) to design and implement own national learning outcome assessments?

The concept 'technical knowledge transfer' spans many disciplines, from science, to communication, sociology, education and anthropology (Bozeman, 2000, pp. 3-4). It refers to "the transmission of know-how to suit local conditions, with effective absorption and diffusion both within and across countries (Chung, 2001; Kanyak, 1985). Management on the other hand refers to "intentional, goal oriented interaction between two or more persons, groups or

organizations in order to exchange technological knowledge and/or artifacts and rights." (Amesse & Cohendet, 2001, pp. 2-3). This study operationalized the orientation adopted by Kanyak (1985) and Chung (2001) to refer to knowledge transfer as the transmission of the technical know-how (influence changes in curriculum to include sufficient components on literacy and equipping of national counterparts to design and implement their own assessments) from the 'agents', that is, the international cross-national frameworks (under the EFA umbrella) to participating countries. Moreover, such transmission should be sensitive to local conditions (education systems/language/mode of instruction) and the instructors (teacher training institutions/teachers) should be well equipped with this capacity. With this understanding, the diagram below (Figure 1), shows the researcher's conceptualization of the key variables necessary for the transfer of technical skills (Research Question 2).

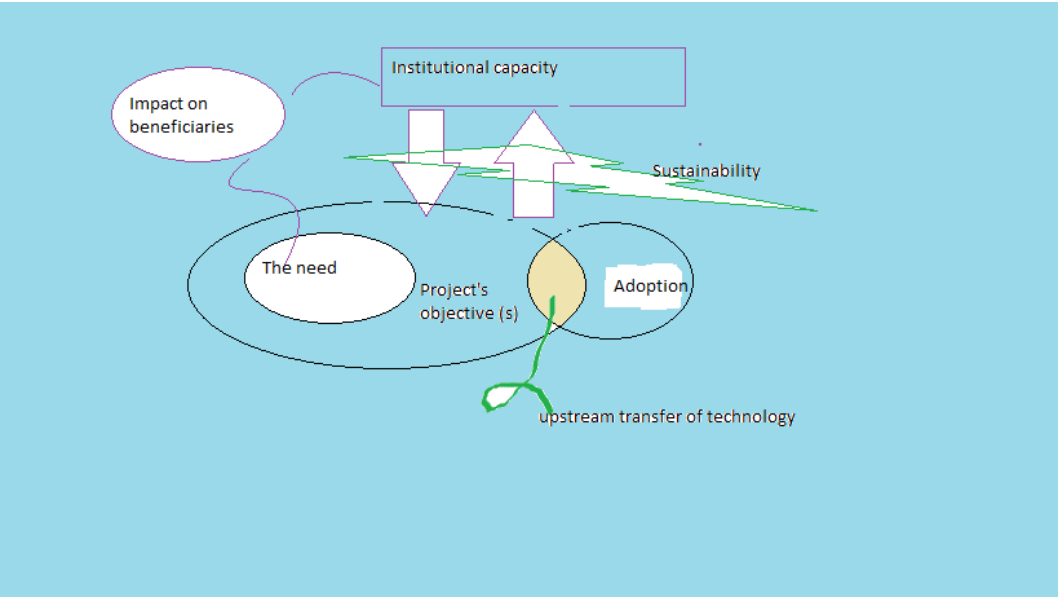

Figure 1: Conceptual framework on transfer of knowledge/capacity – *(source – researcher)*

From Figure 1, the following can be inferred:

i. The first inner circle. This circle represents the actual need. In essence, the design of any project should be informed by the need in the society/community (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995) –in this case, the need for better learning outcomes and technical capacity by nationals to implement autonomous literacy assessments-however, the community (countries participating in the cross-national learning assessments) are better placed to define the need. This need therefore determines the design of the project and not the other way round (Mbabu, Peixoto, Mulongo, Munyua, Ojwang & Low, 2014)

ii. The outer circle: This circle represents the objective of the project, in this case, the desire to acquire the knowledge. As demonstrated, this objective(s) is determined 'bottom-up/inside out' as opposed to the "traditional model of knowledge transfer." According to Amesse and Cohendet (2001), the traditional model of knowledge transfer focuses on a well-defined technology moving from one well-defined economic unit (firm department, lab, firm or country) to another well-defined economic unit.

iii. Black circle (adoption). The assumption often made is that a well-defined technology arising from a genuine need and motivated by a bottom-up/inside out approach stands a better chance of adoption by the organization.

iv. The little greyish circle superimposed on the adoption circle, otherwise duped "upstream enhancement". As opposed to the traditional model of knowledge transfer, Amesse and Cohendet (2001, p. 16) proposes the adoption of 'knowledge-based' knowledge transfer model whereby the main focus is on liberal, but sustained capacity enhancement or "upstream reinforcement of a competence that involves the development of technologies that do not yet exist or should be acquired from outside and have the potential to create radical discontinuities

and the idea is to identify and evaluate quickly what should be bought from outside, how external elements of knowledge should be incorporated into or discarded …. and what type of incentives must be put in place to glue the process". This study therefore seeks to determine the sustainability of the literacy assessment 'technology' by analyzing the culture (whether the country has taken own initiative to conduct a national assessment autonomously, has improved its curriculum to include sufficient literacy component, teacher training colleges have adopted literacy skills in the curriculum) as proxy indicators of an 'upstream, knowledge-based' transfer/adoption of technical skills.

This conceptual framework is based on the researcher's interpretation of Amesse and Cohendet's (2001) model. The framework helped delineate significant variables that were considered as far as the research question 2 is concerned. The elements in the framework are also applied to the findings of the study (Chapter 4, 5 and 6), that is, the study has interrogated the extent to which the participation in the cross-national learning assessments has informed country specific education objectives and the degree to which this participation has fulfilled this need. Moreover, the study has relied on this conceptual framework to interrogate the effectiveness of the down-stream transfer of knowledge, that is, the cascading of capacities from the cross-national learning programmes/frameworks to country specific institutional technical capabilities to design and implement own large-scale assessments. This was done with the view of establishing the relationship between participating in cross-national learning assessments and improvement pedagogy and overall classroom practice.

Limitations of the Theoretical and Conceptual Basis Adopted in the Current Study

The researcher has presented the theoretical basis underpinning the current study, namely, the

theory of change, and the social development theory. The study has adapted the knowledge transfer model as a conceptual framework. The study has adopted these theories cognizant of the weaknesses and debates surrounding each. For instance, the researcher is aware that the theory of social development and the ideas therein are still evolving. Development experts also agree that the principles of economic growth as encapsulated in social development theory do not automatically translate into improved well-being and the benefits of growth are often unequally distributed (Midgley, 1995; UNDP, 1990 cited in Midgley 2014). The study has therefore adopted this theory without problematizing how access to education alone cannot eradicate inequality nor how education alone cannot guarantee well-being.

The researcher adopted the ideas encapsulated in the human capital development approach while fully aware of the wider geo-political arguments and debates about education. In addition to the discussion on how education is propagating inequality, there is overwhelming debate against the human capital development/theory with commentators arguing that education world-wide has been commercialized with governments and individuals investing in education purely for returns, that is, “viewing schooling as something like a machine, which children enter and exit with their human capital appropriately topped up” (Unterhalter cited in Deneulin & Shahani, 2009, pp. 211). Education has been used as a ‘signaling device’ for worker productivity (Strobl, 2004) and for screening purposes, that is, education qualifications have been used to signal ability (and thereby higher wages) without considering the fact that education alone cannot increase a person’s productivity. Moreover, education is not always a socially profitable activity nor rationales public subsidy (Deneulin & Shahani, 2009). As far as the geo-political debate is concerned, while relying on the dependency theory, Noah and Ackstein

(1985, cited in Crossley & and Watson, 2003) postulated that that the world's present arrangement can be validly perceived as a hegemony by the 'haves' nations over the 'have-nots'. Within nations, the arrangement is seen as the domination of 'have' over 'have-not' classes and interests (Teeomm, 2012).

Dependency theorists argue that the principal aim of education is to promote and maintain this arrangement, with the developed countries seeking to dominate the poor countries and the rich subverting the rights of the poor through education (Faegerlind & Saha, 2016; Ferraro, 2008; Grigoenko, 2007). According to these theorists, education is designed to transmit a set of ideological characteristics favorable to the maintenance of dominant groups and help reproduce the division of labor in society. The authors further argue that education has been used as a tool of oppression by subordinating indigenous cultures (Ferraro, 2008; Teeomm, 2012). Burns (2000) asserted that western education in form, structure, ideology and objective is hostile to native cultures interfering with the latter's sovereignty, military organization and economic well-being. Burns (2000) observed that before colonization and hence western education, natives had their own forms and systems of education. The author further argues that western education has only served to impose domination through imposition of subtle but firm ethnocentric and self-serving values and systems and thus impacting negatively on natives' self-esteem and pride, have interfered with family setups thereby resulting in family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse. Burns (2000) concludes that this has been subtly legislated through policies and institutional behaviors that can be described as hegemonic, prejudicial, racist, discriminatory and oppressive in character, intent and effect. Education has therefore been used to reproduce these through self-centered curricula with schools acting as active agents of this

negative ideological western hegemony.

However, a critical analysis of these arguments reveals that they are rarely backed by empirical data, are simplistic and fundamentally flawed. It is only Sica and Prechel (cited in Altbach, 2012) who scientifically examined the role of hegemonic economic power in shaping education and found a strong and statistically significant relationship between the level of development on various variables of education measures. However, even with these findings, their arguments still lean more towards supporting the human capital theory than dependency. All the other proponents of dependency have based their arguments on unsubstantiated sources and non-empirical data. Moreover, the proponents of the dependency theory oversimplify a complex phenomenon. They also, without evidence, seem to underscore that there is some maleficent force at work on a global scale, generating negative results meant to oppress the masses at the expense of a well-orchestrated center, controlling others like puppets. The researcher finds these assertions extreme.

Therefore, arguments that education is being used as a tool for oppression by subordinating indigenous cultures and the application of dependency and reproduction theory in education today is diversionary. This distracts educationists from the real issue of dependency and reproduction as applied by African leaders in controlling economic benefits, at the extreme detriment of the masses (periphery). That is, in most post-colonial African countries, there is a conspicuous group of political elites exploiting a periphery, usually with a dominant class of families or caste. These ‘elites’ use economic factors of production and not necessarily schools to propagate themselves thus increasing the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. The limitations of the theories of change are discussed under section 6.1.

In summary, although these theories possess inherent weaknesses, their strengths and applicability are wide. While these theories have been adopted in the current study, relevant opposing debates have been given equal weight.

2.7. Summary of the Chapter

A review of the literature has been provided in this chapter. The chapter begun with an examination of debates surrounding cross-national learning assessments before highlighting the significance of the same. The analysis shows that cross-national learning assessments provide participating countries with an empirical framework for decision making especially on policy issues related to the quality of learning. Moreover, cross-national learning assessments allow for the benchmarking of student performance against corresponding standards and comparison with other countries which are similar at a socio-economic. The assessments also inform and motivate investments in education, encourage curriculum reforms, inform the review of training programmes and expose disparities in school resources, school organization and teaching practices. Furthermore, they provide data for monitoring of Education for All (EFA) goals.

However, the literature on the significance of the cross-national learning assessments presented in this chapter is rather generic and does not identify the specific policies, curricula, programmes and structures that have been influenced in the countries that have participated in these assessment programmes. The information gap is particularly evident in Africa. The current study is therefore significant as it provides this evidence across three African countries.

The landscape of education policy development in South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania between 2000 and 2015 has been sketched in this chapter. However, the literature on these policy developments does not analyze the challenges and debates on the education policy

environment in the three countries. This gap is addressed by the current study. The chapter has also explored the status of learning outcomes in the three countries and the capacity of these countries to design and conduct independent large-scale national learning assessments.

The theories that underpin the current study have also been presented. These include the theory of change and the theory of social development. A conceptual framework of knowledge transfer is also presented. While discussing these theories, the researcher has attempted to outline the debates and weaknesses surrounding each. However, the application of these theories to discuss the research findings the is presented in Chapter 6. In this chapter, with regards to participation in cross-national learning assessments, the researcher has demonstrated the usefulness of the theory of change in analyzing outcomes of educational interventions. The short-term and long-term social development outcomes of the participation in cross-national learning assessments in relation to the dependent variables is also explored in Chapter 6. These are potentially the main value additions of the current study to the body of knowledge and academic discourse as far as this subject is concerned.

The chapter ended with a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework used in the study. Nevertheless, there is limited information in the literature concerning the impact of the cross-national learning assessments on policy and curricula formulation, capacities, programmes and the culture of monitoring learning assessments. This is the gap that this study sought to address.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research objective and questions are presented at the beginning of this chapter, which covers the research methods adopted in the study. A description is provided of the research design used and details are provided regarding sampling and the sampling procedure as well as the research instruments utilized for the data collection. Steps taken to ensure rigor during and after the data collection, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

3.1. Research Objective and Questions

Using theories of change, the overall objective of this study was to analyze the contribution of cross-national learning assessments in education policy and capacity development in selected East African countries and in South Africa. The study also analyzed the sustainability of the culture of large-scale learning assessments within these countries as a consequence of the capacity gained by participating in cross-national learning assessments.

The study posed the following overarching research questions:

1. To what extent has the participation in cross-national learning assessment programmes motivated regulatory, investment and policy reforms in education in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa? More specifically:
    a) What curriculum reforms attributable to cross-national learning assessments were initiated in these three countries?
    b) Is there evidence of review of teacher training programmes to incorporate components on teaching and assessing literacy?

c) Has there been an increase in allocation of resources specific to literacy programmes in these three countries?

d) What policy reforms attributable to cross-national learning assessments have been initiated?

2. To what extent has the participation in large-scale cross-national learning frameworks been successful in enhancing capacity development / equipping educationists in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa with technical expertise to design and implement their own large-scale national learning assessments?

a) Is there adequate technical expertise and government support structures to design and implement future national learning assessments?

b) Have the sampled countries taken their own initiatives to conduct national learning assessments autonomously?

3. To what extent has the participation in large-scale cross-national learning frameworks been responsible in inspiring a sustainable culture of evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa?

a) What is the expert assessment regarding the commitment and readiness of the three countries to implement own learning assessments?

b) Is there a specific budget set aside by the Ministries of education to conduct national learning assessments?

c) Do the public institutions responsible for monitoring the quality of education in these countries have the commitment and capacity to monitor and sustain a culture of learning assessments?

3.2. The Participating Countries

Kenya

Kenya, with a population of at least 41 million people lies along the equator on the east coast of Africa. The country covers an area of around 582,000 square kilometers. The country borders Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia to the north, Uganda to the west, and Tanzania to the south. The official languages in Kenya are English and Kiswahili (Nuffic, 2015).

Before gaining independence in 1963, education in Kenya was stratified along racial lines, namely, for Africans, for Asians and for Europeans. Independence saw wide ranging reforms in the education system, with the introduction of a single and uniform education system for all races. Moreover, the period witnessed reforms in the subject content offered. The content was tailored to promote indigenous culture and national cohesion. Between 1964 and 1983, the education system was based on a 7-4-2-3-system, that is, seven years of primary, four years of lower secondary (form 1 -4), two years of upper secondary (form 5-6), and three years of university (Wanjohi, 2011). In 1984, this system was replaced with 8-4-4 system. This system consists of 8 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary school and 4 years of higher education. Pupils also attend a mandatory pre-primary school for 2 years before joining the primary level (Wanjohi, 2011). The implementation of the 8-4-4 system has however faced immense challenges related to relevance (Okoth, 2014), cost (Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013), quality (Okoth, 2014), access (UNESCO, 2015) and equity (Kirimi, 2012).

Kenya, whose Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is US$ 1,424 (Focus Economics, 2016) spends about 6.7% of its Gross National Product (GNP) on education. The country funds most of its education budget, with only 4% of the total budget funded through aid (UNESCO, 2015).

However, a big proportion of the education budget funds recurrent expenditures related to free primary education that was introduced in 2003 (UNESCO, 2015). Nevertheless, even with this investment in education, Kenya still faces significant challenges in education (Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013). For instance, even with the free primary education, about one million children are still out of school and the quality of primary education is still low (UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO (2015) further avers that among young men aged 15-29 years who left school after six years of schooling in Kenya, 6% were illiterate and 26% were semi-literate. Young women are particularly affected, with figures showing that 9% were illiterate and 30% semi-literate after six years of schooling. Bunyi et al., (2011) conclude that the access to education in Kenya has not been matched by increase in learning (this issue is discussed in more detail in section 2.4)

In terms of cross-national learning assessments, since 2000, Wasanga and Kyalo (2007) indicate that Kenya has participated in not less than five programmes, namely, Uwezo, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) Monitoring of Learning Achievements in Lower Primary (MALP), Monitoring Learning Achievement(MLA) and Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa (FEMSA).

Tanzania

According to the official government portal, **Tanzania** is a unitary republic composed of two states, Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. The Republic of Tanzania was established 1964, after gaining independence from Britain in 1961. The National language is Kiswahili. However, English is widely used in official communication. The United Republic of Tanzania is a nation in East Africa and is bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west, and Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the south. The

country covers approximately 945,000 square kilometers, with a total population of approximately 47 million (World Bank, undated). The Per capita income is about US$950 (World Bank, undated).

In terms of education, historically, education in Tanzania was predominantly informal before the advent of colonialism (Weaver, 2011). The western formal education system was introduced in Tanzania during the 1840s, beginning with Christian missionary schools that expanded rapidly with colonization. The education system at this period was run by the British administration and was characterized by racial stratification and segregation. The system was also marked by inequalities between schools for black Africans, European and Indian schools. With independence, Tanzania retained the western formal education system but attempts were made to reform and restructure so as to make it more equitable, culturally relevant and more beneficial to Tanzanian citizens (Weaver, 2011). The post-independence reforms in education were focused on transforming education as a solution to the manpower shortage that faced the country. This entailed the vocationalization of the curriculum in the context of the socialist philosophy of *Ujamaa* (Weaver, 2011).

Tanzania was among the first East African countries to introduce universal primary education in the early 1970s (Kassam, 1994; Mushi, 2009, cited in Wandela, 2014). Another important feature of education during this period was the promotion of Kiswahili language as the medium of instruction in school (Wandela, 2014). The education system in Tanzania is based on a 7-4-2-3-system, that is, seven years of primary, four years of lower secondary (form 1 -4), two years of upper secondary (form 5-6), and three years of university. Basic education also consists of 1-2 years of pre-school.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics and Office of Chief Government Statistician (2014), the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in primary schools in Tanzania is approximately 77 percent (86 percent in Zanzibar and 77 percent in mainland Tanzania/Tanganyika). However, even with free primary education, about 13% of children of school age still do not enroll. Moreover, the wastage rate is high, with less than 10% of those that join the formal system of education eventually completing the A-level. In terms of expenditure, Tanzania's budget on education to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio reached 23.9% during the 2015/16 fiscal year, from 21.4% in 2011/12 (UNESCO, 2015; UNICEF, 2016). Unfortunately, 95% of this allocation funds recurrent expenses (UNESCO, 2015).

In terms of learning outcomes, educationists indicate that Tanzania performs modestly by international standards. This conclusion has been made by the various cross-nation learning assessments that have been conducted in the country. The assessments include the annual learning assessments by Uwezo, SACMEQ II and SACMEQ III. Moreover, performance on national examination has kept dropping since 2006, with barely 50% of the students sitting the O-levels examinations passing, implying that too few leave the cycle with an adequate level of mastery of the programme (UNESCO, 2011). A detailed analysis of the status of learning outcomes in Tanzania is found in section 2.4.

A number of challenges besiege the education sector in Tanzania. The challenges include complaints that tertiary institutions are producing poor quality graduates, inadequate qualified science teachers, science books, and other learning resources. Moreover, the teacher-student ratio is too high (Wandela, 2014).

South Africa

According to the official government website, **South Africa** occupies 4% of the Africa's continental landmass, covering an area of 1 221 040 square kilometers. The country is located on the southern tip of the African continent and is bordered to the north by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It encompasses the independent kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland and is flanked by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Indian Ocean on the east. The country's GDP is approximately USD$ 300 billion (OECD, 2016).

Prior to abolition of apartheid in 1994, education in South Africa from 1948 was racially unequal (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). Schools serving the white students were well-resourced while those serving Africans were under-equipped of qualified teachers, learning facilities, teaching and learning resources (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The period 1994-2011 witnessed new reforms in education, motivated by the need to abolish the policy of apartheid and its effects (Fiske & Ladd, 2004) taking into consideration the diverse cultures, different backgrounds of learners and values (Mouton et al., 2012).

Among the education reforms introduced post-apartheid include the abolishing of the existing racially-defined departments of education and establishing a single national education system in tandem with the new constitution (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Other reforms were the restructuring of the 18 racially-divided departments into nine new provincial Departments, the introduction of the Curriculum 2005 and the replacement of text-books with work-books (Mouton et al., 2012). The new curriculum was however faced with several challenges related to the cost of implementation, lack of stakeholder support and inadequate teacher preparedness to implement it. The curriculum was also said to have shifted away from the crucial basics of literacy resulting in most learners at university level struggling to acquire course related

competencies (Mouton et al., 2012). These and other challenges led to the introduction of the revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002), which is not curriculum, but an attempt to streamline and strengthen Curriculum 2005. According to the Department of Basic Education (2010), the Revised National Curriculum Statement embodied the vision for general education to move towards a liberating, nation-building and learner-centered outcomes-based initiative. Other developments in education in South Africa are discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.

In terms of expenditure, South Africa allocates the highest resources to education compared to other African countries. For instance, in the 2013/14 budget, the country allocated 19.7% of total government expenditure on education, an equivalent to 6.5% of GDP. However, even with this investment in education, challenges related to quality persist (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Mouton et al., 2012). In terms of learning assessments, South Africa has participated in at least six cross-national learning assessments. The six cross-national learning assessments include SACMEQ I and II, TIMSS (1995, 1999, 2003) and PIRLS of 2006 (Kanjee, 2013). In addition, the country has participated or independently conducted at least 16 national large-scale learning assessments. Both the cross-national and national large-scale assessments have established that the status of learning outcomes in South Africa is low (Kanjee, 2013).

3.3. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative multi-*case study* research design to analyze, explore and describe policy changes, capacities and the adoption of a culture of evaluation in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa; as a direct consequence of participating in the cross-national

learning literacy assessments. Data were collected by utilizing key informant interviews and content analysis of policy documents.

Selecting the countries that have participated in have participated in cross-national learning assessments is the central element that premised the choice of the theory of change for this study. The Department for International Development, (2012) observe that theory-case-based approaches are especially useful at explaining how output versus outcome relate and how causal factors combine. The theory of change also expounds on the logical arrangement factors and assumptions that explain the contribution of an intervention. This was the key focus of this study, namely, using theories of change to explain the contribution of the intervention (participating in cross-national learning assessments) and outcomes (policy change, culture of evaluation and capacities to conduct own literacy assessments). The cases included in this research project are the countries sampled for the study. The criteria for sampling these countries is explained under 3.4. However, if resources were available, a census of all countries that have participated in cross-national learning assessments would have been preferable/ideal. The intervention is the participation in cross-national learning assessments and the outputs being policy interventions institutionalized.

The components of the study design are summarized in Figure 2. A step-by-step description of these components is provided in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

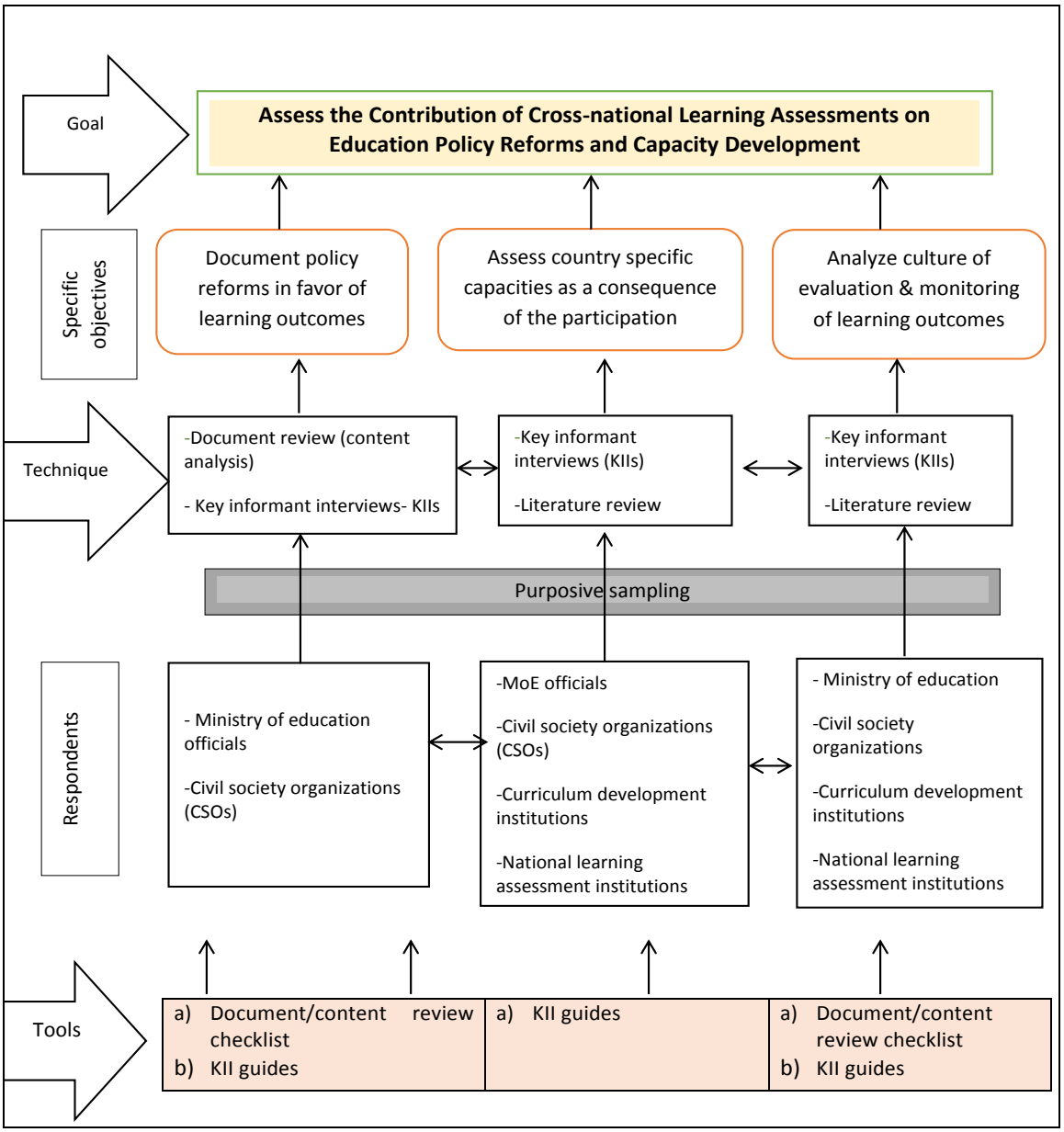

Figure 2: The components (design) of the study

The case study research design has various weaknesses, namely lack of rigor/precision, the design provides a weak basis for generalization and it can generate too much information making it cumbersome to read (Curtis, Murphy, & Shields, 2014; Zainal 2007). Section 3.7. highlights how some of these weaknesses were mitigated in this current study.

3.4. Sampling

At least three countries participating in the cross-national learning assessments in Africa were purposively selected to participate in this study. Ideally, all the countries participating in cross-national learning assessments (as a response to the Dakar Framework of Action of 2000) should be evaluated even as the Dakar Framework of Action comes to the end of the 2015 deadline. Of note is also that the World Bank study which provides the most relevant evaluation data was published in 2004. It is therefore apparent that there is lag in time, necessitating follow-up studies. However, researching all of these countries was beyond the scope of the current study. The study therefore sampled at least two countries from East Africa and one from the Southern African region; Kenya, Tanzania and South-Africa. The researcher relied on three inclusion criteria to select these three countries: a) the country has participated in the cross-national learning assessment (s) b) there was a lag in time since the last evaluation was conducted and c) that the country was convenient for the researcher to access.

As noted in Chapter 2, literature emanating from Tanzania on this particular topic is relatively scanty. This study therefore presented an opportunity to bridge this gap by critically documenting and assessing progress made in Tanzania. South Africa provided an important comparative opportunity between the East African representatives (Kenya and Tanzania) and the southern African block.

Various institutions/organizations were considered as central to provide data/information to fulfill the objectives of this study. These include National and International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implementing cross-national learning

assessment programmes, Ministries of basic education, national examination councils/institutions and institutes of curriculum development in these three countries. The basis of selecting these institutions is the central role they play in formulating and implementing education policies in any country. Detailed rationale for the inclusion of each of these entities is explained in Table 1 and in Appendix 1. Therefore, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were adopted to select and interview the representatives from these institutions/organizations. In total, 17 key informant interviews were conducted (5 in Kenya and 6 a piece in Tanzania and South Africa).

Table 1: Rationale for interviewing the respective key informants

Participant		Objective(s) for interview	Department
Ministry/Department of education	i.	Identify policies established and implemented to address literacy challenges and how these were influenced by cross-national learning assessments	Directorate of Policy and Planning
	ii.	Establish successes and challenges in implementing the policies (if any)	
	iii.	Identify curriculum and teacher development initiatives to mitigate low levels of literacy	
	iv.	To comment on budgetary allocations to continue implementing national learning assessments	
	v.	To comment on the implementation of recommendations from cross-national learning assessment programmes	
b) National Examination Council/institution	i.	To analyze the availability of skilled manpower to design and conduct own national learning assessments	Department of Research
	ii.	To evaluate commitment for continued learning evaluations at the country level, including budgetary allocation	
	iii.	To comment on the implementation of recommendations from cross-national learning assessment programmes	
c) Civil society organizations implementing national learning assessment programmes	i.	Analyze the skill level (capacity) of the country to design and conduct own national learning assessments	Program implementation Department
	ii.	Corroborate information on the readiness and commitment of the country/MOE to continue implementing learning assessments	
e) Institutes of curriculum development	i.	Comment on the effects of cross-national learning assessments on policy and capacity development	Curriculum development
	ii.	Assess the suitability of the teacher training curriculum to equip teachers with skills to teach and assess literacy skills effectively	
	iii.	Analyze the readiness and commitment of the country/MOE to continue implementing learning assessments	

3.5. Data Collection Technique and Procedure

This sub-section highlights the data collection techniques/procedures and the instruments for data collection. The two main data collection methods that were employed in the study, namely

semi-structured interviews with key informants and summative content review of policy documents are described here. The procedure used to collect the data is also elaborated:

3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews: key informants

The researcher settled on this technique due to its suitability in achieving the objectives of the study. For instance, the semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to prepare well in advance and provided the informants with the freedom to express their views in their own terms in breadth and depth they wanted. Additionally, the face-to-face semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain participants' trust and cooperation through establishing a relationship with them. This relationship enabled the researcher to probe and therefore obtain in-depth information (Maree, 2007). This interaction also provided the researcher the opportunity to ask detailed information and the informants had the opportunity to ask for clarification. This interaction therefore enabled the researcher to ask specific questions to elicit information that would best assist the participant to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2007). The main weakness of this technique is the amount of data generated and the expertise it requires to analyze the findings. This is discussed in section 3.6.1.

Procedure used to access participants

To access the participants, first, the researcher wrote letters to the heads of each institution/Department requesting permission to conduct the study (Appendix 10 -12). In the letters, the researcher specified the aim of the study and information was provided on what participation in the study would entail. The ethical principles that would be adhered to during the interview and the thematic areas the interview would cover were also outlined in the letter. The letter invited prospective participants for the interview at a date and venue convenient to the

participant (only one participant was required from each institution/Department). Following the delivery of the letters, in some instances, the researcher was called for a meeting to further explain the study and propose the most suitable staff to interview. In others, the institution readily accepted and proposed the most suitable staff, venue and date for the interview. The permission was either verbal or written. On the day of the interview, prior to asking questions, the researcher reiterated the ethical guidelines (see 3.7.1) and requested the participant to sign the consent form (Appendix 13). The duration of each of the interviews was about an hour and consent was obtained to audio-record these interviews (please refer to Appendix 14).

3.5.2. Summative content review

The use of summative content review assisted the researcher to extract meaningful themes from key education documents related to policy and curriculum, as well as technical and strategic papers. The criteria that were followed in identifying the education policy and strategic documents to review included, either: a) the policy document or strategic paper was cited by a key informant, attributing its formulation or content to cross-national learning assessment program; b) the policy document or strategic paper cites cross-national learning programs; c) was formulated between 2000 and 2015. The period 2000 – 2015 is important because it is the period that was designated for the achievement of Education for All goals (UNESCO, 2006) with the cross-national learning assessments implemented under this auspice acting as a mechanism to provide data for monitoring Education for All goals. Additionally, the cross-national learning assessments were meant to inform policy-making and curriculum reforms (UNESCO, 2005). This study therefore covers an important epoch and comes at the end of the Education for All period set for the achievement of the education goals. It therefore

provides a review of the outcomes of participating in cross-national learning assessments as related to Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

Summative content analysis is one of the approaches in content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A detailed explanation is available in Section 3.6.2. on how this technique was applied in this study. Summative content analysis has a number of advantages, namely, it is credible, adheres to internal consistency, it is not obtrusive, it is non-reactive and provides quick insight into how words have been used in the broader context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, as an approach in content review, it has limitations as well. For instance, thematic analysis has low interpretative ability beyond mere description especially if not utilized within an existing theoretical framework and it can be limited by an inattention to the broader meanings present in the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Procedure used to obtain the policy documents

The study used two techniques to identify and determine what education policy documents to review. First, for attribution/contribution purposes, the key informants were asked to identify the policy and curriculum reforms that had taken place between the year 2000 and 2015 that could be attributed to cross-national learning assessments (see Appendix 6-8). In case there were any reforms, the participants were then required to list the policy or strategic documents that had been formulated. The researcher then requested the informants for copies (soft of hard copies) of the said policy instruments. Secondly, the researcher conducted a document review of literature and academic writing accessed from peer reviewed journals and books on the topic of relationship between cross-national learning assessments and education policy and

practice. This exercise was meant to identify any specific policy instruments that could have been cited as having been formulated between 2000 and 2015 in response to recommendations or participation in the cross-national learning assessments. Thirdly, the researcher obtained education policy and strategic documents from the Education Ministries or government websites formulated between the year 2000 and 2015.

3.6. Data Collection and Documentation Strategies

The following tools (see Appendices 6-8) were designed to aid in data collection:

1. *Document/content review checklist*. This tool assisted the researcher to focus on the search for meaningful themes during the process of reviewing documents (policy documents, technical papers, official bulletins and so forth). The checklist essentially facilitated responses to questions such as: when was the policy developed? Does the policy document contain specific reference to learning literacy outcomes? What specific areas does the document address? Which education level does the policy cover (preschool, primary, secondary or post-secondary)

2. *Key informant interview (KII) guides.* The key informant guides had two main sections, namely, the demographic section and the section on the outcomes of participating in cross-national learning assessments. The questions focused on the specific objectives of the study, namely, the extent at which participation in cross-national learning assessments had influenced educational policy and curriculum reforms, built technical capacities and enhanced the culture of learning assessments. The following KII guides were used:

    a) KII for senior education officials and national examination

councils/institutions (Appendix 6).

b) KII for curriculum development and public learning assessment institutions (Appendix 7).

c) KII for civil society organizations implementing national learning assessment programmes (Appendix8).

Below is a description of how the data were analyzed.

3.6.1. Analysis and Presentation of Qualitative Interview Data

Not one method of analyzing qualitative interview data is prescribed (Kothari, 2007) but is dependent upon the epistemological position adopted by the researcher (Folkestad, 2008). Folkestad (2008) proposes three steps while Chamberliss and Schutt (2010) outline five steps in conducting qualitative data analysis and interpretation. The researcher adopted a mix of these, which can be summarized into three major steps:

a) *Data were transcribed, collated, classified and summarized*. The researcher transcribed the audio data that was collected, after which the data were coded and categorized into themes (Creswell, 2007), a process which Folkestad (2008) terms as 'data reduction'. Examples of the codes that were generated include literacy, policy and curriculum formulation, learning outcomes, large-scale learning assessment, technical capacity, investment in literacy programmes and so forth. Once the data were coded, themes were developed and tabulated accordingly. The themes captured salient aspects of the data, in relation to the research questions.

b) *The data were examined for relationships to assess how one relationship influenced the other.* At this stage, the researcher examined the data for internal consistency,

extracted important verbatim quotations while comparing the emerging information with the literature (Chamberliss & Schitt, 2010) on that specific topic (in that country).

c) *The researcher then drew conclusions*, which entailed comparing, contrasting, searching for patterns and triangulation (Folkestad, 2008) to authenticate inferences and conclusions by evaluating alternative explanations (Chamberliss & Schutt, 2010). Information at this stage was reviewed against the data that was later generated from the review of policy instruments as discussed below.

3.6.2. Analysis and Presentation of Qualitative Data from Document Review

In this study, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the policy documents. Braun and Clarke (2006) identified seven stages of thematic analysis, namely:

a) *Transcription* – turning audio data into text transcripts.
b) *Reading and familiarization* – getting to be familiar with the data through in-depth revision.
c) *Coding* - identifying phrases/aspects of the data that relate to the research questions or hypothesis.
d) *Searching for themes* – isolating important features that capture or sum-up salient aspects of the data as these relate to the research objectives.
e) *Reviewing themes* – checking to see whether the identified themes fit well with the coded text.
f) *Defining and naming the themes* - stating what is unique and specific about each one theme so as to distill a few short sentences that describe what each theme is all about.

g) *Writing the report* - writing the report by identifying and selecting compelling, vivid examples of text extracts, and relating them back to the research question and literature (Craver, 2014).

Except for the first stage (transcription), because the policy instruments were already in printed form, the research adhered to this framework in reviewing the documents. This analysis and interpretation enabled the researcher to draw tentative conclusions and inferences as guided by the research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). While employing a summative content analysis technique, the researcher developed a tool/checklist (see Appendix 9) to assist with the search for meaningful themes during the process of reviewing the policy documents (policy documents, technical papers, official bulletins and so forth). Key words such as EFA, learning, literacy, reading, numeracy, learning outcomes and learning assessments were used to search the documents for the themes. Once the words were found, the researcher categorized the context in which they appeared into the following thematic areas/questions:

a) When was the policy document developed?
b) What does the policy document say concerning learning assessments, learning outcomes, literacy?
c) Does the document make any specific reference to EFA or any of the cross-national learning assessment frameworks/programmes (such as SACMEQ, MLA, Uwezo and so forth?)
d) How many times are the cross-national learning assessment frameworks/programmes cited in the document?

The researcher developed the tool shown in Appendix 9 to aid in the process of searching for themes (i.e. Stage 4). Appendix 3 provides an example of how two policy documents in Kenya were summarized into logical themes with the assistance of this tool. After thorough review of the data (Stage 6 - an example of the emerging data is presented in Appendix 3), the researcher then developed a note book in which he distilled a few short sentences that described the data in relation to the research questions (Stage 7). In writing the report, the researcher extracted compelling samples of quotations to triangulate the information, gleaned from the key informant interviews and literature (Craver, 2014).

3.7. Rigor of the Study

To facilitate rigor in this study, attention was given to the issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the research. Tierney and Randall (2013) aver that validity in qualitative research has to do with whether what is chosen to study is an appropriate and exact measure of the study as far as the specific objectives are concerned. Meanwhile, they note that reliability is concerned with whether the measures adopted produce similar results over time and by different individuals. Nevertheless, Tierney and Randall (2013) indicate that not all reliable interpretations are valid but that all valid accounts are reliable (see Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). In this study, the researcher consulted widely in the design of not only the study, but also the data collection tools. Data arising from the thematic content analysis of the policy instruments is relatively standard. Any other researcher intending to conduct a similar study will generate almost similar results, with limited variations, if any. This validity is attributed to the careful data processing and analysis that was adopted.

Further, Tierney and Randall (2013) point out that to ensure validity in qualitative

studies, caution should be taken before attempting to generalize findings. They posit that "a case study of one site may lend itself to understanding an issue or organization, but surely no attempt can be made to generalize the findings of such a study" (Tierney & Randall, 2013, p. 14). In adhering to this caution, this study endeavored to situate conclusions within the unique context of each participating country.

Moreover, Tierney and Randall (2013) indicate that validity is difficult to enforce in qualitative studies because qualitative researchers cannot claim absolute uniformity and precision in observation, collection, analysis, and interpretation data. Although this argument is plausible, it is argued that conclusions drawn would nevertheless follow some common pathway despite the lack of uniformity between researchers. For instance, in this study, it is unlikely that the content review of the policy documents would produce different results by other researchers. Also, although the method of analyzing and presenting the data emerging from key informant interviews may differ from one researcher to another, inferences drawn are likely to take a more- or- less similar pattern. The researcher affirms that validity in qualitative research is possible if proper disclosure of the limitations/scope and sample description of the study is done, instruments are carefully selected and applied, data analysis is clear, *truthfulness* is maintained and the objective of the study is clear. These are some of the attributes that the current study attempted to conform to.

Confirmability

A confirmable study is a research that is strictly objective. This means that the interpretation, inferences and conclusions are drawn from the data captured, that the report is based on the participants' views and it is not biased nor influenced in any way by the researcher's own

personal perspective (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). For instance, to ensure that the research is confirmable, direct quotations of participants should be used (Kothari, 2007). In addition, whenever possible, the study report should be shared with the research participants to confirm that indeed the conclusions drawn from the data are accurate. To ensure that the current research is confirmable, direct verbatim quotations of participants are cited. Moreover, the inferences and conclusions were drawn strictly from the available data and are supported by literature. The draft report was also availed to the key informants for review and confirmation. The draft report was also shared with the research assistants for their input to confirm that the conclusions drawn were as accurate as possible.

Reflexivity

The researcher kept a reflective diary throughout the study to record ideas and thoughts as well as reflections regarding experiences. Reflexivity is a technique employed by many qualitative researchers to legitimatize, validate and question research practices and representations. It refers to recognition of 'my place and presence' as a researcher, in the research (Pillow, 2003 p. 13). Moon (2008) avers that reflexivity is particularly important when analyzing secondary level data. This is because in analyzing secondary data, the researcher is faced with the challenge of understanding how the contextual setting may have impacted the original interview.

Moreover, in relation to reflexivity, researchers need to be fully aware of their active role in the construction of knowledge throughout the research process. Therefore, consciously or not, the researcher should be cognizant of the power he/she holds on the subject and the form of content of what the participants recount. In this current study, the researcher actively monitored his role in the production of knowledge and attempted not to let his personal views overshadow

the participants' perspectives, rather giving them primacy throughout. To achieve this, the researcher kept a self-reflective journal which aided him to become critically conscious of any potential biases. Reflections on the process were made in order to make changes whenever necessary, in addition to reflections on his abilities as a researcher (Maree, 2007). Additionally, the notes from the reflective journal formed part of the data review process alongside the secondary data review notes.

3.7.1 Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to various ethical principles in the process of conducting the research. These ethical principles were considered from the conceptualization to the design and execution of the study (Glesne, 2006). The principles included obtaining statutory clearance to conduct the study (Fritz, 2008), full disclosure (Glesne, 2006), confidentiality, informed consent (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheragh, 2014), consent to audio tape the interview, anonymity (Bryman, 2008) and voluntary participation (Kothari, 2007).

Obtaining statutory clearance entails seeking permission from the bodies that regulate the implementation of the research. Full disclosure and informed consent imply that the research subjects have sufficient information to make informed decisions about participating in the study. To facilitate this, information such as the nature of the study, the participants' potential role, the identity of the researcher and the financing body, the objective of the research, and how the results will be published and used should be disclosed (Sanjari et al., 2014). The researcher also ensures that the participants can withdraw from the study at any time and that all risks to the research participants are eliminated (Glesne, 2006). Confidentiality implies that no personal information related to the participants is revealed (Sanjari et al. 2014).

Anonymity and confidentiality ensures that the researcher minimizes the possibility of intrusion into the autonomy of those participating in the research. The following are the steps the researcher took to conform to the ethical principles outlined above:

Obtaining statutory permissions

The researcher obtained ethical clearance to conduct the research from the University of the Witwatersrand's Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) [See Appendix 15, Ethics Protocol number H15/02/19]. Approval was also sought from the research Departments/councils of the participating countries (Appendices 16 - 17). Furthermore, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the respective Ministries of Education /Departments of the participating countries (Appendix 11). The researcher also obtained written or verbal consent from the directors of the relevant education Departments and organizations that eventually participated in the study, before commencing the data gathering process.

Each potential participant received a letter inviting him/her to participate in the study (Appendix 12). In addition to introducing the researcher, the invitation letters contained information such as the purpose of the study as well as the ethics governing the implementation of the study such as voluntary participation, anonymity, freedom to withdraw from participation at any time, access to and safe keeping of the data and access to the results of the research. Participants were requested to indicate their consent to participate in the study by signing a consent participation form (Appendix 13). An additional consent was obtained and for the interviews to be audio- recorded (Appendix 14).

Voluntary participation

As noted above, the researcher provided the participants with detailed information on the

purpose and process of the research to enable them make informed decisions about whether to participate in the study or not. They were also told that they could withdraw at any time from the study, or refuse to respond to certain questions in the interview which they might have found uncomfortable to answer.

Maintaining confidentiality

In this thesis, appropriate measures have been taken to protect confidential information from being identified, such as the names of the participants. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the actual names of the participants. The audio recordings and transcripts have been securely stored with password protection. However, as this is central to the study, the names of the participating countries and of the participating Departments/organizations have been identified in the documentation of the results. The respective participants agreed to this.

Secondary use of records

Policy documents were sourced from the Ministries of basic education and through a search of online data-bases and official government websites of the participating countries. The process of sourcing them is described in section 3.5.2. While much of the documentation is in the public domain such as on websites, since this study also relied on policy documents and related secondary data, permission to use these records was sought from the relevant Ministries of education. The sources used have been appropriately cited, acknowledged and referenced in this thesis (see Cohen et al., 2007; Glesne, 2006).

3.8. Challenges related to the study design

A qualitative case study method as a research design can have low precision power due to the limited sample numbers involved (Curtis, Murphy, & Shields, 2014; Zainal, 2007). This study only

sampled three countries out of the many Sub-Saharan African countries that have participated in cross-national learning assessments. This challenge of the case study design (of the lower sample numbers as an inherent feature of the design) limits the generalizability of the findings of this current research Sayer, 2000).

3.9. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter covered the objectives of the research and the methods that were adopted in the study. It highlighted the general architecture of the study and the rationale for selecting the countries that participated in the research. Individual interviews were conducted with key informants. As part of the data collection procedure, policy documents were sourced from the Ministries of basic education and through a search of online data-bases and official government websites of the participating countries. The chapter concluded with a reflection on the rigor of the study, an elaboration on ethical considerations and the weaknesses of the study design. Findings of the research study are presented in the chapter that follows hereafter (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented and analyzed by country. The policy documents that were cited by informants as having been formulated as consequences of participation in the cross-national learning assessments are described here as well as data emanating from the content review exercise. Where applicable, direct quotations from the policy documents are included to show how specifically the documents address the research questions. A description of the curricula and programmes that have been initiated are presented next. The study analyses the findings in the paradigm of how the formulation of these policy instruments, programmes and capacities can be attributed to the participation in the cross-national learning assessments. To achieve this, the findings from review of the policy documents are triangulated with the findings from the key informant interviews and those drawn from a review of relevant literature.

4.1. Kenya

In Kenya, the researcher reviewed literature, conducted summative content review on policy and strategic documents and interviewed key informants drawn from the Ministry of Education, Research Triangle International (RTI), Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), Africa Population and Health Research Council (APHRC) and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). A summary of the key findings from Kenya are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of key findings in Kenya

Key findings
• At least seven policy/strategic documents were formulated in Kenya, namely (i) Government of Kenya (2005): Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research; (ii) Government of Kenya (2005): The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme - (KESSP) - 2005 – 2010; (iii) Government of Kenya (2008): the Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya; (iv) Government of Kenya (2010): the Task Force Report on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010; (v) Government of Kenya (2012): Sessional Paper, 2012, A policy framework for education and training (vi) Government of Kenya (2013): the Basic Education Act and (vii) Government of Kenya (2013): The National Education Sector Plan 2013-2018; Basic Education Programme, Rationale and Approach • Between the seven policy/strategic documents, a total of 85 specific citations on learning assessment frameworks/programmes was made; (National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) cited 28 times, UWEZO 16 times, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) 13 times, Monitoring of Learning Achievements in Lower Primary(MALP) 13 times, Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) 6 times, Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR) 5 times, Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa (FEMSA) 4 times, Aga Khan-EMACK once). • In response to recommendations/findings from the cross-national learning assessments, Kenya is in the process of reviewing its curriculum. • The capacity of teachers to monitor and assess literacy is inadequate. Their skills in measurement are also limited. • In terms of real investments, at least $120 million has been invested to support the Tusome programme while the learning assessment conducted in 2011 cost $42,000 and the one for 2016 was allocated $ 58,000.

4.1.1. Policy reforms attributable to cross-national learning assessments

Below is a detailed presentation of the findings from Kenya, beginning with policy/strategic documents, the formulation of which is attributable to participation in cross-national learning assessments. Appendix 3 presents some of the policy documents that were analyzed and the results.

4.1.1.1. Government of Kenya (2005): The Session Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research; Meeting the Challenges of Education, Training and Research in Kenya in the 21st Century

According to the Ministry of Education, the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research (Government of Kenya, 2005) was meant to address the challenges of equity, access, relevance and quality. It was also meant to provide a policy framework for the education and training sector in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In addition, the Sessional Paper "aimed at harmonizing various policies, Acts, guidelines and legislations as well as addressing emerging priorities and issues" (Government of Kenya, 2005, Sessional Paper No 1, p. 13). As stated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Government of Kenya, 2005), the Sessional Paper resulted in the adoption of a Sector Wide Approach Programme Planning (SWAP) to the provision of education. This approach brings together diverse actors to support the provision of basic education. It is through the SWAP process that the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), a programme aimed at improving access, equity, quality, retention and quality completion rates both at the primary and secondary school level of education was formulated.

As far as content is concerned, this policy document can be said to be well aligned and is relevant to the research question. It provides clear and succinct observations on the issues of quality, more so, on the importance of measurable learning outcomes. It is also one of the government policy documents that is clear on the need to review the education curriculum in

Kenya to make it responsive to the changing socio-economic needs of the country. The document says the following on this issue:

> Review and update the existing (8-4-4) technical education curriculum to make its content more relevant and its implementation more flexible so as to respond to the changing needs of the industry and general trends in the labor market. The curriculum for this level should also place more emphasis on child-centered approaches in teaching so as to enhance both quality learning achievements and motivation. Currently, teaching in primary schools is dominated by transmissional forms of teaching in which pupils are passive and expected to recall facts when required to (Government of Kenya, 2005, Sessional Paper 1, p. 64).

From this excerpt, one deduces an emphasis on pedagogy that facilitates learning achievements rather than rote learning that is currently a major subject of debate in Kenya. Further, on competence-based curriculum and learning outcomes, the document states that the Ministry of Education (MoE) is committed to improving the quality of learning so that measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy are realized. The document identifies the need for a dynamic monitoring and evaluation system in Kenya. This is essential to facilitate, periodically, monitoring of learning competencies at various grades using established attainment standards. For this to happen, an appropriate assessment tool for monitoring of free primary education is recommended in the document.

Of all the Ministry of Education's policy and strategic documents, this is the first Paper that unequivocally identifies the delivery and the need for continuous monitoring of literacy and numeracy skills as an important indicator of a quality education. In addition, the Sessional Paper

(Government of Kenya, 2005) identifies the strategies and structures needed to sustain the culture of learning assessments. The learning assessments are down-stream (school-based) rather than up-stream (MoE-based). The Paper recommends building the capacity of educationists so that they are able to implement school-based learning assessments, with special attention given to the acquisition and mastery of the language of instruction.

As far as attribution to large-scale learning assessments is concerned, a senior MoE official observed that the formulation of this Sessional Paper (Government of Kenya, 2005) was informed greatly by findings from learning assessments conducted in the country by national, bi-lateral and regional assessment bodies. The participant further confirmed that it is from these proposals that the National Education Sector Plan (2013-2018) was formulated and factored in most of the proposals put forward by the Sessional Paper No. 1 (Government of Kenya, 2005). He reiterated that:

> *In the Sessional Paper, we actually proposed interventions. But as you may be aware, Sessional papers are normally never implemented as they are, so on the basis of that we developed the second sector plan in education which we call National Education Sector Plan that is supposed to run from 2013 to 2018. And in it, we factored in the results of the intervention, I mean the results from research that indicated that we had challenges particularly in early grade reading and numeracy. One big component in the Plan focuses particularly on literacy and numeracy….But the best studies that we could actually say have made a lot of difference are the Uwezo studies…..EMACK also did some studies in Coast. Research Triangle International (RTI) also started their studies- that's when we had inside information and realized that it's possible our children were not getting the*

competencies required. Based on these, we have put in place a lot of interventions (Key informant, MoE Official, August 2015).

Apart from the large-scale learning assessments, the Sessional Paper (Government of Kenya, 2005) also cites EFA by reiterating that the Government of Kenya is committed to international declarations, protocols and conventions as resolved in world conferences on Education For All (EFA) (Jomtien-Thailand, 1990, and Dakar-Senegal, 2000) and to the provision of quality education as a fundamental human right in tandem with the EFA goals.

4.1.1.2. Government of Kenya (2005): The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme

The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) was intended to 'operationalize' the budget for prioritized programmes. When accomplished, it was meant to ensure that the goals and objectives spelt out in the preceding education related policy documents were attained. This is therefore not a policy document as such but a strategic programme. In light of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the KESSP had the broad objective of giving every Kenyan the right to quality education and training through the provision of an all-inclusive quality education.

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, the KESSP document lays out important aspirations. Before laying down the strategies, the document highlights some of the constraints facing the country as far as the achievement of better quality education (learning outcomes) is concerned. Among the key obstacles outlined in the document are the lack of tools to measure learning achievements and absence of an effective national system for monitoring learning achievements at other levels except at the end of the school cycle. Another reason is that even

these public examinations are designed for selection and certification and 'only provide a small measure of learners' achievements/competencies'. (Government of Kenya, 2005 p. 219)

To mitigate these challenges, the document commits the government to provide instructional materials, infrastructure, grants, continued in-service programmes for teachers and the establishment of mechanisms for regular national learning assessments. This is in order to improve the quality of learning outcomes. The document further underscores that one of the objectives for continued teacher in-service programmes is to equip the teaching fraternity with capacity to 'undertake school-based assessment of learning achievements' (Government of Kenya, 2005 p. xvi).

The document further proposes the establishment of the Teacher Management Investment Programme that will help facilitate efficient management and utilization of teachers as critical resources necessary for better learning outcomes in schools. Other strategies laid out in the document include the establishment of the Learning Achievement Monitoring Unit for quality assurance purposes and institutionalization of the culture of monitoring of learning achievements especially at the primary level. The document further proposes that the various learning assessment programmes such as SACMEQ, MLA and MALP should be analyzed with a view to harmonizing them into a coherent national assessment system.

Finally, the document cites initiatives such as SACMEQ (6 times), MLA (6 times), MALP (13 times) and Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa (FEMSA; 4 times). This implies that these cross-national learning assessment initiatives contributed to the shaping of ideas behind the KESSP programme.

4.1.1.3. Government of Kenya (2008): Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya

The Safety Standards Manual (Government of Kenya, 2008) serves as a blueprint for enhancing the safety of schools and school children in Kenya. The manual acknowledges that the safety of the learner is central to the provision of quality education in the country. Section 6.12 of the document is devoted to disaster and emergency preparedness, particularly in ways of handling unforeseen hazards, events and circumstances. The first edition of the policy was published in April 2008.

As far as learning achievement is concerned, the policy draws a correlation between learning outcomes and safety of learners. It observes that the health of learners and their learning achievements are closely related. The document goes further to point out that "good health and nutrition are indispensable for effective learning. Learners can reap maximum benefits from teaching/learning process if they are healthy" (Government of Kenya, 2008, p. 25). Finally, the document outlines the effects of acts of violence among learners through ethnic or land clashes, cattle rustling, cultural practices such as female circumcision on learning outcomes and proposes ways on how this can be addressed.

However, in general, informants indicated that though this manual is important, it does not give much emphasis on learning outcomes. It also does not cite any specific national/regional learning assessment programmes/findings.

4.1.1.4 Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education (2012): Task Force Report on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010: Towards a Globally Competitive Quality Education

This document provides recommendations on how to re-align the Education sector to the Vision

2030 blue print, the Constitution (2010) and the East African Community treaty. Mainly, this Education Task Force Report (Government of Kenya, 2012) addresses the issues of access, relevance, quality, retention, transition, equity, governance and management, in the light of the devolved governments to the County.

As indicated in Chapter 2, this document received significant amount of criticism with the government indicating that most of the recommendations were not possible to implement. However, as shown through literature, education experts disagree with the government's position, indicating that some of the recommendations drawn in the paper are quite progressive. This position was supported by a participant who indicated that the *"recommendations by the task force on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 were very bold and forward looking. Although the government appeared to disagree with the report, with time, it has started implementing the recommendations quietly"* (Key informant, Africa Population and Health Research Council - APHRC- November 2015).

For instance, as far as learning outcomes are concerned, the report notes that access and quality of basic education in Kenya are inversely correlated. The report asserts that "whilst enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels have increased, learning achievements are declining" (Government of Kenya, 2012, p. xxvii). The task force report cites the Uwezo (2011) learning assessment findings as the basis for drawing this conclusion. This indicates that the findings of this assessment informed the deliberations of the task force, which was constituted at the highest policy making levels in education. Agreeing with this observation, a participant postulated that *"recent task force reports such as the report on Realignment of the Education*

Sector to the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 borrow their thinking from findings and recommendations from large-scale learning assessments" (Key informant, MoE Official, August 2015). In addition to relying on learning outcome assessment findings in compiling this report, the task force also acknowledges the guidance on Quality Assurance and Standards it received from the UNESCO EFA Quality Assurance Framework.

The document notes the critical role measurable learning outcomes play in the development of Kenya. The report thus advocates for the provision of quality education and training characterized by improved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, scientific and communication skills. The document proposes that the quality should be enhanced to the extent that the achievement on learning assessments for the country is in the upper quartile on credible cross-national learning assessments by 2017. Further, like the Sessional Paper No. 1 (Government of Kenya, 2005), the Task Force Report (Government of Kenya, 2012) proposes a systematic monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate continuous assessments tests (CATs). This is aimed at monitoring learners' performance and achievements regularly and at all levels. To operationalize this, the report calls for provision of easily accessible (online) standardized items to be used by teachers to assess the competency of learners.

Further, the document aptly observes that the current summative assessment at the end of every education cycle in Kenya does not necessarily measure learners' abilities. It recommends the need to introduce a competency-based-assessment in line with a competency based curriculum. The report further states that assessment should be part of the teaching and learning process. This is a progressive recommendation and has been taken up by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. A participant indicated that "*at the moment, we are in the*

process of developing a competence-based curriculum" (Key Informant, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development-KICD, November, 2015). Overall, the task force offered quite progressive and radical recommendations which, if implemented, would alter the landscape of the education sector in Kenya in a significant way.

4.1.1.5. Government of Kenya (2012): Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012. A policy Framework for Education and Training: Reforming Education and Training in Kenya

The above education Sessional Paper (Government of Kenya, 2012) is a Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) policy document meant to support Vision 2030. The premise is that the foundations for socio-economic transformation is anchored on a progressive ST&I platform. According to the document, the goal of the ST&I policy is to build critical capacity and capability in ST&I that will create change and transform Kenya into a newly industrialized country through the utilization of knowledge as the driving force.

Among the goals of basic education that the policy document outlines include the need to improve the quality of education and training in Kenya until learning outcomes are in the upper quartile on recognized international standardized tests by 2017. The policy document is also candid in acknowledging that despite free primary education, learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills have remained consistently low. The policy document acknowledges that access to education alone is not enough and should be accompanied by improved learning outcomes. To ameliorate the challenge of poor learning outcomes, the policy document commits the government to implement standardized assessment of core learning outcomes, transferable skills and subject related knowledge. The document further recommends the building of the capacity of teachers to develop and use school based learning

assessments. It further proposes the need to establish the Kenya Qualifications Framework for regulating and systematizing the accreditation and assessment of educational programmes. However, the document does not contain specific citation/reference to any national/regional learning assessment framework.

Perhaps as an evaluation of the technical capability and readiness by the country to undertake its own large-scale annual autonomous learning assessments, the policy document observes the following:

> current summative assessment at the end of primary and secondary cycle does not adequately measure learners' abilities while school based assessment is not standardized and does not inform teaching and learning processes in tandem with Vision 2030 (Government of Kenya, 2012, p. 47).

The policy is critical of the school-level Kenya National Examination Council's (KNEC's) examinations. It terms the KNEC exams as uniform throughout Kenya without due consideration of region or the cultural /urban divide. As a recommendation, the policy suggests that the capacity of teachers should be built so that they are able to develop and use school-based assessment of learning achievements. This observation is shared by KNEC who confirm that most teachers lack the requisite skills in measurement (psychometrics). This has affected their ability to design assessments and has thus impacted negatively on the continuous assessments in schools (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2015). Commenting on technical preparedness by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to implement and monitor literacy programmes and the contribution of learning assessment programmes, the participant from the MoE asserted the following:

> *We have already signed a contract with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and through the government, we have contracted Research Triangle International* (*RTI) to provide technical support to implement the programme. For purposes of building capacity and sustainability, we have created a ministry technical team to understudy RTI so that we take over the programme come 2018* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

Moreover, to underscore the contribution of large-scale learning assessments in the formulation of this policy document, a participant asserted the following:

> *In addition to Sessional No. 1 of 2005, findings and recommendations from the large-scale learning assessments further informed the writing of Sessional Paper of 2012* (Key informant Interview, MoE Official, August 2015).

This comment further serves to highlight the contribution of large-scale learning assessments and on education practice in Kenya.

4.1.1.6. Government of Kenya (2013): The Basic Education Act No. 14

The purpose of this Act was to give effect to Article 53 of the Constitution and other enabling provisions; to promote and regulate free and compulsory basic education; to provide for accreditation, registration, governance and management of institutions of basic education; to provide for the establishment of the National Education Board, the Education Standards and Quality Assurance Commission, and the County Education Board. The date of commencement of the Act was 25th January, 2013.

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, the Act established County Education Boards. Among other mandates, these Boards were to monitor assessments in the counties, provide for

education assessment and research centres, and under guidance of the Cabinet Secretary of education, regulate school-based assessments and certification. Still in the spirit of devolution, the Act establishes Education Standards and Quality Assurance Council which, among other functions, is to cooperate with county education boards, to monitor the entire process of assessments and examinations in the institutions of basic education. The Act also recognizes private schooling but gives the Cabinet Secretary the mandate to request private schools to provide evidence that pupils in these schools are achieving grade level competencies in learning outcomes as stipulated on nationally recognized standardized achievement tests.

Moreover, this Act devolves powers of coordinating, managing and monitoring quality of learning outcomes from the central government to the local authorities. The Act does this by establishing new devolved structures all the way to the county level. It is however silent on how these devolved structures will be technically capacitated to deliver this challenging mandate, knowing that delivery, conducting and monitoring of learning assessments is a specialized domain. Commenting on the extent to which large-scale learning assessment influenced this Act, a participant observed the following:

> *The Basic Education Act and Vision 2030 clearly state that the curriculum should be competence-based. While designing the revised curriculum, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should consider this recommendation. But most importantly, the genesis of these recommendations on the need for a competence-based curriculum are the learning assessments such as the English Language Literacy in Kenya project, SACMEQ, Uwezo and Monitoring Evaluation Learning* (Key Informant Interview RTI, November, 2015).

This participant highlights an important link between the recommendations from the large-scale learning assessments (by the English Language Literacy in Kenya project SACMEQ, Uwezo and Monitoring Evaluation Learning), the Basic Education Act and the ongoing curriculum review debate in Kenya (discussed under section 4.1.2).

4.1.1.7. Government of Kenya (2013): The National Education Sector Plan 2013-2018: Basic Education Programme: Rationale and Approach

The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) is a five-year plan (Government of Kenya, 2013) that outlines the education sector reform implementation agenda in six priority areas. The areas are based on challenges affecting the sector and lessons learnt in the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP). The focus areas include sector governance and accountability; access; equity; quality; relevance as well as social competencies and values. Noteworthy features of the NESP include an emphasis on the quality of education to address the challenges arising from the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative in 2003 and the subsequent Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in 2008. The FPE led to an exponential increase in enrolment in both primary and secondary levels without commensurate expansion of supportive resources and quality. For instance, the document decries the need to improve the quality of all aspects of education and training so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved. This is especially so in literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills relevant to the world of work. Other outcomes include social competencies and values. The document cites learning outcome assessments done in Kenya in the recent past as a basis upon which quality inferences are hinged:

> Literacy and numeracy assessments in Kenya over the last three years reveal learning outcomes that are lower than expected. For example, in 2010, the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) showed that fewer than half of Grade 3 pupils were able to read at Level 3 (Basic Reading) or Level 4 (Reading for Meaning) (KNEC, 2010). The Uwezo (2011) report showed that fewer than 30% of pupils in Class 3 could read at a Grade 2 level (Government of Kenya, 2013, p. 68).

This indicates that the NESP document notes the significance of learning assessments and indeed, has relied on these assessments to arrive at inferences and the policy guidelines therein. The document further underscores that in contrast with national examinations, national assessments should provide a means of assessing the level of attainment of critical skills such as literacy and numeracy. The document places significant emphasis and importance on learning assessments and observes that national assessment is more crucial as it goes further than examinations to link achievement to non-academic factors such as pupil characteristics, school and home environments. The NESP document (Government of Kenya, 2013) recommends a harmonization of the different approaches currently implemented in Kenya (such as Early Grade Reading Assessments-EGRA, Early Grade Mathematics Assessments - EGMA and Uwezo). It proposes that this will be strengthened and that a learning achievement work-plan including a project supported by donors will be established under the leadership of National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA). These recommendations and aspirations are progressive. However, the document fails to offer details on how these will be implemented. For instance, the document does not indicate modalities of how the different approaches will be harmonized and what capacities and resources the National Assessment

System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) will need to effectively implement the harmonization.

The document cites 54 times specific learning outcome frameworks/approaches: Research Triangle International's (Primary Math and Reading Initiative-PRIMR) 5 times, Uwezo cited 16 times, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) cited 7 times, National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) cited 28 times and Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya (EMACK) cited once. Perhaps this underscores the central role that these frameworks were relied upon to shape this strategic document. Moreover, between KESSP (29 citations) and the NESP, there is a difference of 25 citations. This huge difference could mean that learning assessments have been significant in creating awareness and played a central role in advocacy. It could also mean that their effect (awareness creation and advocacy) has grown exponentially since 2005 to date. The contribution of large-scale learning assessments in the formulation of the NESP (Government of Kenya, 2013) was further confirmed by the Education Ministry official who posited the following:

> *..in it [NESP], we factored in the results and recommendations from the learning assessments, the results that indicated that we had challenges in particular, early grade reading and numeracy. In the National Education Sector Plan document, we have a component under the national education sector plan, one big component that is focusing on literacy and numeracy. It was a useful coincidence that while we were discussing this, results from Early Grade Mathematics Assessment [EGMA] and Early Grade Reading Assessments [EGRA] by Research Triangle International came out. So we owned the results and immediately agreed that we were going to actualize the findings which*

> *indicated that it is possible our children in lower primary were not attaining the competencies required. So on the basis of earlier studies by RTI, we conceptualized and agreed we were going to pilot a package, a methodology of improving early grade reading and numeracy and we piloted it in form of Primary Math and Reading Initiative* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

It is clear from this statement that large-scale learning assessments played a key role in informing the National Education Sector Plan.

Further on attribution, the participant from Research Triangle International (RTI) underscored that the Basic Education Act (Government of Kenya, 2013), Vision 2030 (Government of Kenya, 2008) and Sessional Paper No. 14 (Government of Kenya, 2012), recommended a competence-based curriculum. These documents also emphasized that the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) ought to consider them while reforming the curriculum. Consequently, the informant from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) confirmed that the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2005) was greatly informed by findings from learning assessments conducted in the country by national, bi-lateral and regional assessments bodies. The Ministry of Education official also confirmed that the National Education Sector Plan (2013-2018) was formulated and factored in the interventions stipulated by Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2013). Thus, one component in the Plan focuses particularly on literacy and numeracy. On the other hand, the participant from Research Triangle International alluded again to Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2013) and indicated that through reforms of the curriculum, the issues of learning achievements can be addressed. Commenting further on the nexus between

learning assessments and policy formulation, a senior official at the directorate of policy at the Ministry of Education said the following:

> *These studies have made a lot of difference…. we realized our children may not have been doing as well. National Assessment System for Monitoring Learners Achievement as well indicated that, particularly for class 3, that it was possible our children were not attaining the national benchmarks, and of course this informed us, it informed the system* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

Further, on the impact of the large-scale learning assessments in Kenya; Wasanga and Kyalo (2007) indicate that the findings from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) study informed the engendering of the curriculum, formulation of the gender policy and the re-admission of girls who became pregnant to school (the re-entry directive). Moreover, based on the findings and recommendations from the study by the English Language Literacy in Kenya project (The English Literacy Norms -ELN), a set of benchmarks for Standards 3 and 6 pupils were developed. These are still in force and have been adopted by a number of assessment initiatives to rate/score learners on literacy and numeracy assessments in Kenya**.** In this light, a participant at the Kenya National Examinations Council indicated that as a result of the SACMEQ and the Monitoring Evaluation Learning (MEL) recommendations, holiday tuition in Kenya was abolished. HIV/AIDS was also integrated in the curriculum. The participant further indicated that the mean grade for entry into teacher training was raised as an outcome of Kenya's participation in cross-national learning assessments. Corroborating this statement, Wasanga and Kyalo (2007) indicate that SACMEQ findings motivated the government of Kenya and development partners to increase support for school

feeding programmes so that children could attend and stay in school longer. They further observe that because of the findings by the Pupils' Learning study (that among other things established that teachers equally performed poorly on numeracy tests and that this performance was reflected in pupils' scores), the government increased the enrolment and pedagogical content for teacher in-service training programmes.

Commenting on this initiative, UNESCO (2015) observes that investment in teacher training in Kenya has borne fruit. UNESCO (2015) cites learning evaluations that indicated commendable changes in the classroom as a result of these teacher capacity development programmes in Kenya. The findings, for instance, revealed that 34% of teachers in 2005 used paired and group work, compared to 3% in 1999. On Monitoring of Learning Achievements in Lower Primary (MALP), Wasanga and Kyalo (2007) indicate that with findings from the programme 's learning assessment, the Ministry of Education developed expected competencies in English and Mathematics for all grade levels in the primary school cycle. The main aim of these competencies is to provide a basis for monitoring the acquisition of the required learning competencies by pupils at each grade level (Wasanga & Kyalo, 2007). Drawing a clear attribution, Wasanga and Kyalo (2007) assert that as a recommendation from large-scale learning assessments, the government intensified quality monitoring and teacher support visits to underperforming schools. These authors also assert that based on the results of Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) studies, the Government of Kenya and the Ministry of Education developed policies that have led to significant reforms in the education sector. Additionally, independent external evaluators of Uwezo concluded that indeed Uwezo had contributed to moving the education policy discourse from the exclusive

sphere of academics and policy makers, to being widely discussed and criticized in the public space (Lieberman, Posner & Tsai, 2013).

Commenting on the impact the large-scale learning assessments have had in Kenya, Best et al. (2013) observe that the feedback received from the dissemination of SACMEQ findings in Kenya ignited important debates in the education sector. For instance, the government was blamed for the poor terms and conditions of teachers, and the boom in private tuition was seen as a result of poorly motivated teachers. The government was also criticized for the negative impact of cost-sharing policies that impacted heavily upon poor families, because they could not provide the necessary resources for their children's education. Parental participation in the management of schools and in their children's schooling was said to be either lacking or quite low. Informants confirmed that it was from these proposals that the National Education Sector Plan (Government of Kenya, 2013) was formulated. It's key components mainly constituted how to teach, monitor and assess early grade literacy and numeracy. Nzomo and Makuwa (2006) confirm that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology recognized and appreciated the importance of SACMEQ's research results in informing policy. To that effect, it (a) introduced a Ministry of Education budget line under 'education quality monitoring and evaluation', and (b) started to use the SACMEQ research results as baseline data by providing these data to other surveys undertaken within the framework of the free primary education programme. Informants were clear on the fact that the learning assessments have not only contributed to policy formulation in the country, but also to general education practice.

Even with this significant contribution, a section of the participants felt that some recommendations from the learning assessments have been generic, impractical and not easy to implement. Below is what one participant said:

> *These studies have been very useful in highlighting the learning situation in the country. However, as far as contribution to policy is concerned, the assessments would have done even much better by providing specific actionable recommendations. And this should not stop there; providing a framework of the specific action (s), perhaps with resource implications, and assisting the government to formulate and monitor the recommended policy actions would have been more worthwhile* (Key informant Interview, RTI, August 2015).

This concern is echoed by Postlethwaite and Kellaghan (2008) who argue that the impact of learning assessments on the national policy arena would have been greater if the specificity of recommendations would have been effected. They recommend that the assessment programmes should explain clearly how the results of the assessments can be used to inform policy or highlight strategies that are required to effect improvements in learning. Therefore, based on this finding, it is proposed that the programmes implementing large-scale learning assessment should provide a framework for specific action. Resource implications could also be given consideration.

4.1.2 Curriculum and Programme Reforms Attributable to Cross-national Learning Assessments

In this section, the researcher focuses on reforms and innovations on education curricula and programmes launched in Kenya that are attributable to cross-national learning assessments.

4.1.2.1. Curriculum Reforms

Comparatively, between the three countries covered by this study, Kenya has had the least curriculum reform initiatives in the last 15 years. The 'reforms' have been alterations to the current 8-4-4 education curriculum or pronouncements of intent to review the curriculum.

The 8-4-4 education system has received a lot of criticism. This system has a broad-based curriculum that was initially tailored to provide learners with vocational skills and technical education for innovation and self-reliance (Onjoro, undated). The system was intended to make education more relevant to the learners by making them more self-reliant and prepare them for the world of work. However, experts claim that this objective has not been met. They termed it cumbersome and not well aligned to the needs of the country in the 21st century (Muricho and Chang'ach, 2013). Because of this, Onjoro (undated) observes that between 2002 and 2005, vocational subjects were removed from regular primary and secondary school syllabuses following a cosmetic review of the curricula. This is the only review of the curriculum that is recorded during this period. A key informant observed that even though a number of cross-national and national learning assessments have been conducted in the country, these have not affected any changes in the curriculum to a large extent. The informant hypothesized that if there had been significant curriculum reforms between 2000 and the present, some of the recommendations from these studies would have been taken up and probably affected the way learning achievements are addressed at various levels in the education system.

Even with minimum curriculum reforms recorded in Kenya, it is apparent that the cross-national and national learning assessments created awareness amongst educationists in this

country and informed debates on the curriculum. A key informant from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology observed:

> *Through Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR), we got hands-on lessons on why children were not learning, getting the skills that are required; we realized there could be a problem with the syllabus. So we reorganized the syllabus in the way children learn. Thereafter, we developed curriculum support materials in form of books. We provided every pupil with a book and then we developed a teacher's guide which had both the pupil's input and the teacher's methodology/guide. These are the practices we are carrying over as we scale-up the Tusome Initiative* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015)

Corroborating the argument about the impact of large-scale learning assessments and curriculum reforms in Kenya, a participant from the Kenya National Examinations Council indicated that *"as a result of the SACMEQ and Monitoring Education Learning recommendations, holiday tuition in Kenya was abolished, HIV/AIDS integrated in the curriculum and the mean grade for entry into teacher training raised"* (Key informant, KNEC Interview, August 2015).

The government has acknowledged the need to review the curriculum. Sessional Paper no.1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2005) is quite unequivocal about this. The paper makes a strong case for the review of the existing 8-4-4 technical education curriculum to make its content more relevant and its implementation more flexible. This is aimed at responding to the changing needs of the industry and the general trends in the labor market.

To affirm the government's commitment to reforms based on learning assessments, a key informant from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) reported that the institute has embarked on curriculum reform; he revealed that this has initiated by developing a

curriculum policy which is already completed and at advanced stages of release. He assured the researcher that competence-based learning, which is central in the Tusome programme, will be incorporated, as well as issues of Science Technology Innovation and Mathematics (STIM). These assertions seem to signify a link between research, policy and curriculum development.

A participant from African Population, Health and research Centre (APHRC) underscored similar sentiments as follows:

> *…..that is exactly what we are doing at the moment, developing a competence-based curriculum ….for example, in reading, we should be able to do this and this and that, described and well defined so that when for instance I am in grade 6, nobody should come and tell me that I have not learned. There should be a target. At the moment, the target is illusive, mostly focused on chasing for the mean score [in summative, high-stake national examinations* (Key Informant, APHRC, November, 2015).

4.1.2.2. The *Tusome* Programme

Kenya launched the Tusome programme in January 2015. According to USAID (2014), Tusome which is the Kiswahili word for "let's read" is a nationwide early literacy program that intends to improve the learning competencies of about 5.4 million pupils in class 1 and 2 in Kenya. This scaling-up programme was informed by the findings of the Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR). PRIMR, which was a proof of concept was piloted to show-case how better teaching methods, use of information communication technology (ICT) and supply of teaching and learning materials can improve literacy outcomes in Kiswahili and English. USAID (2014) indicates that based on impressive literacy results as a result of the pilot, the Kenyan

government reached out to development partners to assist with the nationwide rollout of this initiative. This is how the Tusome initiative was initiated. USAID (2014) indicates that a total of $65 million was invested in the Tusome initiative (USAID contributed $55 million, while the Department for International Development contributed the rest). USAID, (2014, p. 1) avers that "under this initiative, Tusome will fully transition implementation of the Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) programme activities by its fourth year to the Ministry of Education via government-to-government mechanisms and technical assistance"

Commenting on this partnership and how the introduction of Tusome initiative was informed by the large-scale learning assessment programmes, a participant from the Ministry of Education observed the following:

> *Tusome is basically Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR) on a large scale. I think for us, we see this as a commitment by the government to implement recommendations and findings from the learning assessments that our children are not learning. This has been demonstrated time and again by Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), Uwezo, Research Triangle International (RTI) and others…..after the PRIMR project and after the results, we made a decision that we are going to roll out this programme nationally and we named it Early Grade Reading Programme or Tusome which is going to be rolled out countrywide…we estimate our primary schools to be 26,000 and we have identified 1000 low cost primary schools or non-formal, and we are ready. We have enough resources to buy the materials and procurement is ongoing* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

However, it is important to note that technically, the Tusome Programme is still donor driven; its funding and implementation is being spearheaded by international NGOs and not by the Government of Kenya. This position is affirmed by a participant who observed the following;

> *We have already signed a contract with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and through the government, we have contracted Research Triangle International* (*RTI) to provide technical support to implement the programme* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

4.1.2.3. The National Assessment Centre (NAC)

The Kenyan Government, through the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) established the National Assessment Centre in 2006. The National Assessment Centre which is housed at the Kenya National Examinations Council (Wambua & Ogle, 2011) has the mandate to coordinate assessments and monitor learning outcomes in Kenya (Wasanga, Noor & Nyaga, 2010). The National Assessment Centre is a legal structure that is meant to provide a wide-ranging synthesis of educational outcomes. Among other tasks, it is mandated to survey the achievement levels at the basic education level and inconsistencies in learning outcomes. According to Wambua and Ogle (2011), the National Assessment was formed to assess the performance of the school system and not of individual learners.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the National Assessment Centre consequently established the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) which provided the framework for conducting the first national learning assessment of 2009-2010. According to KNEC (2010), the NASMLA, which is an initiative of the Ministry of Education and KNEC, was

designated to gather empirical data on educational standards at the national level in order to document the education system's abilities in various skill areas, and to target areas for improvement. The NASMLA was therefore initiated to complement the national examinations by providing a much needed systematic framework for monitoring learners' progress through each level of the education system.

4.1.3. Review of Teacher Training Programmes to Incorporate Components on Teaching and Assessing Literacy and Numeracy

As indicated in the previous section, Kenya has put in place mechanisms to review her curriculum. The debate of review of the teacher training curriculum to address deficiencies observed through learning assessments has been ongoing for a period of time now. Strategic government policy documents have also been clear on this issue. For instance, Sessional Paper 1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2005) indicates that the Government of Kenya is keen to enhance the quality of primary education by regularly reviewing teacher education curriculum and establishing specific teacher support programmes and staffing norms for effective and equitable distribution the human resources. Unfortunately, these policy recommendations and intentions have not been accompanied by concurrent actions, leading to Wanyama and Koskey (2013) to conclude that since independence, education reform in Kenya has been political rather than professional.

In the meantime, experts and research continually point out the poor education that Kenyan children are receiving, as a result of inadequately trained teachers, an issue they relate to a deficient curriculum. Sessional Paper 1 of 2005 (Government of Kenya, 2005) also acknowledges this:

> Currently, the class sizes in teacher training colleges are too large for lecturers to pay special attention to methodology and therefore the quality of the teacher is often compromised. In addition, many students take education courses for lack of alternatives. In order to improve the quality of the teachers graduating out of our universities, it is imperative that the secondary school teacher training programme is restructured to enable the trainees acquire sufficient subject mastery and pedagogy (Sessional Paper 1, 2005, p. 71).

Similar concerns were raised by participants. For instance, a participant registered his concerns by indicating that teacher training institutions were deficient in resources, curriculum and capacity to train teachers to deliver and assess literacy components:

> *Of course we have carried out this study, we had already carried out the study on pre-service (of teachers) and various issues came up. One is that in this country, we don't have any course in any university that teaches teachers' trainers. It's one thing to be a teacher; it's yet another thing to be a trainer……you could be a very good teacher but you can't train somebody else to become like you* (Key Informant, Research Triangle International (RTI), November, 2015).

Another participant also identified weakness at the school level (the down-stream) and said that the teachers' capacity to monitor the curriculum and asses it is lacking. The participant further observed that "*teachers do not have that capacity and they should be supported with certain skills. This skill should enable the teachers to be able to assess the child for particular competencies and be able to tailor their teaching towards them"* (Key Informant Interview, Africa Population and Health Research Council

(APHRC), November, 2015). These same sentiments are reinforced by the Kenya National Examinations Council who in the EFA Kenya report of 2015 (UNESCO, 2015) acknowledge that most teachers in Kenya lack the requisite skills in measurement (psychometrics). Based on this, Kenya National Examinations Council conclude that this, in addition to creating inability to design assessments, has hampered the implementation of continuous monitoring of learning outcomes in schools (MoE, 2015).

Participants indicated that the problem lies with the teacher training curriculum. For instance, a participant proposed that universities need to rethink the teacher training curriculum so that a pool of individuals are trained to be trainers at teacher training colleges. Contribution to this discourse, a responded stated as follows: *"I taught in teacher training colleges for many years…. and nobody trained me [to be an effective teacher]. For the first one year or so I was grappling about. The way to go is to make the university's departments of education to understand that there is need to have a course for teachers' trainers"* (Key Informant, Africa Population and Health Research Council, November, 2015). Similarly, the Kenya National Examinations Council concludes that the lack of requisite skills in measurement is attributed to the limited training or lack of coverage of psychometrics in the teacher training curriculum of universities as well as other teacher training institutions (MoE, 2015).

Similar observations were posited by a participant from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. He agreed that there is a deficiency of teacher expertise and proposed the following as a strategy to address this:

> *We have been having this aspect of objective based curriculum or content based curriculum where we have been dealing with content - but now we are looking at*

> *competences. …. it is paradigm shift and we will be doing a lot of capacity development programmes to make sure the teacher has the know how to implement a competence-based curriculum. That is what is on board* (Key Informant, KICD, November, 2015).

He added that the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development will achieve this in the following manner:

> *We will do this from two angles: one, the in-service for the teachers who are already teaching to make sure they have reached at the capacity. The second aspect is that the current teacher education curriculum is going to be overhauled to become competence-based* (Key Informant, KICD, November, 2015).

Explaining the concept of competence-based learning, the participant indicated that it is all about learners having the ability to do, and not just memorize facts. He further observed that rote learning and lecturing has been the hallmark of the current 8-4-4 curriculum. Nevertheless, the participant was optimistic that with the new curriculum, "*learners will not just be learning mathematics but will know how to apply the concepts".* He further observed the following: "*For example, when a child learns geometry, he/she will know how angles apply in carpentry"*. To meet this challenge *"we will be retooling the teacher. This will ensure that any other person coming out of the education system is actually well prepared to deliver a competence-based teaching and assessment".* On the issue of assessment, he observed that learners will be assessed progressively coupled with lots of experiential learning.

A counterpart from the Ministry of Education observed that it was unlikely that someone can reform the school curriculum and fail to consider reforming the teacher education

curriculum as well. He observed that efforts to change the teacher curriculum are already underway. *"The aim is to amend the teaching methodologies of the tutors in colleges as well as the curriculum of teacher training institutions to address specialized pedagogical skills"* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015). He added that there is a very strong component in the Tusome package on the teacher training because *"we think the bottom line of any education system is the ability of the teacher to perform"*. Nonetheless, the participant cited the prevailing circumstances of teachers not being absorbed into the profession immediately after they complete college as a challenge; *"some of them will take as long as two to three years before they get jobs and it's possible they will have forgotten the pedagogical skills"* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

4.1.4. Resource Allocation for Literacy Programmes

With regards to resource mobilization and allocation to sustain literacy programmes and learning assessments in the Kenya upon the exit of externally funded programmes, the informant from the Ministry of Education expressed confidence in the government's ability and made reference to the period when the Kenya Educational Sector Support Programme was developed (2005 to 2009). He argued as follows:

> *Then the government was funding close to 95.6% of the national budget in education, development partners were only bringing 4% to the sector plan. Even to date, if you compare it with what we (the government) is investing in education, it will still not be 2%. So the government has all the resources the problem is how we organize them and now that we have a sector plan and everything in education is based on the sector plan then we will be able to direct*

resources appropriately ...so whether they withdraw or not (donor agencies), in my view I am not worried… ….am seeing a situation where by 2018, seventy percent of Kenyan children in class 1 and 2 will be able to read at the national competency levels (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

Likewise, the informant from Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) said that the future is promising and cited the Global Partnership Education (GPE) fund as an example. She illuminated as follows:

….under the Global Partnership of Education sponsorship to the Ministry of Education under Primary Math and Reading Initiative project, we have secured funding for 2 national assessments at class 2. We would like to have a cyclic kind of assessment and monitoring, so that we could say we monitor after 3 years and funds should be available to make sure that after 3 years, everything is expeditiously done. Then we will be informed and have interventions, monitor again in that order. It should be something we can depend upon as policy makers. Lack of funds has been cited as a derailing factor. So we managed to secure funds for 2015 and 2016 then will do assessments in 2016- 2018.We have set aside a total of Ksh 58 million ($580, 000) to do this. If you recall, we spent close to $420,000 to conduct the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement - NASMLA study. This shows our commitment (Key Informant, KNEC, March, 2015).

She added that the Primary Math and Reading Initiative Project has 3 cycles and cycle one is complete. The funds for the other two are available and innovations rotate around these

funds. The government plans to conduct the two cycles of assessment but also disseminate the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) III findings. "*The approach for dissemination has also changed from a national launch of the report to a county based so as to educate more people"* (Key Informant, KNEC, March, 2015).

4.1.5. Technical Expertise to Design and Implement Own Learning Outcome Assessments

Pertaining to the Ministry of Education's ability to design and implement learning assessments, the study solicited views from informants from the ministry and corroborated with those from other participants (non-government). First, the researcher sought to obtain an internal evaluation by the Ministry of Education on its ability to autonomously design and implement technically strong national level learning assessments. A participant at the Ministry of Education replied as follows:

> *I don't think it's fair to imagine we shall have built capacity for everybody to do assessments for purposes of national comparison. We can still leverage on the expertise available in the world if we know what we want. ….we shall build capacity of our National Assessment Centre to be able to guide the country in doing literacy assessments* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

From this caption, one deduces that although there is some level of technical capacity, the Ministry of Education is not too confident that the National Assessment Centre can independently execute an assessment of national proportions without the input from other experts – outside the government. The same sentiments were echoed by a participant from African Population and Health Research Center. Focusing on the Assessment Centre at the Kenya National Examinations Council, the informant called

attention to the Form two assessment that is being funded by the Ministry of Education. She indicated that the assessment was a national study premised upon a similar framework as that used for the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learners Achievement for class 3. Even with good design and sampling, the participant observed that the Centre had implemented all the stages of the study successfully except data management and report writing. A participant postulated as follows:

> *The capacity to develop the test is very high; but the capacity to analyze the data is a little bit low; the capacity to have the data disseminated is also low. It is not low (dissemination) because of the workforce, but is low because of the funds. The resources are not there timely enough to disseminate information as Uwezo does. Because as government, we have to wait, and sometimes this takes a long time before dissemination of reports, which sometimes is very detrimental, because you do study for a purpose and information needs to be disseminated. If we get people with the capacity to analyze, and do report writing, but lack funds to disseminate the report, it really affects the whole process of study* (Key Informant, KNEC, March, 2015).

From this, a few issues arise: Firstly, from the discussion presented earlier, the key informant from the Ministry of Education indicated that as a ministry, they were well resourced to design and implement large-scale learning assessments. This is a statement this participant from the Kenya National Examinations Council is not disputing. Instead, the participant is raising the issue of timeliness; that disbursement of money is not timely and sometimes affects the execution of the assessments. Secondly,

like other countries as will be discussed later, lack of data management skills is a major challenge facing countries and therefore impacts negatively on the capacity to conduct fully independent large-scale learning assessments.

The testament about technical ability to design the tests was corroborated by other participants. One of the participants asserted that even without the support from other agencies and organizations, the Ministry of Education still has strong capacity in test development. Citing the example of the Form two national learning assessment, the participant was confident that the government has improved its technical ability to design and implement large-scale learning assessments. The participant concluded that achieving the culture of continuous monitoring of learning outcomes in Kenya is achievable. The participant noted the following:

> *The Ministry is well advanced in planning to conduct the Form two study and is actually doing it independently. The Ministry is not asking us for any assistance. A few times, the Ministry has invited us the technical committee not to design the study, but to just review what they [Ministry] are doing* (Key Informant, Africa Population and Health Research Council, November, 2015).

According to Education for All Framework, one of the reasons why countries participate in cross-national regional assessment is for them to build their own capacity as a country. Indicating the correlation between the capacity in Kenya and the participation in cross-national learning assessments, a participant recapped the following:

> *…….every time Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) has a study going on, their technical team visits each participating country for technical support – they train a number of people in that country. …. For instance, in the last SACMEQ assessment, before data collection, they came and trained the country team. The country team brought together a group of individuals in research from Uwezo, Research Triangle International(RTI), Kenya National Examinations Council and from the Ministry of Education. All involved in this learning assessment were brought in so that they can build their capacity. Because we believe that if we build capacity for those in the civil society, we network a lot in terms of information sharing –databases. When we work together in such initiatives, it is more productive than dealing with government officers alone. SACMEQ still supports us in technical front-online-they give things you can read, there is a technical person you can talk to for guidance. Under the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA), we work with other civil societies, like we have worked with UWEZO, RTI, AGA KHAN Foundation, Africa Population and Health Research Council (APHRC) and many others…..every time we attend these workshops, we come out with something* (Key Informant, KNEC, March, 2015).

Similar sentiments were put forward by another key informant from an education think tank based in Nairobi. The informant affirmed that Kenya's participation in the cross-national learning assessments has been important in building the capacity of a pool of technical experts in this area. He observed the following:

> *If you look at the National Assessment Centre in Kenya, most of the people posses commendable skills. Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) have this model where they train you all the way- for instance, national teams are involved from scratch, - all the way from formulation of the questions, development of instruments, data collection, analysis, interpretation to report writing. If you undergo that kind of process, for sure you end up having some skills and we can see it is happening with KNEC- with National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) study as an example. They could do that almost all of it by themselves, just because of participating in SACMEQ. The same thing applies with South Africa; the people driving that Annual National Assessment are actually SACMEQ people* (Key Informant, APHRC, November, 2015).

Even with this attribution, participants identified a couple of challenges facing the capacity building momentum at the Ministry of Education. A participant indicated that the major challenge is that "*most of them don't stay in the Ministry the moment they acquire these skills. Rather with these skills, they become competitive and leave"* (Key Informant, APHRC, November, 2015).

4.1.6. Culture of Evaluation and Monitoring of Learning Outcomes in Kenya

The researcher inquired from participants from the Ministry of Education, Research Triangle International, Kenya National Examinations Council and Africa Population and Health Research Council (APHRC) to establish the real position of the Ministry of Education as far as matters of

sustainability of learning assessments is concerned (upon exit of externally funded assessments programmes/technical assistance).

The informant from the MoE observed that the country is at an advanced stage of putting up structures and building capacities that will enable continuous monitoring of learning outcomes without much support from bilateral partners. The following is what he said about the structures at the Ministry:

> *The National Assessment Centre at the National Examinations Council is the one that is supposed to monitor our learning achievements, we have already resourced it and they should be able to do the learning assessments and we have built in a component under GPE support where we are empowering the examinations council and the National Assessment Centre to be able to do the assessment of learning outcomes. But basically, every school should be empowered to be able to design and monitor their learning outcomes and every school should not look at normative assessments - where they compare themselves with another school - they should be able to compare the performance of their children against some set criteria. They should be able to tell us, 'children in my school, are able to read 50% of the words that they are supposed to read.' So basically, if we in build an aspect of accountability by the teacher, accountability by the head teacher, accountability at the school level, that is why we have the school improvement programme under the Kenya Educational Support programme under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

Even with these structures, the informant highlighted some of the challenges the MoE is facing in its endeavors to institutionalize the culture of monitoring and evaluation:

> *We have a national assessment which is anchored in the national educational sector bill, hosted by the Kenya National Examinations Council and funded by the government through the Ministry of Education. Funding might not be running as smoothly as it should, because someone has not seen the need for having learning outcomes measured and monitored as regularly as it should. The initial indication shows that there are some who understand that these structures ought to be in place. And in Kenya right now we appreciate the role the civil society is playing on the funding, and the fact that they even go to measure learning outcomes in primary schools with the permission of the Ministry of Education* (Key Informant, KNEC, March, 2015).

This statement reinforces the earlier sentiments raised by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) informant who observed that the flow of funds to sustain effective assessments has hampered the smooth flow of functions at the Assessment Centre.

KNEC was also confident that the government will sustain the culture of learning outcomes assessment because the structures for assessment are already in place. The MoE also communicated the Ministry's determination to make learning assessments sustainable by empowering teachers at the training colleges and regular in-servicing. The following is an excerpt to this end:

> *….the bottom line is, even if you don't have a tool and you have built the capacity of a teacher through training to be able to assess how the children are reading, with or without a tool, the teacher alone is an adequate tool to be able to assess children formatively. When it comes to the national or the summative situation then a decision will be made. ….like the other day I went to Kahawa, where World vision is running a literacy boost programme, they are helping children to read in mother tongue. ……the teacher who taught 62 children in class 3 in that primary school, I could tell that these children were reading because he took them through the lesson and those children could read. He was able to identify individual children and allowed them to read on their own and they could read very well, he was even able to ask groups to read* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

From these statements, it appears the government of Kenya is cognizant of the significance of good quality education measurable through learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life-skills. The government has also endeavored to put in place structures to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. This includes the establishment of NAC, empowering Teacher Advisory Centres (TAC) tutors through training and provision of ICT materials and training teachers to implement and assess learners continuously. The MoE informant postulated the following:

> *We have created a ministry technical team to understudy Research Triangle International (RTI) so that they can be able to take over the programme in 2018. …we are beginning the teacher training in April, because we are running late …*

> *we delayed but we are starting in second term and we are prepared. We have all the capacity and all the TAC tutors will be given templates, the templates are packaged with monitoring tools and they are both tools for teacher assessment and tools for performance, they fill them and after every lesson, they assess at least three learners using an instrument that is in the template. Like in reading, you … tell a child to read an aspect that they have already been taken through and mark the areas that they have scored wrong within a minute and then you will be able to say, 'this child's reading level is at this level immediately after the lesson.' I think we are equal to the task, we are prepared as a ministry* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

About the teachers, the informant from the MoE felt that they (the Ministry) are headed in the right direction and observed the following:

> *Teaching is organizing the teaching and learning environment on the basis of materials and the children. A good teacher is supposed to monitor and assess the learning outcomes of their children in every lesson. The head teacher of a school, in a primary school set up, is the first inspector or person to monitor the learning outcomes or performance of the teachers…. we are re-emphasizing the reconstitution of the TAC tutors, we have told the national government you must employ field officers because the TAC tutors are going to be utilized in other functions (monitoring of teachers) and they cannot do what they were traditionally doing* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

To further affirm the MoE's commitment to monitoring learning, the same informant asserted that:

> *Research Triangle International (RTI) is not going to leave today, the contract between us, RTI and USAID is up to 2018. The package we have under Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR), under Tusome, has the necessary tools to assess the learning achievements ……, we have a template version of the assessment and it is ready. The teacher and TAC tutor do not need to develop; they just need to use it. And we hope this will deliver the results, by the time we finish we think our people will have built enough capacity* (Key Informant, MoE, March, 2015).

4.2. Tanzania

Table 3 presents a summary of the key findings for Tanzania. A detailed presentation of the findings is presented immediately after.

Table 3: Summary of key findings for Tanzania

Key findings
• The researcher established that at least 6 policy/strategic documents were formulated in response to findings and recommendations by large-scale learning assessments, namely, i) United Republic of Tanzania (2008): The Education Sector Development Programme-2008-17 ii) United Republic of Tanzania (2010): Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) - Secondary Education Development Programme II, iii) United Republic of Tanzania (2010): The Higher Education Development Programme Strategic Document (2010 -2015) iv) United Republic of Tanzania (2012): Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan v) United Republic of Tanzania (2013): the National Key Result Area Roadmap for Education document and vi) United Republic of Tanzania (2014): The Education and Training Policy. • Eight large-scale learning assessment programmes are cited across these documents, namely, SACMEQ, the International Testing Services, Uwezo (cited twice), Early Grade Reading Assignment (cited twice) and an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (cited twice as well). • Three curriculum reviews were also implemented, namely the i) United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania, ii) United Republic of Tanzania (2009): Curriculum for Certificate and iii) United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Diploma Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania. • Tanzania is yet to conduct a completely independently funded and executed large-scale learning assessment. • With regards to increase in allocation of resources specific to literacy programmes in Tanzania, the most notable investment is an external source, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that allocated about US$100 million to the United Republic of Tanzania for literacy programmes.

Below is a detailed presentation of the findings from Tanzania, beginning with policy/strategic documents whose formulation is attributable to participation in cross-national learning assessments.

4.2.1. Policy Reforms Attributable to Cross-national Learning Assessments

In Tanzania, policy reforms have been ongoing. The most recent policy, Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) inaugurated in February 2015 covers the entire education management from pre-school to university level. Prior to this, there were three policies: the Education and Training Policy of 1995 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995), the Vocation Education Policy of 1996 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1996) and National Policy on Higher Education of 1999 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). All these three were reviewed and modified into the all-inclusive Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) which incorporates education at all levels and teacher training. A senior policy educationist at the University of Dar es Salaam echoed these sentiments and observed that *"the Education and Training Policy of 2014 is unique in the sense that it looks at education in its entirety and in the whole country. This is diversion from the previous policies which were categorical by levels of education. It [Education and Training Policy-2014] covers the education sector from the lowest level to the highest level*" (Key Informant, Policy Analyst, University of Dar es Salaam, October, 2015).

On this foothold, the interview with an official at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training revealed that Tanzania inaugurated a new education policy as a way to emphasize the focus on the quality of education. It is upon this policy that the education projects such as Literacy and Numeracy Education Support Programme (LANES) are anchored. He specifically said the following:

> *The learning outcomes will demonstrate the quality of students according to their levels. With emphasis on improving the quality of education, there are a*

> *number of measures which the policy [Education and Training Policy] clearly articulates: firstly, the policy states that the curriculum will be reviewed so as to ensure that the basic tenets of how to read, write and communicate as stipulated in the curriculum are implemented. That has been clearly stated in the policy. The other thing is to have in place a monitoring and evaluation system which will not only gauge the current levels of systems in place but also ensure that talents in students can be discovered and developed right from the early levels of learning in the lower classes. Therefore, the monitoring and evaluation system is greatly emphasized since it is from this that we will assess whether or not the learning outcomes have been achieved. When we get to know that early enough, then the students can be put in remedial classes so as to ensure that they complete relevant levels as per the expectations* (Key Informant Interview, Ministry of Education Official, September, 2015).

The views above reveal a commitment to reforms in the education policy environment that Tanzanians hope to see implemented. They capture salient areas of improvement and assessment that could transform learning outcomes across all grades. In line with implementation, a key informant underscored that the LANES initiative has been structured in a manner that is in tandem with policy reforms so that it achieves the objectives of the sector rather than to contradict them:

> ……*with the LANES programme, we have done a lot of restructuring because of the changes that have certainly come after the education and training policy was approved [Education and Training Policy-2014]. Our partners, the Global*

> *Partnership for Education are asking us to continue doing so if there is need so that we are in line with the policy. For instance, the curriculum revision that Tanzania Institute of Education is effecting is fully reflected in the policy…So when we are phasing out the old curriculum, we are doing it in this regard…….so in Tanzania, the Global Partnership for Education encourages us to have a comprehensive education sector plan that includes everything in it, from pre-primary, ICDE, Higher Education, Technical vocational Education* (Key Informant Interview, Ministry of Education Official, September, 2015).

Specific Policy/strategic Documents

Like in Kenya, the researcher reviewed (content review) of education policy documents (see Appendix 4) with a view of identifying the extent to which these policies addressed learning outcomes and how these are related to the learning assessments conducted in Tanzania in the last 15 years. These policy/strategic documents are presented below:

4.2.1.1. United Republic of Tanzania (2008): Education Sector Development Programme - Revised Edition

The Education Sector Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008) was revised and launched in August 2008 in order to improve educational provision to achieve poverty alleviation. It is a key part of the systemic public sector reform that was to support the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA). The Education Sector Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008) is a comprehensive programme aimed at a total transformation of the education sector into an efficient, effective, outcome/output based system; it was an evolving national plan for achieving the educational goals expressed in

Tanzania's Development Vision 2025. It is also a macro-level plan that set out four major pillars (basic, higher, technical vocational and folk education) of clustered outcomes that tie all elements of the education sector together in a coherent and synergic manner. The pillars, too, have a common vision of attaining high levels of education outcomes, related to enhancing capabilities among students, adult learners and out of school youth (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008, pp. 10 and 30). It envisages the creation of a well-educated nation with high quality of life for all by facilitating improvement in learning outcomes especially in rural and marginalized areas. It is built upon the recognition that a well-functioning educational system is a necessary condition and prerequisite for achieving improvements in educational outcomes and for growth through enhancing human capabilities. The document acknowledges that this will only be realized by instituting and strengthening performance and outcome oriented monitoring and evaluation of education provision in the country.

Specific to learning outcomes, the document identifies with increased enrolment rates at all levels of education, improved teacher/pupil ratios, increased percentages of pupils passing the Primary School Leavers' Examination, and increased transition of Standard VII pupils entering secondary schools as key focus areas. The intention of the policy is to invest in developing an integrated and outcomes-oriented education system that focuses on improving learning outputs and outcomes, teacher capability improvements, and promoting a better teaching and learning environment that will culminate in increased achievement and competencies of learners and teachers (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008, p. viii). It further emphasizes that quality provision and learners' achievements will be the guiding principles in the articulation and implementation of all sub-sectoral policies, plans and activities. Concerning

efficient management, the document states that establishment of delivery strategies and actions that emphasize the achievement, improvement and evaluation of learning outcomes and outputs as well as establishment of an education sector management performance system for monitoring educational outputs and outcomes will go a long way to enhance learning outcomes.

The policy document is strong on reforms and interventions focused on improving learning outputs and outcomes on teacher training, and on promoting a better teaching and learning environment. This will result in increased achievement and competences by learners and teachers. It suggests the need to ensure that trends in education quality and access are monitored regularly, through learning assessments. Consequently, it notices the importance of strengthening schools'/institutions' management so that they are of sufficient quality to enhance performance and outcomes oriented monitoring and evaluation system.

This policy document can therefore be said to be the most forthright in Tanzania on matters pertaining to learning outcomes. It is elaborate on practical steps to be taken and provides succinct recommendations on how to improve learning outcomes. The document also notes the significant role cross-national learning assessments such as Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) and International Testing Services play in shaping education quality and discourse in the country. The results framework within the document also acknowledges the role of impact studies to monitor the quality of education. Finally, the document cites Education for All (EFA) (three times), a clear attribution indication. For instance, the document postulates the following:

> While ESDP was initiated in 1997 as an effort to translate the Education and Training Policy of 1995 into comprehensive and complementary sub-sector strategies, there was a

need to re-examine how the Programme may best act as a concrete policy mechanism for implementing Vision 2025 as well as Education for All (EFA) (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008, p. 2).

4.2.1.2. United Republic of Tanzania (2010): Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) - Secondary Education Development Programme II

The United Republic of Tanzania's (2010) Secondary Education Development Programme II (SEDP II) is a continuation of SEDP I (United Republic of Tanzania, 2004), which was implemented between 2004 and 2009. It builds on the national goals of secondary education provision. It was aimed at accommodating the Education Sector Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008), which was the base of all subsector programmes, including Primary Education Development Programme II (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007), and Higher Education Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010) for the period 2010 to 2015. The linkages among these programmes were thought to be vital in the sense that achievements are sequential. As noted already, some milestones were achieved through SEDP I. However, several activities were not fully implemented and it was found necessary to continue implementing them within the context of SEDP I objectives. SEDP II (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010) was therefore meant to consolidate the gains of the first phase of SEDPI. The overall goal of SEDP II was to "increase the proportion of Tanzania youths completing secondary education with acceptable learning outcomes" (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010, p. 6). It focused on improving enrolment, performance and quality of education. Furthermore, it is specifically aimed at improving outcomes through teacher capability improvements and promotion of

teaching and learning environments. The discourse below details the above mentioned key areas of the policy.

The outlined changes, reforms and interventions reflected in the SEDP II (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010) were geared towards improving learning outputs and outcomes. This was to be achieved through teacher capability improvements and the promotion of teaching and learning environments. It envisioned enhanced teachers' capabilities in the teaching process. The focus was on improving pupil/teacher interaction in classrooms as well as improving the continuous assessment process of students. This was meant to ensure that learning is not solely based on one final examination result and that student-centered methodologies/pedagogy were reinforced in the classroom.

Moreover, the document proposed the establishment of an appropriate assessment and examination system that takes into account possible links with relevant systems within the East African Community (EAC) and South African Development Community (SADC) as the operation strategy. Finally, it endeavored to train National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) personnel on an appropriate assessment system by 2013. These improvements were expected to translate into increased achievement and competencies of learners and teachers, which in turn would reflect efficient and effective output/outcome of secondary education. On the need to improve quality of learning in the context of EFA, the document postulates:

> …Inequalities in learning environments among different schools resulted in inequalities in learning outcomes, with girls doing poorly in both participation rates and pass rates, especially in science and mathematics subjects, and community secondary schools doing consistently poorly (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010, p. 6).

4.2.1.3. United Republic of Tanzania (2010): Higher Education Development Programme Strategic Document (2010 -2015)

The primary objective of the Higher Education Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010) was to make a positive contribution towards the achievement of goals stipulated in the Vision 2025 document. The latter envisions high quality education at all levels, National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (popularly known as MKUKUTA); and the Millennium Development Goals. The Higher Education Development Programme (HEDP) was a follow-up to the Education Sector Development Programme which started with the Primary Education Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2002) and the Secondary Education Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2004). The achievements of both PEDP and SEDP in boosting enrolments are quite substantial.

Its inception was informed by several sequential developments in the sector that started from the primary level and progressed through to the secondary and ultimately the higher/advanced education level. The document recaps the events as follows:

> The Programme SEDP (2004 – 2009) focused on attaining a transition rate of 50% from primary to ordinary level secondary education and 25% from ordinary level to advanced level secondary education. The target of 50% at ordinary level was realized during the initial two years of implementation. It was followed by the enthusiasm shown by communities to build more secondary schools and the government's desire that at least 75% of all those passing the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), should have access to secondary education. Concurrently, the transition rate of 25% from ordinary level to advanced level has also been reached (26%). Consequently, these successes are

> exerting pressures for the expansion of higher education to meet the increased social demands for access to quality education (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010, p. 6).

The document identified low enrolment, poor quality of education services, underfunding, poor remuneration of staff and poor coordination within and other sectors as factors that hampered the quality of education in Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010). Thus, it outlined the need to improve delivery of higher education through enhancement of a relevant and diversified curriculum, increased access, equity and quality.

In conclusion, although the document is relevant to this study as far as education quality is concerned, the document does not focus on learning outcomes/assessment but mainly emphasizes the quality of higher education in Tanzania. Thus, the document reiterates that:

> Several policies and structural reforms have been initiated by the government to improve access and the quality of education at all levels. Amongst these include: Education for Self-Reliance (1967); Musoma Resolution (1974); Education and Training Policy (1995); National Science and Technology Policy (1996); Education Sector Development Programme (1997); Policy Paper on Government Reforms (1998) and the National Higher Education Policy (1999). (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010, p. 22)

4.2.1.4. United Republic of Tanzania (2012): Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan (ANFEDP), 2012/13 – 2016/17

The above policy document was formulated by the Education Sector Development Committee and implemented in February, 2012. This plan is a follow up to the Medium-Term Strategy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2003). It seeks to align itself with the existing Secondary

Education Development Programme, but with emphasis on Adult Non-Formal Education. Among other things, the Plan seeks to:

- Address the 31 percent illiteracy rates among the adult population so that they can be able to contribute effectively to poverty reduction initiatives and economic development of the country.
- Provide learning opportunities to school leavers and neo-literates for the advancement of their education through post literacy and continuing education programmes.
- Address the number of out-of-school children and youth (11 – 18 years old) who have no access to formal schooling or have dropped out of school.

This policy document is relevant to the research question because in addition to adults, it addresses the needs of out-of-school children and illiterate youth as far as quality education and lifelong learning is concerned. With regards to learning achievements, the document recommends measures to increase the proportion of Tanzanian youths completing secondary education with acceptable learning outcomes. The document further recommends modalities for assessing learners in line with guidelines set by the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) and the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA).

The policy document cites Education for All (EFA) as one of the pivotal commitments in international legislation that Tanzania upholds and seeks to implement. In total, the document cites learning outcomes eight times and the need to improve the quality of learning in the context of EFA, three times.

4.2.1.5. United Republic of Tanzania (2014): Education and Training Policy

The Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) that covers the period between 2015 – 2025 was inaugurated in February 2015. Before this policy, there were three separate policies of education in Tanzania: the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania 1995), the Vocation Education Policy of 1996 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1996) and National Policy on Higher Education of 1999 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). These three policies were reviewed and modified into the all-inclusive Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) which incorporates education at all levels as well as teacher training. The policy was developed so as to provide guidance with regards to education and training considering economic, social, scientific and technological changes as well as the challenges of education and training nationally, regionally and internationally. The aim is to increase opportunities, efficiency and quality of education and training in Tanzania for an educated human resource befitting a middle- income economy by the year 2025.

The policy document is forthright on issues of education quality and identifies the major weaknesses in the education and training system of the country, namely, teacher deficiency, insufficient teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure for teaching and learning as well as challenges in certification and quality control of schools and colleges. The policy further underscores the challenges posed by weak curricula that are not able to meet the thresholds necessary to effect the requirement changes and momentum in economic, social, scientific, and technological spheres thus leading to substandard graduates who lack the proficiency to withstand competition in the job market.

The document is strong on matters of quality and cites commitments espoused at the Dakar (2000) Education for All framework of action. Other strategic documents in Tanzania attributable to the Education for All (EFA) framework of action (in particular, cross-national learning assessments) include the curriculum for advanced secondary education (A-level), the curriculum for ordinary level (O-level) secondary education and the curriculum for certificate in teacher education programmes. These documents are discussed under section 4.2.2.

4.2.2. Curriculum and Programme Reforms Attributable to Cross-national Learning Assessments

In this section, the researcher focuses on alterations and innovations on education curricula in Tanzania that can be attributed to cross-national learning assessments. Three relevant curriculum reviews took place in Tanzania between the year 2000 and 2015. Moreover, an important reading and numeracy national programme (LANES) was launched. The curriculum and programme innovations are discussed below.

4.2.2.1. United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Advanced Secondary Education in Tanzania

The curriculum for advanced secondary education (A-level) in Tanzania came into effect in 2007. This curriculum spells out modalities for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning process for the Advanced Level-Secondary and teacher training. Its focus is on:

- Meeting the requirements of the Education and Training Policy (1995), Tanzania Development Vision 2025, National Science and Technology Policy, ESDP and Secondary Education Development Programme, National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (2004).

- Organizing the Advanced Secondary Education Curriculum that comprises of 13 policy documents.

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, the curriculum is quite vocal and captures the fact that assessment of student achievements is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It further emphasizes that an effectively planned assessment can promote learning, build confidence and develop students' understanding of themselves as learners. The document puts forward two main components of assessment; continuous assessment and summative examination. It also spells out modalities for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning process. It goes further to propose time blocks for assessment for both formative and summative evaluations. It encapsulates that three types of continuous assessment shall be carried out as part of continuous assessment. They comprise diagnostic, formative and summative assessment procedures. The summative assessment includes: annual school examinations and final national examinations. On the other hand, continuous assessment shall occur throughout the two-year cycle. Continuous assessment and the final examination shall have equal weight of 50% each.

It is noteworthy that the curriculum recognizes competence-based teaching and learning assessment methods and indicates that these methods assess students' achievement on logic, comprehension and critical thinking rather than rote learning. The methods proposed include portfolios, rating scales and rubrics, checklists, oral presentations, project work, practical tasks to demonstrate performance skills, written essays or reports and analysis. This emphasis on competency- based teaching and assessment is laudable; what remains is to see the implementation of the same. Finally, the curriculum alludes to the EFA framework of action; it

gives focus on bolstering the achievement of the global goals in education by singling out the basic learning needs to be prioritized. These include literacy, oral expression, numeracy and the ability to solve problems. According to the document, this attribution is an endeavor to realign the curriculum and other global policies and to equip the Tanzanian citizen to be competitive globally.

4.2.2.3. United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania

The curriculum for ordinary level (O-level) secondary education in Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007) came into place in 2007. Like the A-level's curriculum, this document also spells out modalities for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning process for ordinary level learners in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Similarly, like the A-level curriculum (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007), this document empathizes on competency based teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, it makes reference to the Education for All framework of action – it points to the Jomtien's broad global guidelines, goals and targets for the expansion and improvement of Basic Education as spelt out in the declaration i.e. literacy, oral expression, numeracy and the ability to solve problems.

In conclusion, this analysis reveals that the two secondary level curricula in Tanzania launched during the EFA 2000-2015 epoch are strong on learning outcomes, competency-based teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, the curricula are innovative by proposing competency-based assessment methods instead of methods that rely on a memorization of facts. The documents encapsulate the ideals of globalization as espoused in the Education for All

framework of action, thus indicating the role of the international apparatus in influencing education discourse and delivery in Tanzania.

4.2.2.4. United Republic of Tanzania (2009): Curriculum for Certificate and United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Diploma Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania

The Curriculum for Certificate in Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania (United Republic of Tanzania, 2009): was reviewed and published in 2009.The Curriculum for Diploma in Teacher Education Programmes (United Republic of Tanzania, 2007) came into effect in 2007. It was for the Post-Secondary Diploma teacher education level.

Both curricula envisioned teacher education programmes in the light of the existing realities of social and economic needs so as to prepare student-teachers to fit in the society and to compete in the global economy. They were also as a response to an increased demand for qualified teachers equipped with sufficient content and pedagogic knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective implementation of the revised pre-primary and primary level curriculum.

4.2.2.5. The Literacy and Numeracy Education Support Programme

The researcher established that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training hosts the Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) Programme which commenced its implementation in the fiscal year 2014/2015. LANES aims at improving teaching and learning of the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training produces reading materials, mathematics tools and different tools that are meant to enable the child to practice reading and mathematics. With regards to how the LANES was initiated, a participant said:

> *We got a letter from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Ministry of Finance actually received the letter that said there is this partnership, if Tanzania joined, they would have an opportunity to apply for grant to implement some education sector aspects. That was in 2012* (Key Informant A, LANES, September, 2015).

A key informant at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training noted that the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grants, through the LANES programme, supports most of the literacy initiatives in Tanzania. The participant (A) further explained as follows:

> *During that time (2012/2013), there was a lot of discussion about improving literacy and numeracy skills of the children in the lower grades, and this was a big agenda in the BRN, the big result now initiative. The BRN in the end of 2012, had already decided amongst the 9 initiatives, one of those would be improving the 3Rs, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic skills for children in lower grades and would be learning assessment at the end of Standard 2. …..so we agreed that the focus will be on children in Standard 1, 2, 3 and 4, then children in non-formal sectors, those that are supposed to be in school, but didn't go to school, so they can't just go to school, unless they get some sort of non-formal training in the non-formal centres* (Key informant, MoE, September, 2015).

A Key informant (A) from LANES explained that upon receipt of the Global Partnership for Education fund, the government decided that the focus will be on primary, adult and non-formal education in order to take care of children who are in the formal and non-formal sector. The study also established that the advent of LANES programme (that originally was

to support learners from standard 1 to standard 4 only) was realigned to the new curriculum to cater for pre-primary school children. The key informant (A) at LANES further indicated that with this restructuring, the preparation of pre-primary materials is underway.

Concerning the relationship between the LANES programme and Big Results Now in Education Program (BRNeD), a participant observed as follows:

> *LANES was involved in the design of BRNeD. On the other hand, the ideas enshrined in the BRNeD continue to be implemented by LANES and have to a great extent, steered the course of LANES* (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017)

In terms of attribution to cross-national learning assessments, it appears from the excerpts above that LANES and the BRNeD have had a symbiotic relationship, namely, that the LANES programme supported the design of the BRNeD while the principles enshrined in the BRNeD initiative have been integrated in the implementation of the LANES programme. In drawing the connection with the cross-national learning programmes, a key respondent indicated that "*the national assessment framework for Tanzania has been benchmarked with the international standards such as those by SACMEQ, UWEZO, EGRA and EGMA*" (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed under section 4.2.2.6, the formulation of the BRNeD was influenced by the cross-national learning assessments.

Apart from LANES, there are other similar initiatives focused on improving learning in Tanzania. Notable amongst these is the EQUIP-Tanzania, a programme funded by the DFID in the tune of GBP 50 million. However, unlike the LANES programme, EQUIP-Tanzania is implemented only in seven regions of Tanzania (Pettersson et al., 2015). It is therefore apparent that only the LANES initiative can be considered as programme of national

coverage. To underscore this, a participant observed the following:

> *Unlike other programs, LANES adheres strictly to government procedures. The donor channels the money through the Ministry of Finance and the programme therefore follows the government's fiscal year calendar of June to July. Secondly, it is implemented in all schools, all districts. Although EQUIP-T also addresses the 3-Rs, it does not print books and only covers seven regions. EQUIP-T is therefore a complementing project of what the government is doing. However, I must add that EQUIP-T is piloting some important innovations such as continuous capacity building of teachers. Nevertheless, EQUIP-T does not address systemic issues of education as LANES does and is therefore a small-scale pilot project* (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017).

LANES being a donor funded programme, the study sought to establish the contribution of the Government of Tanzania in the programme and the sustainability mechanisms it has put in place. A participant (B) from LANES explained as follows:

> *As mentioned earlier on, LANES is run by the government. Although the program is donor funded, its implementation is done by the government. The government therefore pays the salaries of its staff working on LANES. It (LANES) pays only a few individuals that have been brought in to provide technical support. Therefore, all who are engaged on LANES across the 13 ministry departments and agencies are paid by the government. It is therefore clear that the government is putting in significant resources into this programme. Additionally, the LANES programme has been working with the Tanzania Institute of*

> *Education to build their capacity to develop reading and learning materials tailored along the new education policy. This knowledge will remain in the country and is good for sustainability. Through the Education Sector Plan, the government has also set aside a budget to print more books for replenishment during the 2019/2020 fiscal year. This are government resources. The assessments used in LANES have also been included in the plans of the National Examinations Council - that the assessments can be done regularly at the local councils. Instructions have already been issued to the local councils to set aside funds in their 2018-2019 budgets to finance formative learning assessments for grade two. Therefore, plans are already underway to take-up some of the initiatives currently implemented by LANES* (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017).

From this excerpt, it appears that LANES is well integrated in the government structures and appropriate sustainability strategies have been put in place. The strategies include the setting aside of funds by government to sustain the printing of learning materials *("which consumes about 40% of the LANES budget"* - Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017) and authorizing the local councils to deliberately set aside funds for learning assessments. Moreover, it appears that the technical skills to develop and implement learning assessments by Tanzanians has improved by participating in cross-national learning assessments. Concerning the technical skills, the key informant (B) from LANES observed the following:

> *There are several things we as a country have learned from the likes of SACMEQ, UWEZO, EGRA and EGMA. What the Tanzania Examinations Council has done is*

to pick the best practices from these. For instance, what we have done is that the tools used for assessments not only conform to the national curriculum, but also adhere to international best practices and standards espoused by these cross-national learning programmes. However, it is important to note that the national assessment framework currently in use in Tanzania has been supported by LANES, but was developed by locals, with the likes of Professor Kitila Mkumbo playing an active role. The national framework has been benchmarked with the international standards spearhead by SACMEQ, UWEZO, EGRA and EGMA (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017).

4.2.2.6. The Big Results Now in Education Programme

Initiated in 2012, the Big Results Now (BRN) was a programme by the Tanzania Government aimed at transitioning the country from low to middle-income economy. The programme which covered the period 2013-2014 focused on six key priority areas necessary to spur improved economic area, namely, i) energy and natural gas (ii) agriculture (iii) water (iv) transport (v) mobilization of resources and (vi) education. As far as education is concerned, the Big Results Now in Education Programme (BRNeD) aimed at improving the quality of education quality in Tanzanian primary and secondary schools as measured through a set of key indices, namely: national average performance of grade two students in reading and numeracy; percentage of teachers found in classrooms during spot-checks; and percentage of teachers with minimum knowledge in Mathematics and Languages in primary schools (World Bank, 2014).

In terms of cross-national learning assessments, **the National Key Result Area Roadmap for Education (2013/14 - 2015/16) document** (United Republic of Tanzania, 2013) recognizes and

promises to adopt some of the assessment models used by several cross-national learning assessment programs. The models include Uwezo (cited twice) Early Grade Reading Assignment (cited twice) and an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (cited twice as well). As a further indication of the significance of cross-national learning assessments in shaping this Programme, the World Bank appraisal document for funding of the BRNEd programme (World Bank, 2014) acknowledges cross-national learning assessment programmes such as Research Triangle International (RTI) and Uwezo. The document avers that national large scale assessments of literacy should be cross-checked with reports by these two cross-national learning assessments. Moreover, World Bank (2014) acknowledges the role of Uwezo's assessments in shaping education discourse and debate on quality of education in Tanzania.

Although the BRN initiative held the promise of accountability and result-based management (OECD, 2013), the program faced several challenges such as misalignment with government budgetary cycle, underfunding (Republic of Tanzania, 2013) and lack of political goodwill because of regime change. A participant observed the following:

> *To me, BRN was a short-term solution. Today, BRN is no more. It has been integrated in the government departments especially in priority Ministries such as Education. BRN was a program that intended to instill result-based thinking in the civil service, that is you worked hard, you got rewarded. The programme achieved some good results and some of the ideas have steered the course of LANES. However, the BRN ended prematurely. I think it ended because it was regime based. The program was pioneered by the fourth regime and was not well entrenched by the time the fifth regime took over. It started late in the*

fourth regime and was difficult to sustain. If it is not your baby, it is difficult to nature! (Key Informant B, LANES, April, 2017).

4.2.3. Review of Teacher Training Programmes to Incorporate Components on Teaching and Assessing Literacy

Teacher training programmes are seen as custodians of what cascades down to the learner. Hence if the programmes are devoid or weak on content on literacy and how to assess learning, investments in conducting large-scale learning assessments becomes an end in itself. This is because the learning assessments generally look at the output rather than the processes or inputs. Teacher training therefore is an important 'input' to achieve better outputs (competent learners). The focus on teacher training colleges thus, is to ensure that what is delivered to the learner is adequate, measurable and relevant. The researcher therefore interviewed key respondents and reviewed literature for evidence of review of teacher training programmes in Tanzania to incorporate components on teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy. To this end, a participant at LANES explained:

…. in the past, Tanzania teachers training colleges used to train on the 3Rs, but from 1980 somehow it was dropped. Since then, most teachers do not have the skills to teach the 3Rs. Instead, they are trained on general content of teaching a child. But the government went back specifically on training the teachers on how to teach the 3Rs. The government, through Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), changed the curriculum to reflect almost only the 3Rs teaching in standard 1 and 2. Seventy percent of the time allocated in the curriculum was concentrating on the 3Rs. ……Through the LANES programme, we had received grants to revise

> *the current curriculum in order to incorporate the changes that had happened. The process is fully fledged; they are reviewing the curriculum and we will retrain the teachers. We will provide the entire package of materials in all the colleges in Tanzania to make sure they don't leave the 3Rs out. …We have started working on how we can establish language laboratories in those colleges to make sure they are also taught phonics, sounds which are included in the new methodology, so we are working together with colleges to ensure that they have the tools for the sake of teaching children well the 3Rs, and mathematics of course.* (Key Informant A, LANES, September, 2015)

The above discourse affirms that although the current teacher curriculum in Tanzania may be inadequate on teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy, the country is committed to reviewing teacher training programmes to incorporate this. According to a key informant, this commitment is also reflected in the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). He observed the following:

> *....as I said earlier, the policy is for preschool to university level. …..it includes different strategies for teacher development and preparation, development of national monitoring and evaluation systems, how to assess students, what to assess, when to assess and in what classes along the way* (Key Informant, MoE, September, 2015).

To further demonstrate this commitment, a key informant from the LANES posited the following:

> *We started by training 2 teachers per school. …we started training all college*

> *tutors in all the colleges in Tanzania on new methodology of teaching in early grades. We started with standard 1 and 2 teachers, and then we are moving on with standard 3 and 4 teachers by the end of this year. Actually, it was quite a practical training. However, we still feel that it is not enough. We are still working on producing self-learning modules that should go to the schools by the end of this year so that the teacher can continue to learn. One of the challenges of teaching children to learn literacy and numeracy is that it is a continuous process and cannot be a onetime event. The other biggest issue is teacher's motivation. They have been given a lot of skills to improvise. For instance, each of the teachers teaching in Standard 1 to 4 through this programme will be given a curriculum package which includes several things: the curriculum itself; syllabus in Mathematics and Kiswahili; and teachers guide… The evidence that we have received from school is that teachers are really comfortable with the way we are doing this. …we hope that this will continue, and even if the programme will not be there, teachers will continue to get the in-service training, and this is the aim of government* (Key Informant A, LANES, September, 2015).

The findings seem to indicate that there are efforts towards reviewing of teacher training programmes but not much has been realized yet, given that the LANES programme is only one-year-old. Sentiments from other informants confirmed this. For instance, a participant from the Ministry of Education said that the government is currently working on establishing strategies that place emphasis on improving the monitoring and evaluation systems for literacy. The

participant added that Tanzania is initiating different dynamic strategies in response to new and applicable innovations in literacy and numeracy (as related to training, teaching, assessment, monitoring and evaluation). These strategies encompass the implementation of the Education and Training policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) for the period 2015 to 2025. The participant (A) from the LANES programme also confirmed this view.

4.2.4. Resource Allocation for Literacy Programmes

Capital investment is a proxy indicator of commitment and interest on a specific issue of perceived importance (OECD, 2007). This study therefore sought to understand the extent to which there has been an increase in resource allocation to literacy programmes in Tanzania. A participant cited the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as one of the notable investments in education in Tanzania. According to the GPE Mid-Year Report – July to December 2014, the Tanzanian Government received a grant of about US$100 million divided into two allocations; US$94.8 million for 2014-2017 for Mainland Tanzania and US$5.2 million for 2013-2016 for Zanzibar. In addition to this, Tanzania received support from other bilateral donor agencies. A participant observed that the "*the USAID has greatly supported the government. For instance, they have supported a baseline assessment on reading, writing and arithmetic…besides this, Tanzania has also received support from UNCEF, EQT and TC*" (Key Informant A, LANES, September, 2015).

However, from the interviews, it was not immediately clear concerning the amount of resources the central government has deployed for programmes/projects specifically on reading and numeracy. These sentiments are supported by the USAID which indicate that investments in

education by the United Republic of Tanzania are limited to funding broad-based programmes that focus on access (USAID, 2009).

4.2.5. Technical Expertise to Design and Implement Own Learning Outcome Assessments

The study sought to establish the extent the participation in cross-national learning assessment programmes has been successful in equipping educationists in Tanzania with technical expertise to design and implement their own large-scale learning assessments. First, the study sought to establish whether the MoE of Tanzania had initiated and implemented autonomous large-scale learning assessment(s). The study established that unlike her counterparts (Kenya and South Africa), the MoE is yet to execute a rigorous and independent national learning assessment at any level. Interviews with the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) confirmed that although its main function was to formulate and ensure the operationalization of examination related policies, the Council is not yet sure whether the mandate to conduct/monitor learning assessments is the Council's responsibility or the Prime Minister's Office, Local Government Authority's (PMO-RALG's). The Council is therefore yet to conduct a national autonomous learning assessment. As a follow up, the study investigated NECTA's preparedness to implement assessment of pupils in class 2 as outlined in the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). The participant from NECTA observed the following:

> *This is a challenging exercise. We are going to start implementing this in 2016 and shall start with pilot regions so that we can learn before we roll it out on a large scale. It is still under discussion whether this shall be our role or we will*

> *only set standard exams and the implementation be done by PMO-RALG. Either way, the systems have been developed and to ensure quality, we must have a role to play. It however not yet clear whether this assessment will be the yardstick for a pupil to proceed to class 3* (Key Informant, NECTA, September 2015).

The National Examination Council of Tanzania being a national body in charge of examinations is aware of the other assessments done in the country. The key informant said that there are some initiatives implemented jointly by the Ministry itself and other partners like Research Triangle International, Uwezo/Twaweza and the Education Quality Improvement Programme (EQUIP-Tanzania). On the issue of whether these initiatives in any way inform the modality of the assessment, she concurred by saying:

> *In some ways yes; the buzz has awakened us to rethink on the need to continuously assess learning outcomes before it is too late. However, the representations of these studies for generalization purposes is questionable. We will be able to compare only after we have started the implementation* (NECTA Key Informant, September 2015).

In contrast, as already highlighted under sub-section 4.2.2.5, a participant indicated that although the national assessment framework currently in use in Tanzania was supported by LANES, it was however developed through local expertise. Additionally, the participant indicated that the assessment framework under the LANES programme has been integrated in the National Examination Council's plans and that plans are advanced to devolve the assessment of learning to the local councils by 2018/2019.

The discourse above seems to indicate mixed views concerning the country's technical preparedness to conduct independent, public funded and implemented national learning assessments. The discourse further seems to indicate that that there is still a lot to be done in Tanzania as far as technical ability and structures to conduct independent large-scale learning assessments is concerned. There seems to be also a certain level of uncertainty about who is mandated to spearhead the learning assessments. The study also sees a disconnect between The National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) and the Prime Minister's Office, Local Government Authority(PMO-RALG) in terms of standardization of assessments.

As far as support from other agencies is concerned, Tanzania has had various learning assessment initiatives as indicated by the following respondent:

> *The first one was done by the support of USAID, but now we said as we proceed to do more assessments, it will be done by NECTA. We (LANES) have done three assessments* (Key informant A, LANES, September, 2015).

4.2.6. Culture of Evaluation and Monitoring of Learning Outcomes in Tanzania

From the discussion in sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.6, it can be deduced that unlike her other two counterparts (Kenya and South Africa), Tanzania is yet to conduct a completely independently funded and executed large-scale learning assessment. However, there are plans to change this scenario as asserted by a participant:

> *……by next year [2016] the government plans to conduct a nationwide assessment that will not be supported by donors. It will be like the Standard 7 exam, except it will be an assessment for standard 2. The reason being that the government can no longer wait until the child is in standard 7 to know that*

> *he/she can't read or write. We are supposed to know about it in time so that we can intervene* (Key informant A, LANES, September, 2015).

Moreover, from the inception of Uwezo assessments in Tanzania in 2010, there has been a lot of discussion about learning and what needs to be done to improve the quality of education and learning in Tanzania. A key informant postulated the following:

> *Around 2011, we started talking a lot about learning achievements, because of what we had seen in the Uwezo report. Development partners started talking of concentrating their support on learning achievements. …. We will provide funding to the government….we are not interested in the number infrastructure projects completed, but how much children have learned* (Key Informant, MoEVT, October 2015).

This shows general awareness in education circles of the significance of learning outcomes rather than preoccupation with infrastructure projects.

The National Examinations Council of Tanzania was however optimistic that the early grade learning assessments are sustainable. Commenting on the planned class 2 numeracy and reading assessment initiative, a key informant postulated the following:

> *We believe it (the class 2 numeracy and reading assessment initiative) will make teachers especially (those) of the lower grades more responsible. However, the challenges experienced in many areas of our country, including the number of students per class cannot be underestimated as it makes it difficult to support all students equally. Being a national initiative that has been spelled out in the policy (Education and Training Policy 2014), it is beyond*

reasonable doubt that this initiative will be sustained (Key Informant, NECTA, September 2015).

However, until structural issues of which department is mandated to manage learning assessments (see recommendations under section 6.5.1) are addressed and the country designs, funds and implements an independent national large-scale learning assessments, it is difficult to ascertain its preparedness to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. Moreover, as under section 4.2.5, the country intends to devolve the assessment of learning to the local councils by 2018/2019. Although this is laudable, it important that the structural issues are addressed first and that capacity is sufficiently build (both at the national and local government levels) before this is implemented. Currently, it is doubtful that Tanzania has sufficient technical preparedness to implement large-scale learning assessments and sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes - as far as literacy and numeracy is concerned.

4.3. South Africa

Table 4 presents a summary of the key findings for South Africa. A detailed presentation of the findings is given thereafter.

Table 4: Summary of key findings for South Africa

Key findings
• At least 5 policy/strategic documents were formulated in response to findings and recommendations by large-scale learning assessments, namely: i) Department of Basic Education (2002). Handbook - Introduction to Whole School Evaluation; ii) Republic of South Africa (2010). The National Development Plan 2030; ii) Department of Basic Education (2011). The Action Plan to 2014- Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025; iii) Department of Basic Education (2013). White Paper for Post-School Education and Training; and the iv) Department of Basic Education (2015). Action Plan to 2019 - Towards the realization of Schooling 2030. • Between these 5 documents, various cross-national learning assessment programmes are referenced at least 130 times i.e. Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) 45 times, Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) 66 times and Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) 19 times. • Department of Basic Education (2002): Revised National Curriculum Statement and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2012) were formulated and contain strong components on learning outcomes. • South Africa established the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) and programmes such as the Foundations for Learning Campaign, The Dinaledi Schools Programme, Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE): School Leadership and Management, the Workbook Initiative and the Annual National Assessments (ANAs), meant to address issues of reading and numeracy in schools. • Comparatively, South Africa has demonstrated commendable commitment to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes by establishing structures within the Department of Education (DoE) and dispensing significant resources to conduct the annual literacy assessments.

4.3.1. Policy Reforms Attributable to Cross-national Learning Assessments

Like Kenya and Tanzania, South Africa has participated in various cross-national learning assessments in the last 15 years. The study therefore sought to understand the extent to which the cross-national learning outcome assessments have contributed to the formulation and

review of education policy in the country. The narrative below reveals the level of policy reform that has taken place in South Africa during this period, that can be attributed to the outcomes and recommendations emanating from the cross-national learning assessments. Inference is made based on the direct attribution messages in the document or on the testimony from key informant participants. Only policy/strategic documents that meet this criterion are discussed.

4.3.1.1. Department of Basic Education (2002): Handbook - Introduction to Whole School Evaluation

This is a package that includes the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (WSE), the Evaluation Guidelines and Criteria, and the Instruments for WSE and School Self-evaluation that came into force in 2002. It covers the preschool, primary and secondary school levels. This handbook is intended to help readers understand the Whole-School Evaluation Policy Framework. In addition, the handbook was developed as part of the advocacy material to raise public awareness about the use of the WSE instrument in evaluating the performance of schools. The handbook had the objective of giving easy access to the principles and practices contained in the three documents to education practitioners - educators, principals, members of the School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and district officials. It was envisaged as being useful to parents who need to understand the application of WSE, since it affected the quality of the education their children receive.

Some of the key focal areas of the handbook are on learning achievement, quality of teaching and learning, and educator development. Staying on quality of teaching and learning, and educator development, the handbook reiterates that the district support services should take responsibility for monitoring and supporting schools in their efforts to raise standards and the quality of educational provision.

In reference to learning assessment first, it poses the question: Do pupils respond to the school in a positive way, contributing to an ethos that is orderly and work oriented? It also notes that supervisors need to assess how much interest learners show in school and how keen learners are to make progress and being involved in lessons. It also emphasizes the need for investigation into the reasons why learners like or dislike school.

The handbook refers to cross-national learner assessments in the sense that its framework incorporated the various National Policies: Whole School Evaluation, the Evaluation Guidelines and Criteria, and the Instruments for WSE and School Self-evaluation. The document was therefore designed to help supervisors reach conclusions on the overall performance of schools using agreed national criteria. It concludes that with this self-evaluation framework, schools would be able to prepare effectively for external evaluation, and ultimately school self-improvement.

4.3.1.2. Republic of South Africa (2010): The National Development Plan 2030

The President of South Africa appointed the National Planning Commission in May 2010 to draft a vision and national development plan. The National Development Plan 2030 is therefore the outcome of efforts and leadership provided by this Commission. The plan focuses on the critical *capabilities* needed to transform the South African economy and society. According to the document, The National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2010) aims to eliminate poverty and reduce all forms of inequality by 2030. The document is holistic; it gives a 360-degree analysis of all sectors that are necessary to move South Africa forward. As far as the education sector is concerned, the Plan devotes a whole chapter (Chapter 9) to education and training and identifies the improvement of education outcomes as one of the priorities until

2030. The Plan is vocal on the issue of accountability in education and asserts that education outcomes cannot improve if accountability is not enforced throughout the education system.

This document elaborates on issues concerning literacy and numeracy. It is one of the documents in South Africa that presents a good awareness as far as technical matters about literacy is concerned. The document is comprehensive in that it clearly details the grade level competencies required of learners in the country. The document postulates that the government will aim to increase up to 90 percent the number of learners in grades 3, 6 and 9 with the required minimum grade level competencies in language and numeracy by the end of each year.

The document is also a strong proponent of large-scale learning assessments. It challenges the country to improve her education until the performance of learners in the country is comparable to other learners in the more developed countries. To further demonstrate the central role played by the cross-national learning assessment in the writing of this Plan, the document observes the following:

> The Department of Basic Education aims to improve South Africa's average Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality results for grade 6 languages and maths from 495 to 600 points by 2022. It also aims to improve average grade 8 scores in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) from 264 to 420 points by 2023. The Commission proposes that grade 8 scores in the round of Trends in International Mathematics and Science closest to 2030 should reach 500 points (Republic of South Africa, 2010, p. 305).

Two important cross-national programmes are cited in this quotation, namely, Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality and the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study. They are both applied here as important yardsticks at baseline upon which future scoring on learning assessments can be gauged.

4.3.1.3. Department of Basic Education (2011). Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025

This Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2011) came into effect in 2012. It provided a high-level commitment of how the government planned to attain its goal on improving the quality of basic education. The Plan also promotes actions that were tested and proven to work in improving learning outcomes. Through its 36 indicators, it specifies the pace with which the country would take to achieve these outcomes. The targets for each province as elaborated in the document seem ambitious but attainable. For instance, in section 6, goal number 6 states the following: “Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 56).

As far as a focus on learning outcomes is concerned, goals 1 to 6 in the document concentrate on the proportion of learners achieving certain standards. In fact, except goal 4, all the other goals focus on the achievement of learning outcomes. In addition, goals 14 to 27 expound on the different interventions and types of support that schools and teachers require to improve learning outcomes. The document further acknowledges that the country’s schooling system performed well below its potential and that improving basic education outcomes is a prerequisite for the country’s long-term development goals.

The Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2011) explains that improving learning outcomes requires leadership and vision on the part of government with a sufficient degree of collaboration and commitment from the various stakeholders. On this premise, it emphasizes that clearly, the outcomes of the education system are not only of concern to those inside the system, but to the country as a whole. Thus, it alludes to the fact that without substantial improvements in learning outcomes, the future development of the country will be seriously compromised. The document further appreciates the significant role played by quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the determination of subsequent grade level competencies in reading and numeracy.

The document observes that quality ECD has the ability to improve learning outcomes throughout primary and secondary schooling and, for this reason, it proposes more commitment and expansion of ECD as priority. It also points out that the use of home language leads to better learning outcomes. However, it warns that whilst it is important to focus strongly on improving learning outcomes in the foundation phase, delivery targets and pressure to improve should not detract from the fundamental need to make learning at this level enjoyable and as a time to instill the values of love in the children. It aptly concludes that a passion for education and not a fear of not meeting targets should drive education improvement.

The document is also a strong proponent of the Annual National Assessments (ANAs). As its name implies, the ANA programme is run annually for grades 1 to 6 and for grade 9. In 2011, it was run in February, with the focus being on what learners should have learnt in the previous year. Upon this backdrop of assessment, the Action Plan to 2014 Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2011) document notes that regular monitoring of education quality through

learning assessments instills and strengthens accountability. While supporting learning assessments, it emphatically asserts that testing by itself does not guarantee improvement in learning outcomes and explains that the mechanisms by which ANA will impact on learning must be made very clear, partly because these influences the way in which ANA is carried out.

With reference to the Education for All (EFA) framework of action (cited seven times), the document alludes to the UNESCO's Education for All campaign that includes six global goals for schools. It cites the sixth goal which focuses on improving all aspects of the quality of education as measured through learning outcomes (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The document cites cross-national learning programmes at least 73 times. The programmes cited include the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, cited 19 times), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, cited 14 times) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ, cited 40 times).

4.3.1.4. Department of Higher Education and Training (2013): White Paper for Post-School Education and Training - Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) is a definitive statement of the government's vision for the post-school system, outlining the main priorities and strategies for achieving them. It is a vision for an integrated system of post-school education and training, with all institutions playing their role as parts of a coherent but differentiated whole.

It is a vehicle with which to drive and deepen transformation of the entire post-schooling sector. The document captures learning achievements and explains that the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) overarches the whole education and training system in South

Africa. NQF was intended to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements. It is organized as a series of levels of learning achievements, arranged in ascending order from one to ten. All qualifications and part qualifications offered in South Africa are to be registered on the NQF.

Secondly, it captures learning achievements by outlining that the primary bodies with a direct role in governing quality assurance and certification are the Quality Councils. There are three Quality Councils – the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Umalusi, and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). They are responsible for: defining the three sub-frameworks of the NQF; quality assurance, the provision, assessment and (in the case of Umalusi and the QCTO) certification of qualifications; and maintaining a database of learner achievements.

Considering learning assessments, the document recommends that Quality Councils should use external assessment to reveal poor performance (except in universities, where assessment is institution-based and moderated through peer-reviewed external assessment systems). It also postulates that this process of change from traditional approaches is already underway. In all these, there is heavy reliance on well-designed learning resources and explicit formative and summative assessment strategies. It emphasizes the need to find appropriate systems for curriculum development, and the development and management of assessment and certification as an integral part of simplifying and improving the quality assurance system. It also details that NQF basis the assessment criteria on the learning outcomes to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements.

4.3.1.5. Department of Basic Education (2015): Action Plan to 2019 - Towards the realization of Schooling 2030 - Taking Forward South Africa's National Development Plan 2030

This Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2015) came into effect in April 2015 covering the years 2015 to 2019. Its focus is towards the realization of schooling by 2030. The document takes stock of key developments in the basic education sector. It reiterates many of the priorities outlined in the earlier plan (Action Plan to 2014) and thus, to a large extent, the priorities have remained the same as those in the earlier plan. However, there are shifts in emphasis especially in the wake of lessons learned and the adoption of the priorities put forward by the National Development Plan (NDP) released in 2012.

In light of learning achievement, this document identifies a sequence of events that influenced the roll out of interventions that impacted on learning outcomes in South Africa. For instance, the document says the following:

> A possible explanation is that the strong shift towards more structured learning programmes and greater use of textbooks prompted by the Foundations for Learning programmes in 2008, influenced learning outcomes in Grade 6 in 2008, and is thus seen in improvements in the Grade 9 results three years later. (Action Plan to 2014, p.11)

The document synthesizes the ANAs testing system and underscores that whilst it will take some years for ANAs to evolve into the world class testing system, it can still play a crucial role in heightening an awareness of the standards and the core learning competencies amongst teachers, parents and society as a whole. The document further acknowledges the central role played by standardized assessments and observes that the implementation of these assessments will lead to improvements in learning outcomes. The document further observes

that even with its teething problems, Annual National Assessments have already succeeded in shifting the culture in the schooling system towards a stronger focus on learning outcomes:

> Even before the full-scale introduction of the Annual National Assessments, there had been an increasing use of standardized testing programmes, either national or provincial. Whilst it will take some years for ANA to evolve into the world class testing system envisaged in the 2011 Action Plan, even as it evolves it can still play a crucial role in heightening an awareness of standards and core learning competencies amongst teachers, parents and society as a whole (Department of Basic Education, 2015, p. 13).

Like its predecessor (Action Plan to 2014), this Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2015) is a strong proponent of Annual National Assessments and observes that ANA allows parents and communities to engage more directly with schools in the matter of the quality of teaching and learning.

Discussing the milestones in education, the Plan records that the impact of information communication and technology on learning outcomes is very promising but that there is need for improved access to ICTs and linkage to other elements of school improvement. Furthermore, its goals 1 to 13 deal with specific outcomes of the schooling system. Both outcomes relate to enrolment and attainment, and outcomes relating to what learners learn. Being a strong proponent of learning assessments, the document underscores the significance of these tests as far as regional/provincial comparability in educational outcomes and poverty quintiles are concerned. The document also acknowledges the significance of early years on learning achievement in subsequent grades and subjects:

> …can be seen as more than just a trend for mathematics and science in Grade 9. Such trends do not occur in isolation. They occur because there is improvement in earlier grades as well, and across other subjects such as the languages. A good command of language can be regarded as a prerequisite for effective learning in other non-language subjects (Department of Basic Education, 2015, p. 11).

The document recommends that each district needs to take stock of how it uses information, in particular Grade 12 examinations and Annual National Assessments results, and information on drop-outs, to understand and manage education outcomes in the district. Each district should then include within its plans a clear statement of how information can be used to promote education outcomes. It also reiterates that there is room for improvement with respect to these annual reports, for instance in terms of the credibility of non-financial performance statistics and their strategic focus on learning outcomes as the core deliverable of the basic education sector.

The document further indicates that the delivery of quality learning materials to the classroom and its functions are relatively well laid out in South Africa, but that it is marred with wastage and uneven service delivery across the country. It also documents the government's admission that educational quality is a serious national challenge in South Africa. Thus on these flaws, it recommends a more concrete national policy framework for monitoring service delivery.

Finally, this Action Plan (Department of Basic Education, 2015) references cross-national learning assessments. It underscores that in order to move forward, information from cross-

national learning programmes will continue to be a key basis for gauging progress with respect to learning outcomes in South Africa.

4.3.2. Curriculum and Programme Reforms Attributable to Cross-national Learning Assessments

This section discusses findings on curriculum reforms in South Africa between years 2000 and 2015 that are as a result of cross-national learning assessments. According to Jansen (2003), South Africa has issued a number of curriculum related reforms focused on democratizing the education system and eliminating the inequality errors of apartheid. One of the commendable reforms is the curriculum 2005 (discussed under Chapter 2). Others include the revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) Statement. Due to the inclusion criteria, only these two (the latter) will be discussed.

4.3.2.1. Department of Basic Education (2002): Revised National Curriculum Statement

Under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political spheres under apartheid. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. In post-apartheid South Africa, for the first time in 1994, the National Education and Training Forum made it possible for curriculum decisions to be made in a participatory and representative manner.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002) is not a curriculum but a streamlining and strengthening of Curriculum 2005. According to the Department of Basic Education (2010), the Revised National Curriculum Statement embodies the

vision for general education to move towards a liberating, nation-building and learner-centered outcomes-based initiative. The Department of Basic Education (2010) further observes that at the center of the revised National Curriculum Statement vision are learners inspired by the values of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice.

The revised National Curriculum Statement keeps intact the principles, purposes and thrust of Curriculum 2005 and affirms the commitment to outcomes-based education. It covers grades R-9 of schools. The South African version of outcomes-based education is aimed at stimulating the minds of young people so that they can participate fully in economic and social life. Its intention is to ensure that all learners can develop and achieve their maximum ability and are equipped for lifelong learning.

It emphasizes the need for major changes in education and training in South Africa in order to normalize and transform teaching and learning in South Africa. It also stresses the need for a shift from the traditional aims and objectives approach to outcomes- based education. It outlines that the National Education Policy Act (No 27 of 1996) provides a premise for the development of the curriculum design tools to support an outcome-based approach. Outcomes-based education considers the process of learning as important as the content. Both the process and the content of education are emphasized by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process. In the Revised National Curriculum Statement, learning outcomes and assessment standards are designed in a cascading manner, from critical and developmental outcomes. The critical outcomes envisaged in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002, p. 17) include learners who can:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organization and community.
- Organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyze, organize and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.
- Use Science and Technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes envisage learners who are also able to:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national, and global communities.
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
- Explore education and career opportunities.
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

The document further recommends reduction of the curriculum design features from eight to three: critical and developmental outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment standards. In addition, it observes that implementation needs to be strengthened by improving teacher orientation, training and teaching materials.

By means of the Learning Area Statements, the document identifies the goals, expectations and outcomes to be achieved through related learning outcomes and assessment standards. The outcomes and assessment standards emphasizes participatory, learner-centered and activity based education. They leave considerable room for creativity and innovation on the part of teachers in interpreting what and how to teach.

4.3.2.2. Department of Basic Education (2012): Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

As indicated in Chapter 2, the Department of Basic Education (2012) introduced the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as a single, comprehensive, and simple policy document. This was in place of the Subject and Learning Area Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12. According to the Department of Basic Education (2012), CAPS aims to identify and address the challenges, obstacles and pressure points that have negatively impacted on the quality of teaching in schools and to propose mechanisms that could address them. The Department further goes on to indicate that CAPS is a response to concerns raised by those who faced various challenges in the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12*. During the interviews, educations in South Africa pointed out that the CAPS is not a new curriculum but an amendment to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), so that the curricula is more meaningful and accessible to teachers. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2012) provides teachers with details on how each subject ought to be delivered and assessed on a grade-by-grade and subject–by-subject basis. It stipulates the grade level competencies and the assessment criteria.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2015), the year 2014 saw the finalization of the rollout of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which was implemented in grades 7 to 9 and 12 that year. This signaled the end of an important process of ongoing learning and improvement in relation to the school curriculum. Department of Basic Education (2015) further indicates that the CAPS enjoys widespread support, largely because it put forward the details and examples teachers need, in an accessible language and format.

A professor of Education, University of Cape Town further observed: *"It is more of the outcomes from Annual National Assessment and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) that led to the formulation of the CAPS".* A respondent at the District Education Boards (DEB) added the following:

> *There was a lot of research pointing to the negative effects of the previous curriculum (C2005). The research pointed out that it was not well understood, not well implemented, and so it needed to be clarified and simplified and so on and so forth, lots of research was pointing to that and I think that's why the CAP statements come in…. and that has been a major thrust in the last 5 to 6 years* (Key informant, DEB, October 2015).

Further drawing a link between Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2012), and cross-national learning assessment, a participant (a ministerial committee member deployed with Grace Community Development and Education-GCDE), affirmed that the ANAS results and the SACMEQ results informed to a large extent the formulation of the CAPS. She asserted that *"this underscores the fact that South Africa's involvement in both internal (ANA) and cross- national (SACMEQ) has had a positive effect on*

policy formulation" (Key Informant, GCDE, September, 2015). Another participant observed the following:

> *The policy changes influenced by learning assessments have focused on trying to improve literacy. Some of those relate to the curriculum, the new curriculum statement, the introduction of the annual national assessments and introduction of the workbooks, many of the attempts to try to deal with teacher training. All of these have been part consequences of finding out how badly we have done in these assessments* (Key informant, SACMEQ, September 2015).

The discussion below highlights two important programmes that have been established attributable to cross-learning assessments/EFA framework.

4.3.2.3. The National Education and Evaluation Development Unit

In its preamble, the parliamentary Bill No. 34858 of 2011 that gave birth to the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU), identified the need for reliable information on whether the school system was serving the needs of learners in South Africa. The Bill further acknowledged the significant role played by independent cross-national learning assessments in ascertaining the status of learning and the school environment in the country. While doing so, the Bill identified the need to make these assessments more systematic to inform the Minister of education on the quality of learning in South Africa. It is on this basis that the NEEDU was established. The NEEDU was therefore established as an independent body to furnish the Minister of Basic Education with an authoritative, valid, analytical and accurate account on the state of schools in South Africa, and in particular, on the state of teaching and learning. The first report by the unit that analyzed the state of literacy and teaching in the early

grades (grades 1-3) concluded that a greater emphasis on the quality of school management was required if the education system was to achieve its goal of providing quality education for all (National Education and Evaluation Development National Report, 2013).

4.3.2.4. The Annual National Assessments

The Annual National Assessments (ANAs) are standardised national assessments for languages and mathematics in the intermediate phase (grades 4 – 6) and in literacy and numeracy for the foundation phase (grades 1 – 3). The programme was established by the Department of Education in 2011. The test results from the ANAs are used to benchmark the progress of learners in South Africa and evaluate whether the levels of literacy and mathematical literacy achieved are appropriate for the age group. The results also affect decision making with regards to education policy and curriculum development. This study sought to explore how the establishment of the Annual National Assessment was informed by research, particularly the cross-national learning assessments. Below is an excerpt from a participant:

> *The Annual National Assessment is partly a response to what all the research, including international tests was saying about our schools ….. saying we are very weak and as a result parents are uninformed about how their children are doing and they are just getting promoted throughout primary school and reaching grade 10 and 11 and then getting held back or dropping out ……. we therefore thought that if we do assessments in primary, then we can realize where the problem is much earlier before it's too late. So I see those three big policy initiatives being a response to research* (Key informant, Department of Basic Education, October 2015).

Agreeing with these sentiments, Devcos (2014, p. 12) posits that the ANAs have been linked to national education policy as a primary output in the Minister of Basic Education's Delivery Agreement for Outcome 1 (to improve the quality of basic education) and have been useful in providing feedback to parents, teachers and school administrators on student learning. However, the future of ANAs is uncertain given the recent resistance by teacher unions and lackluster acknowledgement from important stakeholders that have questioned the continued necessity of these annual assessments. Moreover, the results from the ANAs have been criticized with experts arguing that they lack external verification and therefore raise questions regarding their validity (Spaull, 2013).

4.3.2.5. Other programmes to improve learning outcomes

In addition to establishing bodies like the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit and programmes such as Annual National Assessments, South Africa also launched several programmes/projects meant to address reading and numeracy in schools. Key among these programmes include the Foundations for Learning Campaign, The Dinaledi Schools Programme, the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE): School Leadership and Management and the workbook initiative.

According to the Department of Basic Education, the Foundations for Learning Campaign was a four-year campaign (2008-2011) meant to create a national awareness on learning outcomes of all South African children. The Campaign further aimed at providing impetus and inspiration across the republic to ensure that all learners are able to demonstrate age appropriate levels of literacy and numeracy by 2011 (Department of Basic Education, 2008 p. 4). In acknowledging the role played by cross-national learning assessments in informing the design

and launch of this programme, the Minister of education observed that the campaign is a countrywide response to large-scale learning assessments that have demonstrated over the years that South African children were not obtaining grade level competencies in literacy, numeracy and science (Department of Education, 2008, p. 4).

The workbook initiative was launched in response to inadequate quality and quantity of workbooks used in schools in the country. The Department of Education argued that this inadequacy was a contributing factor to poor learning outcomes in South Africa. Launched in 2011, the initiative provided Mathematics and Language workbooks in all the 11 official languages in South Africa and was meant "to accelerate progress towards Education for All in terms of access to and quality of education" (Rachael, Nuga, Stubberfield, Bearis, Wilkinson & Murphy, 2014, p. 1).

According to the Project Coordinator of the workbook initiative, the project was formulated to target low income quintiles as a mitigating measure to backstop under-qualified teachers in rural areas to improve pedagogy in reading and numeracy. These sentiments were further observed by a key informant who said the following:

> *The workbook initiative came out of the concern that teachers don't know how to structure learning opportunities for students under annual tests systems, and it showed up particular things that we knew were shortfalls, particularly at the primary level. That is another outcome of these studies (cross-national learning assessments)* (Key informant, Department of Basic Education, September 2015).

According to Zenex Foundation (2013) the Dinaledi Schools Programme which was initiated in 2001 was a pilot meant to improve the performance of historically marginalized

learners in Senior Certificate mathematics and physical science in a selected number of schools. The project was plagued by several teething problems with only about one-third of Dinaledi schools increasing the number of learners that passed higher grade mathematics and science. The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE): School Leadership and Management was piloted in 2007-2009. It focused on school management and was designed for school leaders, especially targeting aspiring school principals as part of a wider strategy to improve education standards. According to Zenex (2013), the programme included elements on practice-based learning, supported by classroom-based content and leadership development processes such as mentoring, networking and site-based assessment. An independent evaluation by Zenex established that the Advanced Certificate in Education programme has good results, returning a positive correlation between the programme and learner performance. The Advanced Certificate in Education, delivered by universities, has a strong focus on learning outcomes. The Advanced Certificate in Education programme was evaluated through the support of Zenex and the evaluation showed a significant relationship between the programme and improvement in learner performance.

4.3.3. Review of Teacher Training Programmes to Incorporate Components on Teaching and Assessing Literacy

The study sought the perception of those in charge of provision of teacher training curriculum on how it has been reformed to equip teachers to teach, design tests and deliver the content on literacy and numeracy in the classroom. Mixed reactions were expressed by the participants on this topic. Some participants indicated that much progress had been achieved in training teachers on delivery and assessment of reading and numeracy. However, one strand that was

common with most of the participants was that the quality of teachers in South Africa is dependent upon the training college one attends. A participant posited the following:

> *…there are two sides to the story, there are those who believe that teachers are getting better. I think it all depends on the institution. This is because teacher training in not uniform in the country….there isn't a standard to the qualification. So I'll say on some level probably, but not all…* (Key Informant, Independent Examinations Board, September, 2015).

The majority of participants, however, felt that the teacher training curriculum has not been adaptive to demands for better learning outcomes. A participant observed the following:

> *We have very weak quality of assessment in our system, we have evidence for this. For instance, in the Western Cape in one study we did, we asked the teachers how many of their children in grade 3 were competent at their level and they indicated that about 85% were. However, our assessment later revealed that only 22% were competent. So clearly, our teachers do not know what grade level competency is, and how they should be teaching and assessing each level. We have also done a study of assessment versus mocks in our metric exams for grade 12 exams, and there are very weak correlations between those marks and our assessments, indicating that many teachers can't assess properly, and that the levels at which they assess are by far, not strict enough. So, we conclude that we have various issues of assessment that need attention. Clearly, our teachers are not being taught enough about assessment; they are not taught enough about how to teach children to read which, is the most important factor* (Key informant, SACMEQ, September, 2015).

Another key government technocrat added the following:

> *We don't have a teaching code; we don't have a system with fully well trained teachers* [to effectively deliver and assess a curriculum strong on reading and numeracy]*. How to turn this around is proving difficult… (*Key Informant, Directorate of Schools to Government Unit, September, 2015).

Responding to whether the government had implemented the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ's) recommendation on the need for the Department of Basic Education to initiate mechanisms to improve the quality of reading and mathematics instruction in South African primary schools through the in-service teacher programme, an education official asserted the following:

> *There is much that the department has done as far as in-service teacher training is concerned, generally. And there's a lot of things that are always going on. So there are definitely initiatives, but I think we haven't yet figured out what works in terms of in-service training as far as this area is concerned (reading and numeracy). I don't think we can make big claims about having really made a big dent in terms of teaching practice, teaching knowledge, through in service training yet…. I don't know that we've really given it the attention it fully deserves and we haven't yet quite figured out what works best, but hopefully we will soon get or make actual progress in that area* (Key informant, Department of Basic Education, September 2015).

Further, some informants explained that the quality of teacher training had deteriorated since 1990's. They blamed this on 'predatory' tendencies by institutions of higher learning that has acquired the middle level training institutions. Below are some excerpts:

Generally, teachers' colleges in the mid 90's and 2000 had very high standards, but amalgamation of various teacher training colleges into universities of technology and amalgamation of technical schools as well, has had negative impacts on the quality of teachers…. are we going to be on the same standards as in the 90's? I can't say, what I know is that there is a move to bring back teacher training colleges, that's when we will see what the impact will be. I believe that will be a very good impact. I know we had to change the education system, unfortunately we changed the system so radically that we were not necessarily giving opportunity to the right people to join the teaching profession (Key informant, curriculum expert, teacher training college, October, 2015).

Our teacher training is taking place in universities, no longer at teacher training colleges. Some people say that they (universities) pay least attention to basic things like reading, because you have people with specialized skills in other areas but in literacy pedagogy. The university doesn't particularly skill them for these 'mundane tasks' (Key informant, SACMEQ, September, 2015).

Even with these challenges, the Department of Basic Education has initiated a number of programmes meant to capacitate teachers to deliver content on reading and numeracy. One such project (as discussed in section 4.3.2.5) is the workbook initiative. Linking this project with cross-national learning assessments, a key informant observed:

The work book initiative came out of the concern that teachers don't know how to structure learning opportunities for students under annual tests systems, and it showed particular things that we knew were shortfalls, particularly at the primary level. That is

another outcome of these studies [cross-national learning assessments] (Key informant, DEB, September 2015).

4.3.4. Resource Allocation for Literacy Programmes

South Africa has invested heavily in school related literacy/numeracy development programmes. For instance, records indicate that the rolling out of the Annual National Assessments cost the government close to R300 million -US$24.9 million- (Nsele, 2015). According to the Department of Basic Education's 2015/2016 budget vote, the ANA's budget went up to R528, 632 million (US$43.9 million) over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. Moreover, according to the Department of Basic Education's 2010-11 budget, the workbook initiative for literacy and mathematics books for Grade 1 to 6 children was allocated R750 million (US$104 million). This budget rose to R3.025 billion (US$251.4 million) of the MTEF period for the production and distribution of workbooks to all schools during the 2015/16 financial year. As a proxy indicator of commitment, these among other investments serve to highlight the commitment by the South African government to improve reading and numeracy in schools.

4.3.5. Technical Expertise to Design and Implement Own Learning Assessments

South Africa has been involved in a number of cross-national learning assessments over the years. Nonetheless, the question that emerges is whether this participation has served to equip South Africans with the requisite skills to design and implement their own national learning assessments. Like in the other two countries (Kenya and Tanzania), opinion was divided concerning this issue. Citing the Annual National Assessments, a number of experts felt that South Africa has the necessary technical competence to design and implement its own learning

assessments of high quality. An official from the Independent Examinations Board observed the following:

> *Well, we do the ANAs so I think the government has done really well in being open to these assessments and also now in encouraging local ones. …. from our own local assessments annually (ANAs), we have shown quite a lot of commitment and competence in doing that* (Key Informant, Independent Examinations Board, September, 2015).

Even with the successful execution of ANAs since 2011, experts in literacy/numeracy still felt that some elements of design and execution were not understood and implemented well, indicating a deficiency in certain elements as far as technical capacity is concerned. Below are some testimonies:

> *We have had a few training workshops on how to use the Trends in International Mathematics and Science data... So, there is some capacity building going on around it. …. We could do with more of these kind of data with a little more training courses that focuses on analyzing these data sets* (Key informant, Department of Basic Education, September 2015).

Another participant asserted the following:

> *Yes, I think we are 50-50….perhaps I should qualify that; we are ready in some sense. The Annual National Assessments say that we can do it in terms of the logistics, but there are various problems with those Annual National Assessments in terms of the questions themselves and the calibrations from year to year* (Key informant, SACMEQ, September, 2015).

Yet another participant indicated the following:

> *There has been a lack of expertise on testing in South Africa and it is a real problem especially for Annual National Assessments in respect to development of tests and administration of the test in the whole country. The lack of capacity is a serious problem, I don't know things that contribute to lack of expertise, a lot of administration is done by external people, also analysis. I don't think we have experts sufficiently developed to carry out assessments* (Key Informant, GCDE, September, 2015).

From these testimonies, it can be deduced that analysis of data sets, design and calibrations of test items and administration are capacity areas that need refinement in South Africa. Even then, South Africa, comparatively, has demonstrated great strides in technical competence to design and implement autonomous learning assessments. For instance, a key informant from the directorate of schools unit noted that Western Cape is one of the provinces that have good systematic assessments.

> *The Western Cape systematic tests have been in existence for the last 10 years. It started by testing grade 3 and 6 and for the last 5 years it has been testing grades 3, 6 and 9. This year (2015), it was conducted in the month of October. This signifies a working assessment system centering on adequacy of technical expertise in the Department of Education to conduct learning outcome assessment* (Participant, the Directorate of Schools Unit, Western Cape).

While attributing this technical exchange to the symbiotic relationship with cross-national learning frameworks, a participant postulated that assessments "*assisted a lot in the creation of the unit in the Department of Basic Education and this unit has been responsible for*

conducting the Annual National Assessments. So yes, it has contributed a lot to that" (Key informant, Department of Basic Education, September 2015).

4.3.6. Culture of Monitoring of Learning Outcomes in South Africa

The study sought to establish whether South Africa as a country demonstrates evidence of a culture of conducting national learning assessments and therefore a system to monitor learning outcomes in the country. As already discussed elsewhere in this document, South Africa has initiated and implemented a number of programmes on literacy and numeracy and "*has conducted a significant number of national learning assessments such as the provincial system assessments to national ones* such as *the Annual National Assessments".* (Key Informant, Directorate of Schools to Government Unit, September 2015) According to this participant, the assessments were done with support from a British company that consults with Spencer International to process the results. He indicated that these interventions together with that of the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality have had great impact towards improving literacy and numeracy in South Africa. However, the participant noted that the discourse in the public domain has downplayed the impact of these assessments.

Similarly, the informant from Grace Community Development and Education (GCDE) indicated that besides SACMEQ, South Africa has participated in a number of other assessments at different levels. They include Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) studies. Western Cape Education Department (WCED) runs decentralized assessments at the provincial level. Nonetheless, the participant from the Directorate of Schools to Government Unit takes issue with overemphasizing the annual

assessments because according to him, they make teachers mechanical in their teaching. He postulated that "*the problem is if you intensify it too much, people will teach the test and that will be a serious problem …. Then there is a danger, the weaker will be reflected as strong, and you believe the system is improving when it isn't".*

Focusing on the views of education experts regarding the commitment and readiness of South Africa to implement its own learning assessments, the participant from the Department of Basic Education said that for provinces, there is readiness but that this readiness differs across them. He observed that a number of them like the Western Cape have been conducting their own numeracy and literacy assessment for a couple of years now, and he was optimistic that others will follow soon.

On the issue of whether cross-national learning assessments have cultivated a sustainable culture of evaluation and monitoring of learning outcomes in South Africa, a participant observed the following:

> *They have definitely shown where we want to be, and have also shown the shortcomings in our education system. …. However, not all international standards are really good, they are only good for the country they are in. Looking at the South African situation, we can necessarily apply other standards; African problems need African solutions, applying standards outside the African continent is not the way to go. I still believe that striving for international recognition for national standards influences the curriculum, what we put in and what we don't put in. Often, we put in too much that should not, excluding too much that we should* (Key Informant, DEB, September, 2015).

The study further examined the commitment and capacity by the Department of Basic Education and the examination bodies to inspect, monitor and sustain a culture of learning assessments. A participant from the Department of Basic Education highlighted that *"though the system is in its infancy, we have been doing this (learning assessments) and we will continue to do it".* She further said that her *"Department was committed to reviewing the assessment of the teachers but that this has been met with immense resistance from the teachers' union. It was to take place in September 2015 but because of the union's resistance, it was delayed" (*Key Informant, Department of Basic Education, September, 2015).

As earlier indicated, the sustainability of learning assessment seems to be jeopardy with informants expressing reservations in the entire process from test development, administration and technical expertise; but the following statement reflects the confidence of one of the informants:

> *It is important to make these things aligned; keep looking at the workbook project and the curriculum; assessment and what has been taught; what is contained in the curriculum and what is taught in the classroom. One positive thing is that the CAPS is very clear on what needs to be taught and that is the basis from which to develop workbooks, textbooks and tests which are tested in the same place* (Key Informant, Department of Basic Education, September, 2015).

4.4. Chapter Summary and Commentary

This chapter has presented the results of the qualitative data analysis (content review of policy/strategic documents). The researcher has analyzed the findings in the paradigm of policy

reforms and capacities that can be *attributed* to a country's participation in the cross-national learning assessments. The findings from in-depth interviews have been triangulated with data emanating from content review of policy documents.

The foregoing findings highlight commendable impacts at the policy formulation level but informants were skeptical about the impact on classroom practice and improvement in learning competencies. For instance, a participant in South Africa observed the following:

> *Great policy makers in this country understand that we are good at policy development but poor with translation of the same into practice. For example, if we know our performance in mathematics is very weak - the next question is what do we do about this? The answer is to fix the curriculum, set* Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements *which are highly specified in the curriculum….. So how is the impact of poor performance in the tests related to policy or preoccupation with policy formulation? Horizon has given that 9 times, schooling has weakened in the Western Provinces. Performances in PIRLS and SACMEQ tests reveal that and we can't explain why* (Key Informant, Directorate of Schools to Government Unit, September, 2015).

Similar sentiments were shared by another participant, a key advocate for equity. This participant (from the Department of Basic Education, South Africa) recommended that for learning assessment to be entrenched as a culture, there is need to address the following: *"Make sure we give the basic rights in schools and at the same time ensure that we don't drag the schooling situation down, that we keep it standing in every school in the provinces; keep uplifting the rural schools by ensuring they are fully resourced"*. He admitted that learning

outcomes should become the measure of quality education but consideration needs to be given to contextual issues. He posited the following: *"I have spent 15 years teaching in schools and colleges and I have made a big and significant difference in Kailisha but the playing ground is not level. What are the appropriate learning outcomes in different contexts (areas/ regions whose first language is English and those whose first language is their mother tongue?"* The participant went further to highlight the challenges of materials in schools and how this should influence contextualization of the assessments. He observed the following:

> *Schools not having textbooks at all or getting textbooks at the wrong time or getting wrong textbooks cannot be expected to perform and be judged against international standards. We have bright kids in South Africa, but we do them de-service by not resourcing them well* (Key Informant, Department of Basic Education, South Africa, September 2015).

These are important issues that should be debated. It is also clear from these comments that the resources in South Africa meant for literacy programmes are inadequate or distributed unfairly to favor schools in urban centres. This conclusion is supported by the District Education Board in its annual report (2010/11) which highlighted the need to provide appropriate Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) for basic literacy programmes in South Africa. This report went further to indicate that sufficient LTSM and learner assessment portfolios, in all official languages, should be provided for all learners and volunteer facilitators in order to advance the learning agenda. The issue of resource limitation is not only confined to South Africa, but cuts across Kenya and Tanzania (Uwezo, 2012; Mulongo, 2013b). Going forward, educationists in these countries will need to address the translation of these policies/strategic

documents into meaningful and real impact, which is improved pedagogical skills by teachers, well-resourced schools (teachers and learners) leading to better learning outcomes in schools.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter of the thesis summarizes the key findings of the research study drawing upon the emerging themes. The findings on summative content analysis of the policy instruments as well as interviews with key informants are summarized and interpreted. They are supported with the existing literature on learning assessments and policy reforms. The narrative is presented per each of the research questions.

5.1. Extent to which Participation in Large-scale Learning Assessments Have Motivated Policy and Curriculum Reforms in Education

The central focus of the study was on policy reforms in education in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa as associated with the participation of these countries in large-scale learning assessments. Results presented in Table 5 show the total number of policy and curriculum reforms that are documented for each country.

Table 5: Policy and curriculum reforms

Country	Number of policy/strategic documents formulated	Number of curriculum reforms
Kenya	7	-
Tanzania	6	3
South Africa	5	2
Total	**18**	**5**

The study established that in the past 15 years, there have been a total of eighteen policy/strategic documents that have been formulated and five curriculum reforms in the three countries, that are anchored on their participation in cross-national learning assessments. **Kenya** had the highest number of policy/strategic documents that have been formulated to address learning outcomes, namely Government of Kenya (2005): Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005, A Policy

Framework for Education, Training and Research; (ii) Government of Kenya (2005): The Kenya Education Sector Support Programme - (KESSP) - 2005 – 2010; (iii) Government of Kenya (2008): the Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya; (iv) Government of Kenya (2010): the Task Force Report on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010; (v) Government of Kenya (2012): Sessional Paper, 2012, A policy framework for education and training; (vi) Government of Kenya (2013): the Basic Education Act and; (vii) Government of Kenya (2013): The National Education Sector Plan 2013-2018 - Basic Education Programme, Rationale and Approach. Based on these findings, it can be summarized that these learning assessments/ programmes have not only contributed to policy formulation in the country, but also appears to have impacted on education practice as a whole.

These findings are in tandem with Wagner et. al. (2012) who observe that international assessments have provided countries with information about their human capital potential in an international context. He added that several studies have confirmed these findings and are in agreement that indeed international assessments have influenced regulatory policy activities related to curriculum content, performance standards and behavioral policy activities related to classroom instruction and professional development of teachers. Wagner et. al. (2012) indicate that these conclusions have been derived by relying on surveys and interviews with government officials within and across the more than 40 developing countries that have participated in Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRL) or Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ). Wiseman (2010) stipulates that evidence-based decision making has become an essential requirement in educational reform and funding decisions worldwide.

From the findings, it is clear that Kenya has in place necessary policies that, if implemented, could potentially transform the learning outcomes in the country. For instance, Sessional Paper 1 (Government of Kenya, 2005) is visionary in outlining strategies (both for the up-stream and down-stream) to improve learning outcomes. Various literature and participants in this current study confirmed this. However, it is important to note that the same recommendations that were made in this policy document in the year 2005 were repeated by the key informants of this study, possibly indicating that the proposed strategies were not implemented. In Kenya therefore, the issue is no longer on policy formulation, but implementation.

About curricula, the informants of this study and literature review confirm that unlike Tanzania and South Africa, Kenya has not yet reformed its curricula in response to recommendations/findings from the cross-national learning assessments. For instance, a participant observed that since the year 2000, Kenya has participated in SACMEQ I, II and III, Uwezo annual assessments, Monitoring Learning Education and other cross-national learning programmes but curricula reform has not been responsive enough. The participants felt that curricula change, review or reform between 2000 and present are long overdue and if the recommendations contained in the assessment reports had been taken up, it would probably have affected the way learning achievements are addressed at various levels in the education system. However, the study has established that advanced plans are underway to review the curriculum and teacher programmes to make basic education competence-based. This is a considerable headway by the government to reform the curriculum, based on learning outcomes assessments. The informant from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)

revealed that the Institute had initiated the process of curriculum review by developing a curriculum policy first. According to this participant, the policy has been finalized and awaiting official release. In this policy, competence-based learning has been incorporated as well as issues of Science Technology Innovation and Mathematics (STIM). Similar sentiments were echoed by the informant from the Africa Population and Health Research Council (APHRC).

In **Tanzania**, the researcher established that six policy/strategic documents contained elements of learning assessments/learning outcomes attributable to cross-national learning assessments. The documents include the i) United Republic of Tanzania (2008): The Education Sector Development Programme-2008-17 ii) United Republic of Tanzania (2010): Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) - Secondary Education Development Programme II, iii) United Republic of Tanzania (2010): The Higher Education Development Programme Strategic Document (2010 -2015) iv) United Republic of Tanzania (2012): Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan v) United Republic of Tanzania (2013): the National Key Result Area Roadmap for Education document and vi) United Republic of Tanzania (2014): The Education and Training Policy. The latter is perhaps the most important as it is the most recent and provides policy statements that will guide education endeavors in Tanzania for the next 10 years. The policy places emphasis on quality of education and cites commitments espoused at the Dakar (2000) Education for All (EFA) framework of action.

Furthermore, the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) incorporates education at all levels and teacher training. The document places emphasis on the need to teach and assess the 3Rs (reading, arithmetic and writing) in the lower grades. Given that it considers education in its totality, participants observed that this document has been

informed to a large extent by the learning assessments that revealed discrepancies across the education sector. For instance, the informant from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training observed that *"the policy clearly states that the curriculum will be reviewed to ensure that the basic tenets of how to read, write and communicate as stipulated in the curriculum are implemented"*. He added that *"the other thing emphasized in the policy is the need for monitoring and evaluation systems which will not only assess and evaluate the current systems, but also ensure that talents in students are discovered and developed right from the early years".* The views above reveal a commitment to reforms in the education as espoused in the policy document. The informant identifies salient areas that require improvement that could transform learning outcomes across all grades in Tanzania.

In terms of curricula reforms, the study established that 3 relevant curriculum reforms (that contain important elements on learning outcomes/assessments) have taken place in Tanzania between 2000-2015. These include the i) United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania, ii) United Republic of Tanzania (2009): Curriculum for Certificate and iii) United Republic of Tanzania (2007): Curriculum for Diploma Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania. These curricula are robust on learning outcomes, competency based teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, the curricula demonstrate their innovativeness by proposing competency based assessment methods instead of methods that rely on the memorization of facts.

The study established from an informant from the LANES Programme that the government through the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), changed the curriculum so as to give more focus on teaching of the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) in grade 1 and 2. The

3Rs concept demonstrates how Tanzania is committed at the national level to prepare curricula that responds adequately to the need for better learning outcomes and assessment/monitoring purposes. It is apparent that Tanzania has taken notable innovations on the curricula front to enhance learning outcomes and for continuous assessment of literacy. This is because the curriculum is fundamental in the teaching and learning processes and its various components have wide-ranging ramifications on quality of education (Altinyelken, 2015).

The findings of the study serve to highlight the significant role the Education for All (EFA) framework of action has played in influencing education reforms and discourse in Tanzania. Godlove (2012) agrees with this conclusion and posits that the EFA Framework of Action has had great influence on policy formulation and practice in Tanzania. He avers that the inclusion of Information Communication Technology (ICT) instruction in the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) and the emphasis to teach ICT in schools can be credited to the EFA Framework of Action. Other achievements as a result of Education for All (EFA) include the mainstreaming of gender in the secondary and tertiary level curricula and the prompting of the Ministry of Education to decentralize primary and secondary education – so as to facilitate equitable distribution and efficient utilization of resources.

Education related policy/strategic documents formulated in **South Africa** during the 2000-2014 period include i) Department of Basic Education (2002). Handbook - Introduction to Whole School Evaluation; ii) Republic of South Africa (2010). The National Development Plan 2030; iii) Department of Basic Education (2011). The Action Plan to 2014- Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025; iv) Department of Basic Education (2013). White Paper for Post-School Education and Training; and the v) Department of Basic Education (2015). Action Plan to

2019 - Towards the realization of Schooling 2030. These documents referenced EFA and cross-national learning assessments and cited cross-national learning programmes extensively (see Figure 3).

Specifically, Action Plan to 2014 (Department of Basic Education, 2012) references the Education for All (EFA) framework of action and alludes to the UNESCO's Education for All campaign that includes six global goals for schools. It cites the sixth goal of EFA which focuses on improving the quality of education measurable through improved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. The Action Plan further outlines measures that need to be put in place for better learning outcomes in South Africa. This document is therefore a strong proponent for both national and cross-national learning assessments as a means of monitoring learning outcomes. It does this by proposing that information from internationally standardized testing programmes should continue to be a key basis for gauging progress with respect to learning outcomes in South Africa. These messages are echoed in the other three policy/strategic documents cited above. This attribution vindicates the theory of change developed in this study which indicates that indeed, cross-national learning assessments impact on education policy, investment and curricula reforms in the participating countries.

As far as curricula reforms are concerned, literature indicates that South Africa has issued a number of curriculum-related reforms focused on democratizing the education system and eliminating inequality as a result of apartheid policy. Kanjee (2013) observes that assessment results have continued to take a centre stage in many debates, research projects, conferences and policy documents in South Africa. The author cites the three examples of how large-scale learning assessments have informed curricula and policy review in South Africa:

a) Curriculum 2005 whose review committee considered and advocated for a coherent policy on assessments in the country that aligned well with the curriculum;
b) The national assessment policy that was passed in 1998 for the General Education and Training for Grade R-9;
c) Adult Basic Education and Training which was renewed with emphasis on formative use of assessment information in the classroom.

Other curricula reforms include the revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement-CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Only these two curricula reforms met the selection criteria used in the study, that is, were formulated between 2000 and 2015. The study established that the cross-national learning assessments and the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) have, to a great extent, informed curricula reforms and programmes in South Africa. For instance, the study established that the results and recommendations by ANAs and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) influenced the formulation of the CAPS and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002). Black and William (2007, cited in Kanjee 2013, p. 518) argue that learning assessments have continuously been used for accountability purposes and for the monitoring of learning achievements in South Africa.

Of all the all the curricula documents presented in Chapter 4, the CAPS document is the most comprehensive document on issues that pertain to literacy and learning assessment. Meanwhile, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002)

among other elements emphasizes participatory outcome assessment standards, learner-centered and activity-based education.

Figure 3 shows the number of times specific cross-national learning assessment programmes were cited across the 18 policy instruments formulated in the three countries.

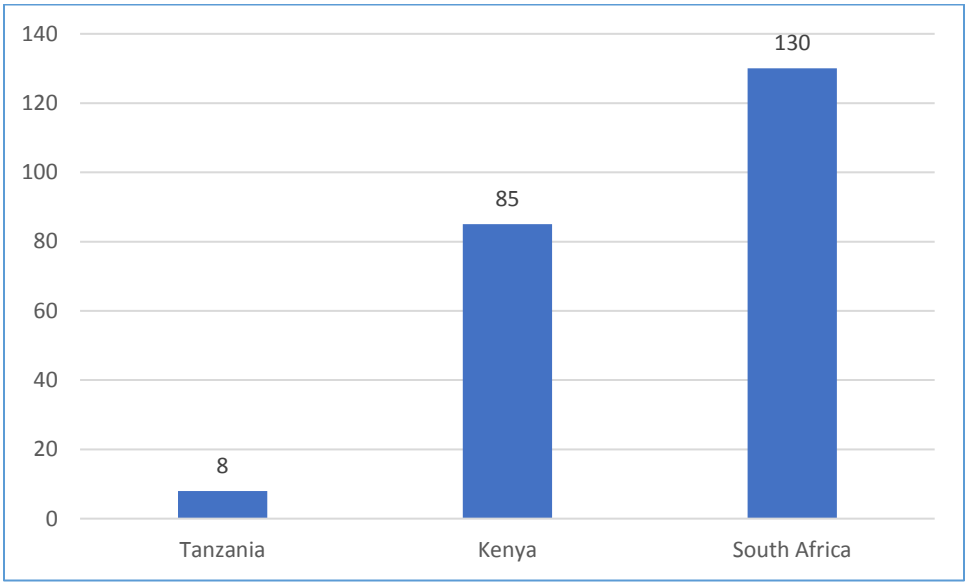

Figure 3: Number of times the policy/strategic documents cited specific cross-national learning programmes

Between the 7 policy/strategic documents formulated in Kenya, a total of 85 specific citations on learning assessment frameworks/approaches was made; (National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) cited 28 times, Uwezo 16 times, Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) 13 times, Monitoring of Learning Achievements in Lower Primary (MALP) 13 times, Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) 6 times, Research Triangle International (RTI) 5 times, Female Education in Mathematics and Science in Africa (FEMSA) 4 times, Aga Khan was cited once). As far as alignment with Education For All (EFA) is concerned, the five documents in Tanzania directly

cited EFA or encapsulate the ideals of globalization as espoused in the EFA framework of action, thus indicating the possible role the international apparatus has played in the education discourse and delivery in Tanzania. However, between them, only the Education Sector Development Programme Revised Edition (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008) and the National Key Result Area Roadmap for Education document (United Republic of Tanzania, 2013) cites specific cross-national learning assessment frameworks. The former cites SACMEQ and the International Testing Services, while the latter cites Uwezo (cited twice), Early Grade Reading Assignment (cited twice) and an Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (cited twice as well). In South Africa, the various cross-national learning assessments are referenced at least 130 times, that is, SACMEQ 45 times, Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) 66 times and Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) 19 times.

5.2. Participation in Cross-National Learning Assessments and Review of Teacher Training Programmes

A further reform aspect considered in this study was the review of teacher training programmes to incorporate components on teaching and assessing literacy and numeracy. Teacher training programmes can be viewed as channels through which literacy skills are transmitted to the learner. Motoko, LeTendre and Scribner (2007) observed that teacher quality is widely recognized by policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike to be the most powerful school-related influence on a child's academic performance. Similarly, cross-national analyses of the 2003 TIMSS data from 46 countries asserted that countries with better teacher quality produced higher mathematics achievement (Motoko et al., 2007).

The findings of this research study suggest that in **Kenya**, the current school and teacher training curricula need urgent review because they were said to be more content rather than competence-based. A participant termed the former as *"deficient in pedagogical skills to deliver learning outcomes, lacked content on measurement skills (psychometrics) and therefore unable to produce teachers with the capacity to design, deliver and assess competence-based content.*" (Key informant, APHRC, October 2015). Even with this awareness (documented by the government as early as 2005 through the Session Paper 1 of 2005), review of teacher training curriculum in Kenya has not been done. Comparatively, amongst the three countries participating in this study, Kenya seems to have lagged behind on this aspect of education.

Because of the curriculum limitations in training, the capacity of teachers to monitor and assess literacy appears to be weak or lacking altogether. Consequently, because of this weakness in relation to skills of measurement, the continuous assessment of learning in schools is also affected. Currently, the government is planning to improve the in-service programmes to address this deficiency and to overhaul the current teacher education curriculum to make it competence-based. However, teacher capacity challenges are not limited to Kenya. The EFA monitoring report (UNESCO, 2013) reveals that as a region, sub Saharan Africa faces the greatest challenge in this area. In response, large-scale distance education programmes for un-qualified and under-qualified teachers are being initiated across Africa. However, evidence of their effectiveness is yet to emerge (Barrett, Ali, Clegg, Hinostroza, Lowe, Nikel & Yu, 2007).

In **Tanzania**, the findings of the research study established that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has put mechanisms in place to ensure that the delivery mechanisms and the capacity of teachers are in line with the changes in the curriculum and

expectations for better learning outcomes. According to an informant, the LANES program is working at establishing language laboratories in teacher training colleges to ensure that teachers are taught phonics and sounds. The findings of the current research study indicate that although the current teacher curriculum in Tanzania does not contain much content on teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy, the country is in the process of reviewing teacher training programmes to incorporate this. The findings also confirm Tanzania's commitment to equip its teachers to teach adequately and to conduct literacy and numeracy assessments. According to a key informant, this commitment is also reflected in the Education and Training policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). These analyses provide evidence of the role of cross-national assessments in influencing investment efforts in teacher training, for better learning outcomes.

Focusing on evidence of review of teacher training curriculum in **South Africa** (to equip teachers to teach, design tests and develop learners in literacy and numeracy), mixed reactions were experienced. Some participants indicated that much progress has been made in training teachers to teach and assess reading and numeracy. However, a common view expressed by the participants was that the quality of teachers in South Africa as far as teaching and assessment literacy is concerned depends on the college they trained. The participants recommended that the teacher- training curriculum should be standardized, strictly supervised and made more responsive to the needs of teachers. They also raised concerns about the inadequate in-service teacher training opportunities and the 'predatory' tendencies by institutions of higher learning that has resulted in acquisition of many of the middle level teacher- training institutions.

Participants further observed that the current curriculum for teacher training should be

modified by considering what has been done in provinces like the Western Cape which has had literacy and numeracy programmes running for a number of years. Partly, this can be explained by Spaull's (2011) assertion that the South African reality is that certain provinces are wealthier than others. The wealthiest two provinces, Western Cape and Gauteng, have a different distribution of students' maths and reading scores as compared to the other seven provinces.

5.3. Participation in Cross-National Learning Assessments and Capacity to Conduct Independent Large-scale Learning Assessments

The researcher analyzed the views of education experts and considered nation-wide government programmes initiated specifically to measure learning outcomes to arrive at inferences related to the transfer of technical skills to conduct independent large-scale learning assessments. Table 6 shows the number of the programmes established in each of the three countries.

Table 6: Programmes on learning and national learning assessments initiated

Country	**Number of public nation-wide programmes to monitor learning outcomes**	**Number of public nation-wide programmes on learning/literacy**
Kenya	1	1
Tanzania	-	1
South Africa	1	3
Total	**2**	**5**

In **Kenya**, views on the capacity to conduct independent large-scale learning assessments were mixed. The Ministry of Education was confident that through the Tusome Programme, Kenyan teachers will gain better experience and improve their capacity in assessment of learning outcomes. Moreover, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) was optimistic that with a little more support in data management and report writing, the National Assessment Centre will

have all the capacity to conduct large-scale national learning assessments. KNEC affirmed that all the structures for large-scale assessments are already in place.

The National Assessment Centre is anchored in the national educational sector bill and funded by the government through the Ministry of Education. Other participants concurred with this observation that with a little technical input, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) has the necessary capacity to implement technically strong national assessments. Participants observed that Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) has always trained groups of individuals in research from Research Triangle International (RTI), KNEC and the Ministry of Education with the aim of building their capacity. Similarly, they confirmed that National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA), a nation-wide learning assessment conducted by the National Assessment Centre exemplifies its capacity to implement learning assessments. They concluded that the National Assessment Centre may have some gaps but whatever capacity gaps it has, the infrastructure and networks it has created gives the Centre the option to outsource.

Wambua and Ogle (2011) agree with the above observation. They indicate that monitoring of learners' achievements through National Assessment has been at the heart of the Government of Kenya's strategy to inform policy and practice of the basic education sector. The Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Kenya National Examinations Council, established the National Assessment Centre whose main role is the coordination of assessment activities in the country. In order to discharge its mandate effectively, the National Assessment Centre has partnered with various stakeholders, chief among them being universities. These partnerships are at individual and institutional level. At the individual level, university researchers have

provided consultancy services in assessment activities. At the institutional level, there is a formal engagement through which the universities provide tailor-made capacity building services.

Moreover, the capacity to develop the assessment tools was said to be high. Participants communicated the Ministry's determination to make learning assessment sustainable by empowering teachers at the training colleges and through regular in-servicing. They made reference to the technical team created by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to understudy the Research Triangle International's Primary Math and Reading Initiative so that they can be able to take over the program in 2018. These findings seem to suggest that Kenya is making good progress in building internal capacity to implement completely autonomous large-scale learning assessments. However, the findings of the study indicate that the National Assessment Centre at the Kenya National Examinations Council is not yet fully capacitated to implement independent large-scale learning assessments.

In terms of programmes, the findings indicate that the Tusome program was conceived and initiated to support learning in Kenya. This is after various large-scale learning assessments indicated that school-going children in the country were not performing well in literacy. Participants observed that after the cross-national learning assessments such as the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) II and III and the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) raised issues on the quality of teaching, programmes such as Tusome were initiated as a response to these findings. The launch of the Tusome programme shows that the learning assessments have not only contributed to policy formulation in the country, but also impacted on education practice. Furthermore, the participants observed that learning assessments have been important in

establishing trends and patterns in learning competencies in Kenya. The cross-national learning assessments have therefore been crucial in evaluating the quality of education in Kenya. These assertions signify that Kenya's participation in cross-national assessments has awakened a focus on monitoring of the quality of learning. Participants were optimistic that the Tusome programme will boost learning significantly. However, as already highlighted in section 4.1.2.2, the Tusome Programme is still technically donor driven as its funding and implementation is being spearheaded by international NGOs and not the Government of Kenya. It only after the government designs, funds and implements a programme of this magnitude that one can ascertain its commitment to taking learning outcomes to scale. Based on the sentiments by the Ministry of Education, that the government has created a ministry technical team to understudy the Tusome programme with the aim of taking over in 2018, perhaps the best time to evaluate this commitment is post 2018.

The study established that unlike her other two counterparts (Kenya and South Africa), **Tanzania** is yet to conduct an independent, government funded, large-scale learning assessment. Moreover, unlike the other two countries that had initiated own national assessments, Tanzania's national body in charge of assessment (NECTA) was not quite committal about its preparedness to implement large-scale learning assessments as stipulated in the Education and Training policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). There is also uncertainty about which institution in Tanzania should lead the process of monitoring learning outcomes. The participants seemed to be unclear concerning who between NECTA and The Prime Minister's Office, Local Government Authority (PMO-RALG) should lead the process. It is important that this is clarified. Therefore, until these structural issues are addressed and the

country designs, funds and implements an independent national large-scale learning assessments, it is difficult to ascertain its preparedness to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes.

In terms of programmes on learning, the researcher established that Tanzania launched the LANES Programme aimed at improving teaching and learning of the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). Supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund, LANES has been tailored to fit to the curriculum requirements. Originally, the programme was meant to support learners from grade 1 to grade 4 only. However, it was realigned to meet the requirements of the new curriculum; cater for pre-primary level as stated in the Education and Training Policy of 2014 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014). Key informant interviews indicated that the launch of this programme was a response to recommendations from the cross-national learning assessments that decried the poor learning competencies in Tanzanian schools. However, like the Tusome Programme, LANES is technically donor driven. Nevertheless, unlike the Tusome Programme, it appears its implementation is well integrated into government structures and operations and therefore much easier to sustain. The BRNeD programme although well-conceived and strong on learning outcomes and assessment, failed to progress due to lack of political goodwill.

Among the three countries, **South Africa** is the country found to have been involved and/or conducted the highest number of large-scale learning assessments. The ability to conduct the Annual National Assessments was cited extensively as an illustration of the technical ability by South Africa to design and implement its own learning assessments, of high quality. Kanjee (2013) agrees that South Africa has seen a steady improvement in technical expertise and

experience in designing and implementing large-scale learning assessments. He indicates that between 1996 and 2007, at least 22 large-scale learning assessments were conducted in South Africa and shown in Figure 4.

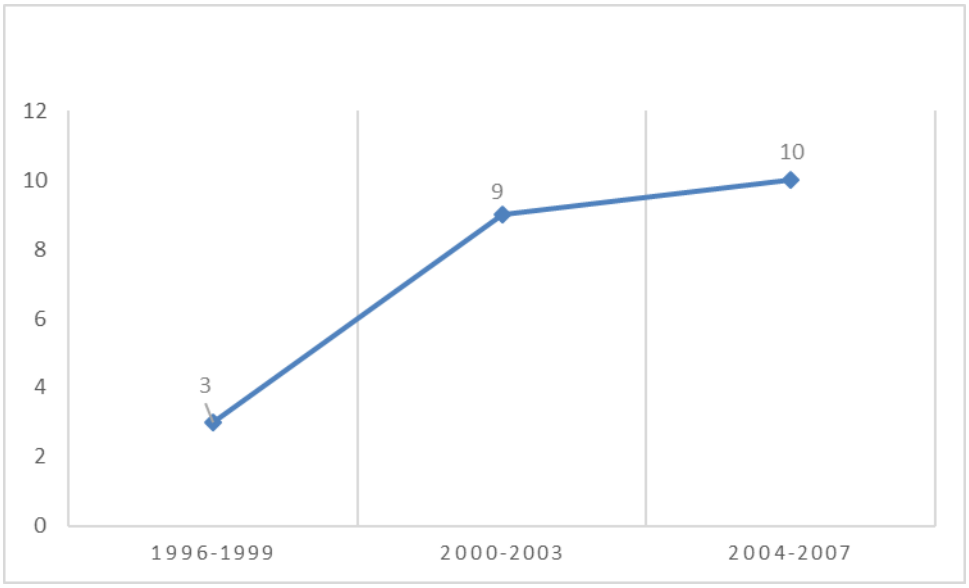

Figure 4: Increase in the number of large-scale learning assessments conducted in South Africa between 2000 and 2007.

Figure 4 reveals that between 1996 and 1999, at least three large-scale learning assessments were conducted, nine assessments between 2000-2003 and 10 between 2004 and 2007. This data shows a growing popularity with the large-scale assessments between 2000 and 2007. This could indicate enhanced technical ability and awareness concerning the importance of monitoring learning outcomes regularly.

Moreover, participants cited Western Cape as an example of a province that has initiated a functional and pragmatic system of monitoring learning assessments. However, even with the successful execution of the Annual National Assessments since 2011, experts in literacy still felt that some elements related to design and execution of large-scale learning assessments were

not well understood and implemented. The elements cited include analysis of data sets, design and calibrations of test items. These therefore are capacity areas that need further attention in South Africa.

In terms of programmes on learning, the study established that in addition to policy formulation, South Africa established programmes such as the Foundations for Learning Campaign, the Dinaledi Schools Programme and the Workbook Initiative meant to address issues of reading and numeracy in schools.

5.4. Participation in Cross-national Learning Assessments and the Culture of Monitoring Learning Outcomes

Under this section, the research regarded availability of supportive government structures and resources invested in literacy programmes as proxy indicators for the sustainability of a culture of monitoring learning outcomes.

The researcher established that **Kenya** had established legal and functional structures such as the National Assessment Centre (NAC) whose mandate is to design, research and monitor learning outcomes in the country. Already, the NAC had conducted independent learning assessments for Grade 3 and plans were advanced to conduct another assessment for Form 2. Participants indicated that with support from other development partners, NAC has planned to institutionalize a system of continuous learning assessments. They indicated that the plan is to conduct a learning assessment at least after every three years. The annual budgetary allocation by the government to the NAC also indicates the commitment by the country to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes.

In terms of structures to support future national learning assessments, the researcher established that at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in **Tanzania**, two departments have been created to support monitoring and evaluation of education quality. In addition, the participant from National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) underscored the fact that education partners complemented NECTA by supporting learning assessments in the country. He cited partners such as Research Triangle International (RTI), Uwezo and Equip Tanzania as having played a key role as far as large-scale learning assessments are concerned. On the other hand, he was concerned about some programs that sampled regions utilizing unstandardized tests yet the results were generalized to the entire country. Henceforth, it is important that issues of complementarity, quality assurance and standardization be given consideration by learning assessment programmes in Tanzania.

Concerning sustainability, the researcher established that Tanzania is initiating plans to facilitate continuous monitoring of learning outcomes. The Big Results Now -Education (BRNeD) initiatives is focused towards improving literacy and numeracy in the country. As shown under section (4.2.2.6), one component of the BRNed was on improving the 3Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic skills) for children in the lower grades whose ideas were integrated in the LANES programme. The latter is currently on-going, indicating the country's efforts at sustaining literacy programmes. Moreover, participants were confident that the learning assessments initiated by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund in Tanzania were well structured to continue in a manner that ensures local ownership. Furthermore, it was indicated that the government plans to conduct a nationwide assessment for grade 2 in 2016. Finally, participants indicated that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training had conducted training for teachers, head

teachers, education coordinators, quality assurance experts and school inspectors to ensure that schools have databases for all learning assessment results. Based on these results, it appears there is a growing commitment towards a culture of learning assessment in Tanzania. However, as discussed under 5.3, it appears that Tanzania is yet to put in place structures necessary to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. Therefore, until these structures are fully operational, the culture and the technical ability to manage independent large-scale learning assessments in Tanzania cannot be well evaluated effectively now, but after a few years from now.

The research findings further indicate that comparatively, **South Africa** has demonstrated more commitment to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. She has done this by establishing structures within the Department of Basic Education and dispensing significant resources (see Figure 5) to ensure that the monitoring of learning outcomes through annual literacy assessments takes place. However, narrowing down to provinces, findings indicate that this readiness differs across each of the provinces. The Western Cape Province was lauded by informants for having conducted its own learning assessments. Confidence was exuded by participants that other provinces could be soon doing so. In terms of resources, the study established that South Africa had invested the most resources (compared to the other two countries) in programmes and structures necessary to implement a monitoring system of learning outcomes. But even with these successes, there are other external factors that could hamper this sustainability; for instance, the Annual National Assessment and efforts to assess teachers have been met with resistance from the teacher unions. Moreover, the government also needs to not only demonstrate, but convince education stakeholders that these

assessments are not an end in themselves. Similarly, it needs to show that programmes implemented to address the poor learning outcomes are indeed generating the necessary results.

The research findings also demonstrated that in addition to policy formulation, South Africa has established bodies meant to address issues of reading and numeracy in schools. They include; the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit and programmes such as the Foundations for Learning Campaign, The Dinaledi Schools Programme, Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE), School Leadership and Management and the Workbook Initiative. This is laudable and further highlights the significance the country has placed on quality education and demonstrates the commitment to the cause of improved learning outcomes.

In terms of actual investment in programmes on literacy, an interview with the Ministry of Education in **Kenya** indicated that the government has been funding over 95 percent of the entire education budget. Some of these has been going to the National Assessment Centre to implement research and to monitor learning outcomes in the country. The Ministry observed that resources were not an issue, rather how to 'organize' them. On the way forward, the Ministry expressed confidence that the National Education Sector Plan (Government of Kenya, 2013) will attract and allocate resources well and will hopefully achieve significant progress in learning outcomes in Kenya. Other participants seemed to agree with the observation about adequacy of resources at the Ministry but were concerned with the timeliness of release of these funds to support learning assessments and other related programmes.

Apart from funds from the central government, informants indicated that development partners have been willing to support learning programmes in Kenya. They cited the Global

Partnership of Education support under the Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR) project which funded two national assessments at grade two. In terms of real investments, interviews and secondary data indicated that at least $121 million has been invested to support the Tusome programme while the learning assessment conducted in 2011 cost $420,000 and the one for 2016 was allocated $ 580,000 (Key Informant Interviews, KNEC and MoE, March, 2015). These are significant investments that demonstrate an awareness and commitment to support learning assessment programmes in Kenya.

With regards to increase in allocation of resources specific to literacy programmes in **Tanzania**, the most notable investment is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that allocated about US$100 million to the United Republic of Tanzania for literacy programmes (Global Partnership for Education, 2014). Moreover, from the informants, the researcher learned that the GPE fund had supported a baseline assessment on reading, writing and arithmetic using Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Snap-short for School Management and Effectiveness (SSME) instruments. Besides the GPE, participants indicated that Tanzania receives support from UNICEF. However, it was not immediately clear on the amount of resources that the United Republic of Tanzania has invested in literacy programmes. Overall, literacy programmes and learning assessments have mostly been donor driven in Tanzania.

Between 2010 and 2015 only, South Africa invested at least $ 424.2 million to support reading programmes and learning assessments (Department of Basic Education 2010-2011 budget; Department of Basic Education 2015/2016 budget; Nsele, 2015). These resources, in addition to formal structures discussed above, highlights the commitment by the South African government to improve learning outcomes and sustain a culture of measurement. The total

amount invested in reading programmes across the three countries between 2010 and 2015 was $USD 645.2 million (Department of Basic Education 2010-2011 budget; Department of Basic Education 2015/2016 budget; Global Partnership for Education, 2014; Key Informant Interviews, 2015; Nsele, 2015). Figure 5 shows the proportion of South Africa's contribution in the total amount of $USD 645.2 million.

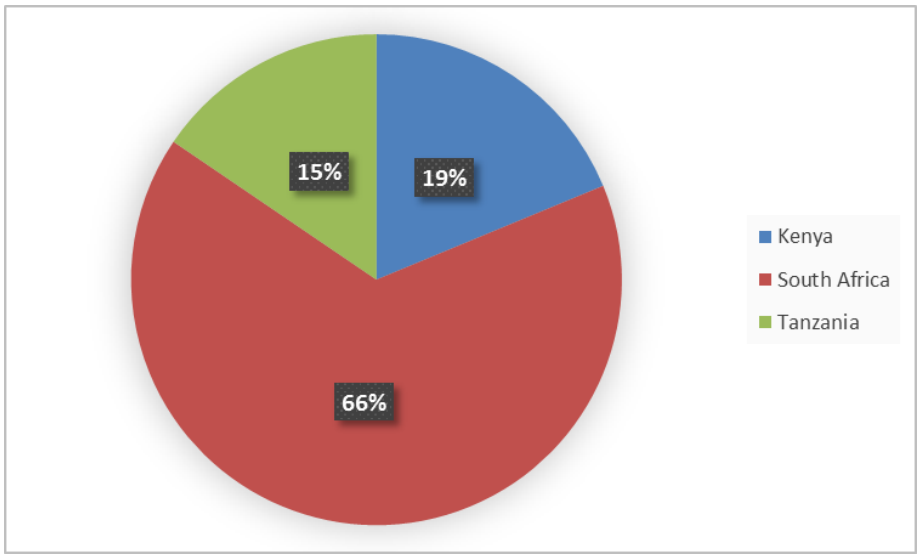

Figure 5: proportion by country of the total investment in literacy programmes

The total amount of cash invested in learning programmes in just a period of 6 years (between 2010-2015) was $USD 645.2 million. Of the total, Kenya invested $USD 121 million, Tanzania invested $ USD 100 million and South Africa invested $ 424.2 million. It is therefore clear that South Africa has had the largest investment in reading programmes[1].

[1] The Kenyan and Tanzanian figure does not include the amount of money that goes into for instance, the National Assessment Center (Kenya). The total amount for Tanzania only shows that which is invested in the LANES program and does not indicate the amount invested by the central government. This is because the MoE budget for Kenya and Tanzania for that period did not disaggregate the data to show exactly how much went in to support reading programs and learning assessments. The figure therefore could be higher than this.

5.5. Chapter Summary

The summary of the findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that the participation in cross-national learning assessments by Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa had contributed to policy reforms and to some extent, built capacity and inspired a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. The programmes that were instituted include Tusome in Kenya, LANES in Tanzania, National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) and Annual National Assessments in South Africa. Curriculum reforms and policy decisions on additional resources for teacher and pupils (such as the Workbook Initiative in South Africa) and teacher development programmes (such as the in-service teacher programme in Kenya) were also implemented. Furthermore, participation in the cross-national learning assessments motivated countries and donors to invest resources into learning programmes and large-scale learning assessments. For instance, across the three countries, recent data (in the public domain) indicates that at least $ 645.2 million had been invested in education programmes/assessments meant to improve literacy and numeracy especially in the lower grades (Department of Basic Education 2010-2011 budget; Department of Basic Education 2015/2016 budget; Global Partnership for Education, 2014; Key Informant Interviews, 2015; Nsele, 2015). Best et al. (2013) support this conclusion by indicating that large-scale assessments influence policy and curriculum reforms, performance standards and resource allocation. They further assert that the utilization of assessment data in policy-making often inform the creation of assessment policies in developing countries.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides an integration of the research findings. The chapter highlights the contribution of the study to knowledge, based on the theories underpinning this research. Practical and policy implications of the study are presented and suggestions are given for future research. The limitations of the study are also considered.

The overall objective of this study was to analyze the relationship between participation in cross-national learning assessments and the impact of this participation on education policy, curriculum and capacity development in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The study also analyzed the culture of learning assessments within these countries, as a consequence of their participation in cross-national learning assessments. The theories of change and social development in addition to a conceptual framework of technical exchange/capacity transfer are adopted to discuss the findings of the research.

6.1. The Theory of Change; the causality dichotomy of the study findings

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the theory of change (ToC) is an important management, monitoring and evaluation tool. This tool is especially useful is analyzing critical assumption, both long-term and short-term that underpin social and community development initiatives. This tool has its origins in logic models and logical frameworks as applied in monitoring and evaluation (Valters, 2014). However, unlike these early models, the ToC is more robust, depicting in a logical and comprehensive manner how short and long-term results will be generated from a series of corresponding actions/interventions. The ToC goes further to identify and isolate possible intervening variables, assumptions and risks that may affect the achievement of the intended programme/project goal(s). *Causality*, or otherwise known as

attribution is therefore a logical way of demonstrating how certain inputs/interventions or actions have produced certain results/outputs/impacts (Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Mbabu et.al., 2014). Stathers et.al., (2013) explain that a ToC shows and explains the impact pathways and the assumptions that a programme or a project makes. The writers further observe that a ToC presents a logical explanation of the ways by which change is anticipated as a result of an appropriate mix of *inputs* through the execution of *activities/interventions*, which in-turn produce *outputs*, then *outcomes* and *impact* along an impact pathway. This is illustrated in Figure 6. According to these writers, "the ToC questions the assumptions about causality underlying the relationships between outputs, outcomes and impact" (Stathers et.al., 2013, p. 320).

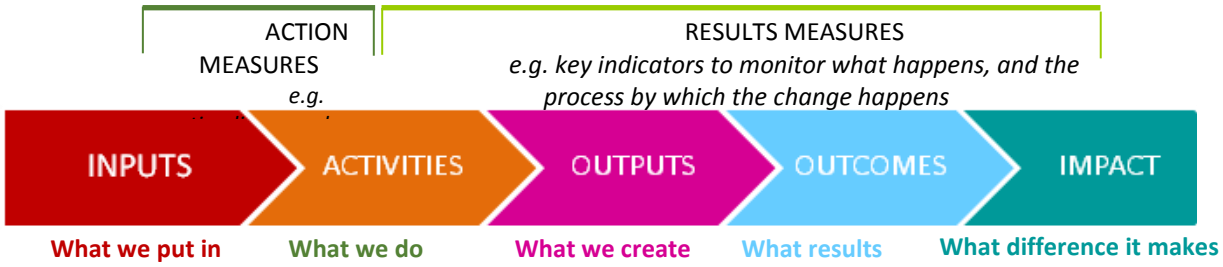

Figure 6. The different levels of results that encapsulate the theory of change (source: Stathers et.al., 2013)

As already discussed under section 2.6, the issue of causality/attribution has been contentious in the development arena (Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009). On one side of the dichotomy are those who argue that results/outcomes in social development programme can never be isolated accurately for a specific program/project (attribution) and that many intricate intervening variables often interplay to produce social-economic results and therefore a project/programme can only claim contribution (Almquist, 2011). Mayne (1999 p. 2-3) observes that measuring

contribution (determine what the contribution a certain programme has made to the outcome) and attribution ("how much of the success -or failure- can we attribute to the programme") are the most difficult elements in evaluating development programmes.

The debate concerning contribution versus attribution can be winding and difficult to exhaust. Some development experts regard these debates as mere arguments about terminology and of therefore not important[2]. The current study has tended to lean towards 'contribution'. Focusing on attribution would have required sophistically econometric tools and resources. However, this study, the two terminologies have been in certain instances, used interchangeably.

This study has also contextualized theory of change simply as a logical illustration of how social development occurs that is, by how early changes and outputs arising from the participation in cross-national learning assessments relate to more intermediate changes (Figure 7). The relationship between intermediate changes and the longer-term changes (see Mbabu et. al., 2015) in the lives of people are then explored (see section 6. 3).

[2] For more analysis on this topic, read the 'Attribution Vs. Contribution', online article AID LEAP (un-dated). Available at http://aidleap.org/2015/11/23/contribution-vs-attribution-a-pointless-debate/. Accessed on 2/03/2016

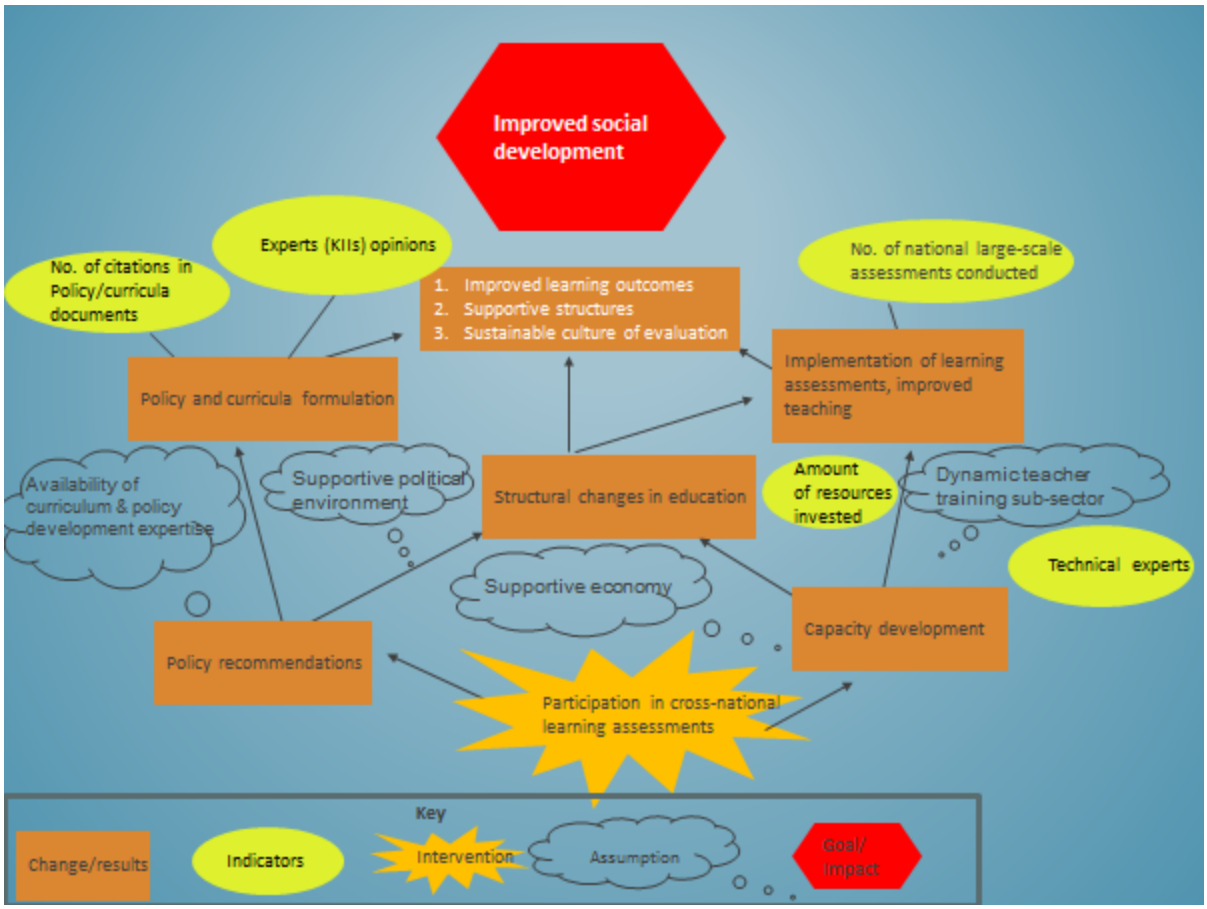

Figure 7: The theory of change proposed in the study

As discussed in Chapter 1, education experts aver that participation in cross-national learning assessments in not an end in itself, but that a country participates in these programmes in order to learn about the quality of her education relative to other countries and so as to formulate policies to improve education (Hanushek & Kimko, 2000; Hanushek & Wößmann, 2007; OECD, 2004; UNESCO, 2005). For the current study therefore, this participation was regarded as the *intervention*. For the intervention to occur, *inputs* such as financial resources, technical expertise, tests, software and so forth are required (Mbabu et. al., 2015). The *outputs* emerging from these assessments include policy recommendations and exchange of technical knowledge (see the conceptual framework under section 2.6). The *outcomes* that can be *attributed or* have

been *contributed* by participating in the cross-national learning assessments by the three countries include the formulation of policies and curricula, improved teacher competencies, improved technical capacities to implement autonomous large-scale learning assessments, improved structural changes in education and sustainable culture of monitoring learning outcomes (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007; OECD, 2004). The indicators of success in the theory of change adopted in this study include the number of citations the cross-national learning assessments have been cited in the policy documents, availability of technical experts to design and conduct large-scale learning assessments, amount of funds allocated to conduct large scale-learning assessments and the number of independent national large-learning assessments conducted by a country. Additionally, for attribution purposes, the study considered the views of education experts (the key informants) to ascertaining which policies were influenced by the cross-national learning assessments. If these indicators were evident, based on the theory of change, the study was to conclude that that sufficient evidence that participating in cross-national learning assessments is worthwhile, that is, to demonstrate a ToC that argues that international treaties and legislations/frameworks do indeed impact on national development agendas. This is discussed under section 6.2.

Therefore, as far as the indicators are concerned, the study has shown that at least 18 policy/official strategic documents were formulated in these three as a consequence of participating in the cross-national learning assessments. Across the 18 documents, a total of 223 specific citations of cross-national learning programmes are recorded. Moreover, five curriculum reforms attributable to the participation in the cross-national learning assessments are also recorded. Additionally, the research findings have demonstrated that at least six

programmes were instituted in the three countries attributable to cross-national learning assessments (namely, Tusome in Kenya, LANES and BRNeD in Tanzania, NEEDU, the Workbook Initiative and the Annual National Assessments in South Africa. In terms of investments, across the three countries, the study has shown that at least $ 645.2 million were invested in learning programmes/assessments.

Further, based on this theory, the study has established improved technical capacities in the public sector in South Africa, and to some extent Kenya to design and conduct independent learning assessments. Tanzania has also demonstrated a commitment to establish official structures necessary to design, implement and sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes. In these three countries, however, the study has established that the capacity to design learning assessments has largely remained at higher levels of the Ministries and has not cascaded down to the grassroots-level (teachers and lower level education officials).

Additionally, the study considered the views of the key informants to establish the nexus between participating in cross-national learning assessments and policy, curriculum and programme formulation. Chapter 4, highlights a few of such sentiments. Examples of verbatim citations from the participants indicating attribution to cross-national learning assessments are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Sample verbatim excerpts indicating contribution of cross-national learning assessments

Country	**Example of verbatim quotations indicating contribution of cross-national learning assessments**
Kenya	1. *recent task force reports such as the report on Realignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 borrow their thinking from findings and recommendations from large-scale learning assessments* 2. *…findings and recommendations from the large-scale learning assessments further informed the writing of Sessional Paper of 2012* 3. *the genesis of these recommendations on the need for a competence-based curriculum are the learning assessments such as the English Language Literacy in Kenya project, SACMEQ, Uwezo and Monitoring Evaluation Learning* 4. *in it [NESP], we factored in the results and recommendations from the learning assessments…. It was a useful coincidence that while we were discussing this, results from EGMA and EGRA by RTI came out.* 5. *as a results of the SACMEQ and MEL recommendations, holiday tuition in Kenya was abolished, HIV/AIDS integrated in the curriculum and the mean grade for entry into teacher training raised* 6. *The capacity to develop the test is very high; but the capacity to analyze the data is a little bit low; the capacity to have the data disseminated is also low*
Tanzania	1. *the national assessment framework for Tanzania has been benchmarked with the international standards such as those by SACMEQ, UWEZO, EGRA and EGMA* 2. *There are several things we as a country have learned from the likes of SACMEQ, UWEZO, EGRA and EGMA. What the Tanzania Examinations Council has done is to pick the best practices from these. For instance, what we have done is that the tools used for assessments not only conform to the national curriculum, but also adhere to international best practices and standards espoused by these cross-national learning programmes* 3. *Around 2011, we started talking a lot about learning achievements, because of what we had seen in the Uwezo report*
South Africa	1. *It is more of the outcomes from Annual National Assessment and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) that led to the formulation of the CAPS* 2. *There was a lot of research pointing to the negative effects of the previous curriculum (C2005….. lots of research was pointing to that and I think that's why the CAP statements come in* 3. *this underscores the fact that South Africa's involvement in both internal (ANA) and cross- national (SACMEQ) has had a positive effect on policy formulation* 4. *The policy changes influenced by learning assessments have focused on trying to improve literacy. Some of those relate to the curriculum, the new curriculum statement, the introduction of the annual national assessments and introduction of the workbooks, many of the attempts to try to deal with teacher training. All of these have been part consequences of finding out how badly we have done in these assessments* 5. *The Annual National Assessment is partly a response to what all the research, including international tests was saying about our schools* 6. *The workbook initiative came out of the concern that teachers don't know how to structure learning opportunities for students under annual tests systems, and it showed up particular things that we knew were shortfalls, particularly at the primary level. That is another outcome of these studies (cross-national learning assessments)*

The theory of change is an important tool in programme management as it helps planners think beyond the linear causal models by identifying and underlying assumptions and preparing to address risks (Anderson, undated). This is an innovative way of activating strategic foresight (Mbabu et. al., 2015). Guijt, (2013, p. 1) define assumptions as "An assertion about the world that underlies the plan/anticipated change process". In this context, the theory of change adopted by the current study made various assumptions. The first assumption that cross-national learning programmes make when they provide policy recommendations is that the countries possess curriculum and policy development expertise that will analyse the recommendations and respond by formulating policies and developing curricula (Learning Metrics Task Force, 2015). The second assumption the programmes make is that the economy is strong enough to support structural changes in education that would support sustainable quality education (Dumciuviene, 2015; Mercana & Sezerb, 2014). For a sustainable exchange of knowledge from the technical experts to teachers to occur, that is, so that the latter can teach and design high quality learning assessments, particularly at the school level, the assumption is that there is a dynamic teacher training sub-sector in each country (OECD, 2012). The other assumption made is that there is a supportive political environment that is necessary to support policy formulation and implementation of structural changes in favour of improved learning outcomes (Levin, 2001).

In conclusion, this discussion has demonstrated that theories of change are of great universal utility. The current study has demonstrated that the tool is useful in analyzing social development interventions such as the implementation of cross-national learning assessments. However, despite their utility, the theories of change possess inherent weaknesses: for instance, these theories cannot fully explain the trajectory of impacts or how outcomes occur.

This is because of the uncertain natural and social environment in which projects and programmes are designed and also because “community initiatives are complex, precisely because the initiatives have different strands and operate at different levels” (Van de Westhuizen & Abrahams, 2002, p. 2). The theories of change are also amorphous and ‘often develop a life of their own’ (Van de Westhuizen & Abrahams, 2002, p. 8).

6.2. The Study Findings in the Context of International Frameworks and Country Specific Policies

The relationship and significance of international policy development and its influence at the national-level policy formulation has received notable attention in the globalization, international development and geopolitical debates (Becker & Davies, 2014). Becker and Davies (2014) posit that the policy development in one country can be influenced by international actors or can be informed by policies formulated elsewhere in the world. Analyzing how international interdependence shapes country-specific internal decision- making and policy, Gilardi (2012), argues that decisions in one country today depend not only on domestic factors and international pressures, but also on decisions made in other countries. Gilardi (2012) refers to this process as *‘transnational diffusion’* and further classifies the ‘diffusion’ mechanisms into four broad categories, namely coercion, competition, learning, and emulation. The author asserts that transnational diffusion is real and has produced interesting insights and driven processes. Agreeing with these sentiments, Füglister (2012) posits that interdependencies among collective actors indicate that policy diffusion is an important component in policy making at the international level. Using the diffusion of health insurance subsidy policies in Switzerland as a case example, but focusing specifically on the role of intergovernmental bodies,

Füglister (2012) observes that intergovernmental cooperation provides useful insights into the process of policy diffusion. The author further argues that national and regional programmes provide an important opportunity for policy makers to exchange information and experiences thereby formulating their own opinions which ultimately enhance policy learning and development. He further observes that successful policies do not just spread but that they need to be channeled through institutionalized intergovernmental cooperation, agencies or networks.

Concluding his remarks, Füglister (2012, p. 24) postulates that intergovernmental networks and policy actors that promote policy learning and exchange are essential and "a promising direction for getting a more nuanced picture of the pattern of *policy diffusion*". In discussing this issue, Béland and Orenstein (2009) observe that transnational policy actors such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have for a long time exerted much of their influence on country policy making and implementation by taking on the roles of global think tanks and policy entrepreneurs. These organizations have been credited with guiding institutional creation, proposing and reinforcing reforms and have to a significant extent, impacted on national policy outcomes through advocacy and conducted operational studies to demonstrate policy innovations (Béland and Orenstein, 2009, p. 14).

The researcher has demonstrated to a greater extent how the World Declaration on Education-For-All (EFA) framework has influenced policy and curriculum formulation in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The EFA framework of action launched in Jomtien in March 1990 and adopted during the Dakar World Education Forum held in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000) called upon countries to broaden their conceptualization of education from mere 'access' to a greater focus

on education quality as denoted by measurable learning outcomes (Tikly, 2011). Participation in cross-national learning assessments has affected education policy development, capacity and program development, curriculum reforms and investments in education Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. For instance, the study has shown how the various policy instruments that were formulated post Jomtien and Dakar in these three countries were influenced by these declarations, that is, the instruments clearly declared their commitment and alignment to these declarations, protocols and agreements as resolved in these two conferences.

However, the underlying rationale for conducting large-scale standardized learning assessments is to provide information on a country's educational outcomes so as to guide education policy development, and resourcing decisions (Benavot & Tanner, 2007; Braun et al. (2006); Forster 2001 cited in Best, 2013). Giving a practical example, Kanjee (2013) points out that out of the 22 learning assessments conducted between 1999-2007, only one of the studies focused on providing teachers with information while all the rest focused on providing information to policy makers. To this extent, the current study has demonstrated how cross-national learning assessments conducted under the auspices of the EFA Framework for Action have influenced the formulation and content of at least 17 policy/strategic documents in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. Furthermore, the research has shown that at least five curricula reforms took place in these three countries that are attributable to large-scale learning assessments. These findings reveal the impact of international policy frameworks on local policy environment. Specifically, the findings suggest that the objective of conducting the cross-national learning assessments, that is, to influence policy formulation, has been achieved in these three countries.

Policy experts agree that the rate of impact and diffusion of international policies across countries vary (Becker and Davies, 2014), even when the evidence that the implementation of the policy or research findings can help improve the quality of lives (Overseas Development Institute, 2004). This conclusion is also true in the current study. For instance, this study has identified more significant progress in policy and programme formulation and resource allocation in reading programmes in South Africa than Kenya and Tanzania. Furthermore, between Kenya and Tanzania, the findings show that the former has made much progress in capacity development and the implementation of independent learning assessments. South Africa and Kenya therefore reflect a more practical commitment to sustain the culture of monitoring learning outcomes through the establishing of structures and independently funding large-scale learning assessments. On the other hand, Tanzania is just starting to put in place structures to enable these developments to occur. This study did not however establish the reason for the differing rates of diffusion between these three countries. This could be a potential area for further research. The Overseas Development Institute (2004) identifies various reasons/factors that could explain the difference in the rate of diffusion and classifies them into three: the political context; the evidence; and the nexus between policy and research communities, within a fourth set of factors: the external context. Additionally, policymakers have also blamed researchers bemoaning their inability to make their findings accessible and practical.

Other experts have on the other hand questioned the transnational diffusion of policies and the honest role of the international actors. For instance, as shown in Chapter 2, Goldstein (2004) argues that the adoption of cross-national learning assessments is a form of hegemonic

control of national systems by international policy actors such as the World Bank. The author posits that such actors achieve this by imposition from outside systemic reforms under the guise of 'remedies'. Pogge (2008, cited in Milner, 2005), while relying on the dependency theory also observes that developed countries and international institutions harm poor countries through exploitation and imposition of foreign ideologies and policies often through trade and economic embargos. These sentiments were also expressed by some participants in the current study. For instance, a participant in South Africa observed that *"not all international standards are really good"* and that "*African problems need African solutions, applying standards outside African continent is not the way to go"* (Key Informant interview, DEB, September, 2015). Another participant also raised a similar issue when he observed that assessment of learners against international standards without considering a country's resource and technological factors should be prohibited. This argument may seem plausible but the participant may not be aware that these assessments are standardized, often taking into consideration these differences.

Moreover, because of the environmental, resource and cultural differences, education experts have advised against ranking league tables and UNESCO (2015) observes that publishing comparisons of participating countries is an ethical issue and can discourage participation by poorer countries in instances where few children are learning the basics. Mulongo (2014) posits that should ranking be absolutely necessary, the performance on cross-national assessments should be construed in relative terms, based on improvement on a specified baseline value.

Béland and Orenstein (2009) although arguing in support of the collaboration between transnational and national actors, alert readers that the position of a country in the global economic system plays a vital role in such a collaboration. For instance, they point out that

poorer, smaller countries often lack the same expertise capacities as the more prosperous nations and this makes them more dependent on the expertise and the policy ideas provided by transnational actors. In most cases, this expertise comes at a premium; at the expense of the poor countries. On the other hand, the rich countries would rather the status quo remains so as to continue reaping these premium benefits (Pogge, 2005). Finally, empirical evidence on both the diffusion and the impact of intergovernmental networks on policy diffusion is often lacking (Füglister, 2012) making attribution difficult thus raising the 'risk of finding evidence of policy diffusion where, in fact, policy change was simply the result of independent choices' (Volden et al. 2008 in Füglister, 2012, p. 1). The researcher agrees with this observation and like in this current study, recommends the adoption of the theory of change which if applied well, can clearly elaborate the outcomes that can directly be attributed to a project. This explains the adoption of the theory of change in this study. Using this theory, the study has potentially demonstrated the attribution nexus. While adopting the theories of change, researchers should be cautious not to get entangled with the politics of *attribution* versus *contribution*. The most important aspects as far as impact evaluation is concerned are transparency and full disclosure.

These supportive and opposing dissenting normative debates and philosophical dispositions are important to this study. The researcher was keen to document any nuances from the key informant interviews alleging hegemonic pressures in participating in or adopting the learning assessments or policy instruments. However, to a large extent, this study adopts a supportive position in favor of 'transnational diffusion' of policies, practices and capacity. This position is taken by the study because the voices opposing the diffusion and suspecting hegemonic tendencies by the international actors are limited compared to those that support

this view. The study thus supports Gilardi's (2012) normative position. It agrees that in an increasingly interconnected world, decisions in one country today are often influenced by international practices and policy.

This position is also taken by Milner (2005) who observes that the growing connectivity of individual national economies into a single integrated global marketplace implies that countries are increasingly affected and influenced by what goes on in the others. This author further observes that countries are no longer individual identities, separate units or existing in silos, because in the current environment, human lives are profoundly affected by non-domestic programmes, social institutions, international laws of governance, business and diplomacy (Milner, 2005). Füglister (2012, p.4) highlights a dearth of empirical evidence on the adoption and the impact of intergovernmental networks and transnational actors on policy diffusion and concludes that "their empirical identification has always proved to be problematic". Like in the case of this current study, education researchers have expressed concern with the apparent deficiency of information on the effects of cross-national learning assessments on participating countries (Wagner et. al, 2012; Mulongo, 2014). This is one of the gaps that this study has attempted to address.

Additionally, Füglister (2012) observes that intergovernmental cooperation, regional bodies and transnational actors provide opportunities for policy makers to network, exchange information, experiences and impact each other in policy formulation and learning. He further observes that successful policies do not just occur and spread in a random manner but that they are channeled through institutionalized intergovernmental cooperation, agencies or networks. This is the same position adopted by this study in support of the adoption of the Education For

All (EFA) cross-national learning assessments as opportunities for diffusion of capacities to design and implement independent national learning assessments in addition to curriculum and policy reform for sustainable improvements in learning outcomes.

6.3. The Implication of the Study Findings on Social Development in the Three Countries

The nexus between literacy and social development has received a lot of attention in education and research discourse (UNESCO, 2005) and has received similar attention by bilateral agencies (World Bank, 2012). It is also a leading policy issue in most countries in the world, among both industrialized and developing countries (Wagner, 1993). To show this important dichotomy further, Grey (2012) observes that literacy is a vital concern in national approaches to address poverty, regional progress and international relations. The fundamental reason why literacy development, especially in early grades, has received this much attention is because research has shown that school children who do not acquire grade competencies and reading and numeracy by about grade two will most likely struggle to attain these competencies later in life (Morrow, 2005; Runo, 2010).

Moreover, literacy is strongly correlated with achievement on other school subjects, school drop-out rates (Mulongo, 2013c; Morrow, 2005; Runo, 2010) and employability (Carlson, 2013). In other words, quality education is synonymous with learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy (McCormac, 2012; UNESCO, 2000; Queensland State Education, undated). Acquisition of early grade reading and numeracy is therefore the bedrock of learning (McCormac, 2012; Mulongo, 2013c). It is for this reason that literacy has been linked with national and regional economic development (Wagner, 1993) and therefore an issue of human capital development at the macro-level. Moreover, it is clear that literacy affects the lives of persons at their individual

level (micro-level) and the development of a nation; this can therefore be explained using the human capital theory (HCT).

The HCT states that a person's education is an investment (which involves costs, in terms of direct spending on education and the opportunity costs of student time) in her/his human capital (similar to investment by a firm in physical capital). This investment makes the individual more productive and accrues him/her a future stream of benefits such as improved productivity, higher income and other non-monetary benefits to the individual as well as the society (Mulongo, 2013c, p. 12). Venkatraja and Indira (2011) avers that education enhances individual endowments, builds their capabilities to overcome personal and social obstacles therefore enlarging their worldview, opportunities and choices that ultimately improves their well-being. In its broadest sense, these authors seem to indicate that education gives people the opportunity of freedom to make independent decisions.

It is on the basis of this assumption that this study argues that individuals (micro-level) and countries as a whole (macro-level) have much at stake as far as the opportunity cost is concerned of not investing in literacy development and associated programmes. Mohamed and Aiayanna (2013) examined this issue at the macro-level and observed that the countries that were ranked low on the Human Development Index (HDI) had correspondingly low literacy levels and they concluded that literacy achievements determine the knowledge and efficiency of human beings and thus a nation. Discussing the relationship between literacy, drop-out and the economy, Carlson (2013, p. 5) observes that learners that leave school early enter the workforce with inadequate skills, often earn less, contribute less and also tend to cost more in expenses.

Alliance for Excellent Education (2006a, in Carlson, 2013) indicates that a high school drop-out contributes approximately $60,000 less in taxes over his/her lifetime and that the more than 1.2 million students who dropped out of the Class of 2011 in America resulted in $713 million fewer state tax revenues and also in $19 billion less in home sales and $741 million less in auto sales (Alliance for Excellent Education, 201 in Carlson, 2013). Burchi (2006) established a relationship between school access and food security. The author observes that an increase in children's school attendance rate by 100% can reduce food insecurity by approximately 19%. Because of these findings, the author recommends that governments and donors should invest more in education; to him, the benefits of education spans economic development because it effects positively the lives of people, especially those of the least advantaged. At the micro-level, Reder (2010 in Carlson, 2013) found a strong relationship between literacy proficiency and earnings and concluded that "literacy skills not only impact on initial earnings in high school dropouts, but the rate of growth of future earnings. This supports the conclusion that literacy skills are essential for future success" (Carlson, 2013, p. 2).

As far as social development is concerned, studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between literacy and maternal health (Cleland, 2010; Fry-Bowers, 2012; Wagner, 1993). Experts indicate that literate women are more likely to consume nutritious foods, plan their families well, are more knowledgeable on disease curative and preventative mechanisms, their infants are less likely to die and they live better disease free lifestyles (Sandiford, Cassel & Sanchez, 1995; Stromquist, 1999). Studies have also demonstrated that educating women impacts on fertility rates and on raising healthier children that eventually possess greater human capital potential (Todaro & Smith, 2011). Therefore, literacy is central in breaking the rancorous

multigenerational cycle of ill child health, low educational achievement, poverty and child mortality.

This study therefore argues that quality education that supports literacy accrues significant socio-economic benefits to an individual and the country at large. This is in support of Hanushek and Woessmann (2016) who posit that the knowledge capital of countries as measured by cross-national learning scores is correlated with long-term growth in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. These authors further observe that access to education alone, as measured by years of schooling completed, bears no relationship with long-term economic returns. The authors analyzed the correlation between countries' performance on cross-national learning assessments and their long-term growth in real GDP per capita (see Figure 8) and concluded that countries that invest in quality education have the potential to grow rapidly.

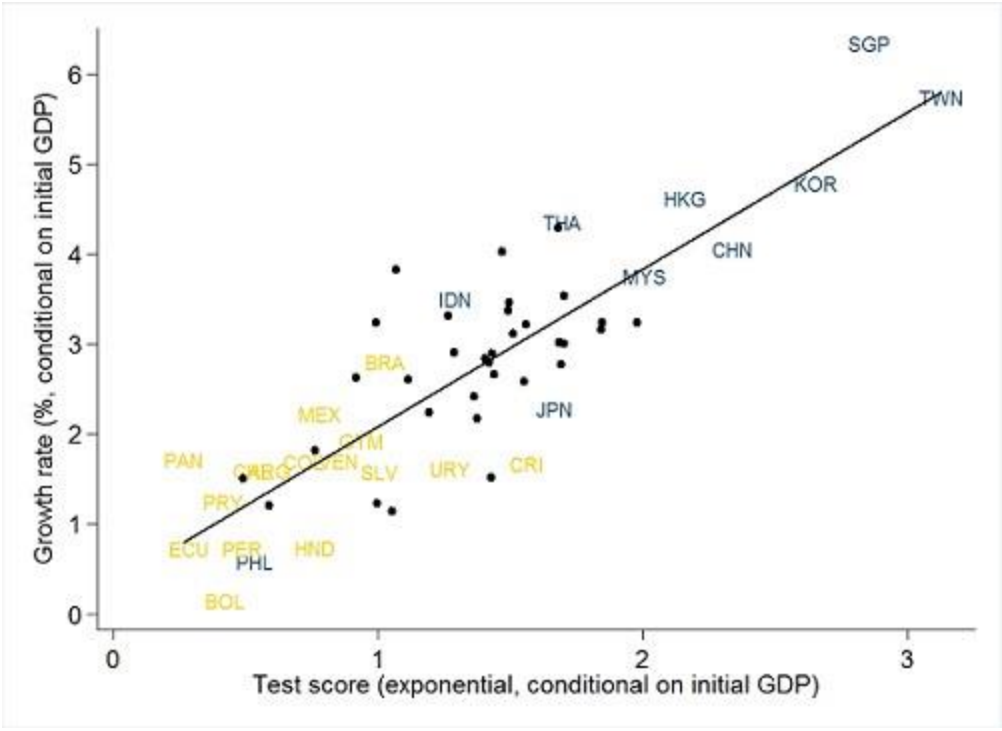

Figure 8: Relationship between countries' performance on cross-national learning assessments and long-term growth in real GDP per capita *(source: Hanushek & Woessmann, 2016)*

Given the significance of better learning outcomes, governments should intervene with appropriate legislation that supports literacy development, especially in the early grades. Furthermore, any government should also strive to ensure that the poor and vulnerable in the society access this type of education. This is an important strategy for addressing inequality in a country (Mulongo, 2013b). In other words, literacy development should not be subjected to liberalized market forces, which in most cases marginalize the poor (Mamoon & Murshed, 2007). On the contrary, governments should intervene in literacy development due to its huge returns on investment at the personal and collective levels. Therefore, analyzing the policy environment as far as literacy development is concerned and providing concrete conclusions to inform governments in the three countries is a worthwhile undertaking.

Gujjar (undated) draws the nexus between literacy and social issues such as freedom and argues that literacy promotes better awareness and participation in community development. He avers that literacy is a great agent of social change that is critical is improving and strengthening skills, values, communications, mobility, personal prosperity and the freedom of people. This position is supported by UNESCO (2006) which posits that literacy is fundamental in the acquisition of individual's wide range of capabilities such as promotion of sound health, social cohesion, lifelong learning, better management of reproductive health and raising an educated and socially (well) adjusted family (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1999). Gujjar (undated) asserts that literacy should occupy a central place in the life of any community. The author posits that this consequently leads to an active society in which individuals have a sense of freedom and responsibility. He observes that the nexus between education and the progress of any society is strong, and each influences the other. Education can help change society by improving and strengthening skills, values, communications, mobility, personal prosperity and freedom.

In addition to the primary benefits of literacy, Wagner et. al. (2012) isolate what they called secondary benefits of literacy which include decreased rates of incarceration in prisons, reduced dependency on welfare and welfare programmes, and social integration. Gujjar (undated) adds other secondary benefits such as instilling basic human etiquette and manners, improved personal awareness and esteem, empowerment, critical thinking and increased political participation.

At the macro level, literacy has been correlated increasingly with comparative advantages for nations (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2016; Mulongo, 2013b; Yeoh and Chu, 2012). The advantages of an educated workforce cannot be gainsaid, especially in the current techno-

knowledge based economies. Economists and education experts have argued that investment in education (human capital) is the surest way a nation can address poverty, inequality, diseases and human rights. Contributing to this debate, Hawkes and Ugur (2012, p. 336) observes that "it is the human resources of a nation, not its capital or its natural resources, that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development".

Citing specific examples, Hawkes and Ugur (2012, p. 380) outlined the following as the key benefits a country derives by investing in literacy/education: (1) a more productive labor force with increased knowledge and skills; (2) better employment opportunities and income-earning opportunities (3) educated individuals and leaders to take-up vacancies left by departing expatriates or otherwise vacant positions in governmental services, public corporations, private businesses, and professions; and (4) better attitudes and positive habits. With these immense benefits at the micro-level (individual) and macro-level (community/national), Gujjar (undated) observes that it is the reason literacy and numeracy development has been at the forefront of the development agenda for the more progressive economies and historical developments in the world. Therefore, without proactive investments in policy that result in changes in investments, capacities and classroom development for better literacy outcomes, education inequality will persist with the worst affected by this being the rural poor.

Todaro and Smith (2011) observe that it is because of this growing awareness and realization about the significance of better learning outcomes that many countries are investing heavily in the expansion of formal programmes in literacy. Education planners and stakeholders have come to acknowledge that access to school is no longer enough, because "schooling is not always to be equated with the spread of learning" (Todaro and Smith, 2011, p. 364) and early

grade literacy especially early childhood education is seen as the primary site where the foundation of learning occurs (Trudell, Dowd, Piper & Bloch, 2012). Perhaps it is in this context that we have seen the three countries and their development partners invest significant amount of resources, both financial and human into early grade literacy programmes. However, it appears that most of these investments, especially in Tanzania, are donor driven. Even in Kenya, it is only more recently that the government started investing in early childhood education programmes. Initially, this was mostly dominated and provided by the private sector or religious organizations (Guantai, 2012; Murunga, 2015). This under-investment, however, in early grade literacy programmes, is not unique to these two countries. Herman (2013) observes that even developed countries such as America also under-invest, with public and private spending on this sector amounting to only 0.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product compared with countries such as Denmark, Israel and Spain that spend not less than 0.9 percent. With under-investment in early literacy programmes (including learning assessments), these countries are likely to miss the benefits that accrue from investing in this important sector (Rolnick and Grunewald, 2011).

The current study also established improved political will in the three countries as evidenced by policy developments and curricula review in favor of literacy development especially in early grades. Although gaps remain in the development of teacher training curricula that are strong on pedagogy for literacy, test development, assessment and grading, the progress made on this front is commendable. The findings of the study suggest a growing dissatisfaction by stakeholders concerning the implementation of the policies and strategies related to literacy development. These are important issues that the countries ought to address because policy development and curriculum reforms are not an end in themselves. Sound and

efficient implementation of policies and curricula have been found to impact profoundly on social development. This is affirmed by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (2002, p. 1) which indicates that proactive improvements in the way education policy is implemented can result in improvements in the quality of the labor force in a country which in turn enhances efficiency and accelerates productivity. The Institute further observes that the improvement in the quality of the labor force can reduce social tensions and can enhance the legitimacy of the political system, which in turn attracts long-term domestic and foreign investments. With these immense social benefits, it is not clear why the implementation of the education policies on literacy has not been satisfactory in the three countries. This will be a suggested area of exploration in a future research study.

Hallsworth, Parker and Rutter (2011), attempt to explain the gap between theory and practice, as far as policy formulation and implementation is concerned. They argue that policy implementation flounders because of unrealistic models during policy formation, exclusion of important constituencies during policy formulation/implementation or the implementation is under-resourced. Because of this disconnect, technocrats in the civil service are usually aware of what should be done but experience difficulties putting it into practice. Hallsworth et al. (2011) observe that those who eventually succeed have to deal with *ad hoc* solutions to the problems that arise. This lack of realistic and inclusive processes jeopardizes policy making, leaving it to chance, personality, and individual ingenuity. To this extent, Todaro and Smith (2011) conclude that developing nations have two options when it comes to this issue: retain the status quo characterized by rapid expansion in formal systems without major modifications in curricula, teaching methods, examinations and institutional structures; or implement, in a system manner,

policies that address the conditions of demand and supply of education by reforming the curricula in accordance with challenges and learning needs of the country. According to authors, the real positive relationship between education and development can only be successfully forged if this status quo is challenged.

In addition to policy and curriculum reforms, the findings of the current study established improved technical capacities (in the public sector) in South Africa and to some extent Kenya to design and conduct independent learning assessments. The key informants in these two countries expressed that with a little technical support (mostly in data management/analysis), the countries are able to stand on their own. Tanzania is yet to establishing official structures necessary to design, implement and sustain a culture of monitoring literacy outcomes. Moreover, the findings of the current study seem to suggest that the exchange of technical capacities has been mostly 'upstream', meaning, that capacity has remained clocked-up with the top Ministry of Education technocrats. However, curriculum experts, teacher training colleagues and teachers felt inadequate as far as technical capability is concerned. The key informants from the Ministries of Education in these countries also acknowledged this fact.

In Chapter 1, the study theorized that capacity development/acquisition at the 'upstream' is the solution to the sustainability of the culture of not only learning assessment, but also delivery of classroom content that promotes literacy and numeracy. However, from the interviews with key informants and information from education reports by the Ministries of Education of the three participating countries, it is apparent that this view is not supported. The results of the study seem to indicate that capacity in the 'upstream' does not necessarily cascade down to the 'downstream', namely, teacher training colleges and teachers in the classroom.

This was further evidenced during the SACMEQ III (2007) assessments that found out that significant proportions of Grade Six mathematics teachers in these three countries had very low competencies in numeracy, some unable to pass grade six numeracy tests, the grades they were teaching! Meanwhile, further studies indicate that teacher competence and classroom practice are positively correlated with learning outcomes in reading and numeracy (Bunyi et al., 2011; Msomi, Van de Westhuizen & Steenekamp, 2014).

Participants in South Africa also observed that the quality of teachers (in literacy pedagogy) in the country was dependent on the type of college they attended. They indicated that some teacher training colleges were not producing competent teachers. This is a matter that education authorities should investigate and consider standardizing the teacher training curriculum in the country. This issue (impact of training on teacher competency) has received great attention in research and policy discourse. For instance, using a meta-analysis approach, Wayne and Youngs (2003) established a relationship between teacher college ratings and student achievement gains. This evidence gives education experts confidence to resource teacher training colleagues, for better learning outcomes later in the classroom. This has to be a sustained "ongoing process involving pre-service teacher preparation, induction and mentoring" (Msomi et al., 2014, p. 3). Kanjee (2013) agrees with these sentiments and observes that indeed this capacity has not been felt at the down-stream given the limited training opportunities for teachers. Kanjee (2013) recommends an expansion into the assessment of the specific content in teacher training colleges as well as during in-service teacher training programmes.

The current study established that teacher training on literacy in all the three countries is still being implemented on a pilot and small scale basis, mostly through donor driven

programmes. For instance, in Kenya, teacher training on literacy has been spearheaded by the Aga Khan Foundation through its Reading to Learn Approach and the Research Triangle International (RTI) through its Primary Math and Reading Initiative (Abuya, Oketch, Ngware, Mutisya and Musyoka, 2015). The Tusome project is an initiative that intends to scale-up the Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) approach. In Tanzania, the programmes are led by the Literacy and Numeracy Education Support programme and Twaweza East Africa. RTI has also been playing a crucial role in South Africa through the Systematic Method for Reading Success (SMRS). Others include the project Teaching Literacy Education Project (TLEP) implemented by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy) and the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA).

This study shows that projects led by the Ministries of Education have been on a small scale and mainly through the in-service teacher training approach. The problem with this approach is that it is periodic and not sustained. Moreover, the findings suggest that these initiatives are not supported by effective teacher training curricula that are strong on literacy/numeracy pedagogy. These efforts therefore face the challenge of reliability and sustainability. Various studies have demonstrated that certain types of teacher professional development significantly contribute to teacher quality and thus student achievement. The professional developments that have been found to generate the most results are those that are sustained in the long-term and are aligned with the curriculum (Bunyi et al., 2011; Kanjee, 2013; Msomi et al., 2014). Teacher quality has therefore been shown to positively influence school-level achievement in literacy, numeracy and science at both the primary and secondary school levels (Goe and Stickler, 2008).

Therefore, for these government led programmes on teacher training to be successful in the long run, government officials need to re-think their strategy to ensure that these capacity development efforts are well aligned and integrated in the teacher training curriculum (there may be need to re-formulate the existing ones first). The programmes should also be made self-sustaining but most importantly, should be delivered mainly through teacher training colleges and not largely through the in-service approach, as is currently the practice. With this in place, good learning outcomes can be envisaged, which in turn could impact on social development outcomes (Yeoh and Chu, 2012).

Further, this study established that there is varying progress across the three countries in technical ability and commitment to implement independent large-scale learning assessments. South Africa and to some extent Kenya have demonstrated more practical commitment to continue with the culture of monitoring learning outcomes. Much progress has however been made by South Africa in resourcing and implementing independent learning assessments, an indication of a commitment to sustain the culture of monitoring of learning outcomes. For better sustainability, the study recommends that learning assessments be decentralized and collaboratively managed with stakeholders at the provincial and county levels.

Moreover, the findings of the research study indicated varying rates of progress in relation to programme formulation and resource investment in literacy programmes across the three countries. Three commendable programmes/initiatives were identified in South Africa and one each in Kenya and Tanzania that have been launched to respond to learning challenges especially in lower grades. The other programmes though commendable are small scale or are still at the pilot stage of implementation. In total, the three countries have invested at least $

645.2 million in the five reading programmes. These programmes are designed to support both teachers and learners as far as learning outcomes are concerned. These findings are corroborated by Best et al. (2013) who established that the most common resource allocation policies attributable to large-scale assessments are those intended to improve the quality of the teacher as well as the teaching materials used in schools.

6.4. Discourse on the Education Policy Formulation Process in the Three Countries

Even with the policy formulation achievements, policy and education experts in **South Africa** have identified a number of challenges facing policy formulation and implementation in the country. For instance, the South African Qualifications Authority-SAQA (2016) postulate that policy formulation processes in South Africa have tended to assume a rational and linear connection between policy formulation and policy implementation. The Authority further observes that policy formulation in South Africa does not often take into consideration the resources and capacities required to operationalize the policies. In apparent reference to White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013), SAQA (2016) observe that the processes of formulating this policy did not incorporate extensive public consultation as required by law. Donohue and Bornman (2014) express their concerned with the way the Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education (Department of Education, 2001) was formulated, terming it exclusionary (read more about this policy in Chapter 2, section 2.3.1). The authors assert that South Africa's education policy environment is characterized by high conflict and ambiguity.

Poutiainen (2009) is critical of the way education policies have been implemented in South Africa. He argues that while education policy formulation has been impressive, the policy

makers in their zeal for a quick turnaround of the education system have tended to ignore salient factors necessary for the good performance of the reforms. Poutiainen (2009) observes that the situation has not been made any easier by the fact that the after-effects of the apartheid education system are deep seated and that policy makers seem to gloss over this issue. These issues have led to a discrepancy between what the policy makers say and what actually occurs within the education system. The author asserts the following:

> Policy created by the government in attempt to address the inequalities of the past were created in a bubble. Too much emphasis was placed on creating change that was in opposition to the apartheid education of the past, whilst ignoring many important aspects of creating effective and lasting reforms. In the long run, they have not had much of an effect on reducing the differences in the conditions many of the schools exist in. The policy has had no real effect outside of the policy creation arena (Poutiainen, 2009, p. 92).

Another important problem that Poutiainen (2009) identifies as far as policy implementation is concerned is the top-down approach of policy formulation and implementation. The author argues that policy development in South Africa rarely considers the opinion of teachers. He goes on to indicate that due to the limited inquiry at the individual level, most of the problems facing teachers in their daily activities are not sufficiently understood and the local conditions that the teachers are faced with are not taken into consideration. The author posits that the top-down policy making approach in South Africa has left many teachers overloaded and unsure of what is expected of them (Poutiainen, 2009).

Other challenges identified as far as policy formulation in South Africa is concerned include the exclusionary implementation of the policies with the mandate mostly left in the hands of the provincial and local Departments of Education. Additionally, there is inadequate teacher support to implement policies and the curriculum changes are too frequent and overwhelming (Poutiainen, 2009, p. 98). The latter is echoed by OECD (2008) who recommends that further change of curricula policy in South Africa would be counterproductive. Rather, the focus should be on proactive implementation that gives attention to the quality of teaching, learning materials and assessment processes. Despite these challenges, OECD (2008, p. 367) is optimistic that policy implementation in South Africa will improve. For this to happen, they recommended for "sustained strategic planning and resourcing, and a steady nerve by policy makers to ensure that the reform vision is realized".

There has also been intense debate concerning the programmes emanating from the policy instruments. For instance, the establishment of the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) and the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) have received both positive comments and vilification (Khosa, 2010; Mohlala, 2011; Spaull, 2015). The loyalty and independence of the Unit has been questioned. As a result of this, the Department of Basic Education has initiated plans to convert the NEEDU into the Office of Standards and Compliance for Basic Education. This decision is in response to the recommendation by the Ministerial Committee that the Unit should be re-established not as a statutory body but as an independent government component, under the title of Office of Standards and Compliance for Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2014).

Teacher unions, the National Professional Teachers' Organization of South Africa and the Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers-unie (SAOU) are both exultant and equally unsatisfied with NEEDU. These organizations are concerned with the preoccupation of NEEDU with teacher compliance instead of a holistic focus on the entire system of education. The teacher organizations also feel that NEEDU has not adequately incorporated the capacity development of teachers at the core of its functions (Khosa, 2010).

Like NEEDU, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) have attracted immense debate in the public arena. The Catholic Institute of Education (2010) views the CAPS as user friendly and easy to understand. Moreover, this Institute observes that the simplicity and precision of CAPS makes it easy for new and inexperienced teachers to follow. It further compliments the content because it gives teachers freedom to be innovative and that there is sufficient emphasis on physical movement in the curriculum. However, concerns such as the commitment of the CAPS to equip teachers to implement the curriculum is missing and the curriculum document assumes that all teachers are at the same level and know what is expected of them. Additionally, a number of terms used in the CAPS documents are problematic and clarification for teachers is needed. The Catholic Institute of Education (2010) postulate that to effectively implement the CAPS, a backup teacher's guide or resource manual that is user friendly and simple is essential.

Being an important policy initiative, perhaps the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) have received the greatest debate in education circles in South Africa. According to Kanjee and Moloi (2014, p. 93), the "ANA in its current form was implemented as a national strategy to monitor the level and quality of basic education with a view to ensuring that every child receives

basic education of a high quality, regardless of the school they attend". The debate about the ANAs has been about the validity, reliability, applicability and sustainability (Spaull, 2015). Spaull (2015) indicates that the main problems with ANAs is that they are being used as evidence of 'improvements' in education when the ANAs cannot show changes over time. The ANAs are also said to lack the capacity for accurate statistical comparison over time and across the grades. The tests are also said to possess varied levels of difficulty yielding inconsistent scores that do not necessarily imply improvements or decline in the quality of education but rather the unreliability of the instrument. Kanjee (2013) posits that the ANAs have no systematic plans and strategies to disseminate the assessment findings.

Kanjee (2011) argues that the ANAs in its current form cannot impact teaching and learning in schools until a number of pertinent issues pertaining to its conceptualization and design are addressed. These issues include lack of a clear pathway of change depicting how the ANAs can impact on improving learning and teaching in schools, lack of a framework to facilitate comparison of results across the years due to lack of common instruments or items, limited analytical information for teachers and lack of effective systems and processes for the reporting and dissemination of results. Others include inadequate support to teachers and education officials to interpret the results for classroom practice, lack of political goodwill and the capacity of Department of Basic Education and provinces to effect the requisite recommendations.

Graven and Venkat (2014) argue that although the ANAs present a great opportunity in terms of utility, they are amenable to unintended outcomes related to fairness, reliability and validity. The authors further observe that the ANAs, as is the case with all high-stake tests, influence classroom practice with teachers 'teaching for grades', that is, teachers adapting

classroom behavior and content to focus on these tests. However, the authors add a disclaimer that further investigation is needed to ascertain how true this is. Graven, Venkat, Westeway and Tshesane (2013, cited in Graven & Venkat, 2014) advance that the ANAs are structurally deficient because they overlook the testing of crucial competence such as mental strategies. In conclusion, Graven and Venkat (2014) offer caution, maintaining that although the ANAs are important, education planners should be aware of the problems inherent with high-stake testing policies. They further point out that these assessments did not necessarily impact on resource allocation to address inequality and that rationality should be exercised so that the country does not spend more than is necessary on testing. The authors instead propose that more resources should be allocated for programmes that will improve the quality of learning and teaching and that addresses the stark inequality in South Africa.

There has been active public and academic debate concerning education policy formulation in **Kenya**. Like in South Africa, experts argue that this process has seldom been informed by research (Oduol, 2006) but has been top-down (Abuya, Admassu, Ngware, Onsomu & Oketch, 2015), mostly inspired by either external forces (Boit, 2008) or by powerful assemblages that have wielded immense powers and authority over policy making processes (Atieno, 2009). These interest groups have influenced each of the process from agenda setting, analysis and identification of alternatives, assessments of options and choosing the most optimal alternative. This partly explains why policy decision in Kenya has been informed by politically appointed commissions and task forces (Cheserek & Mugalavai, 2012; Syomwene, 2013). On various occasions, progressive recommendations given by commissions and task forces that have been perceived to be independent have been rejected; some of the commissions have

even been denigrated (Muricho & Chang'ach, 2014; Ojiambo, 2009; Sihanya, 2013). Examples of the commissions' findings that were rejected include the Koech Commission Report (Government of Kenya, 1999) which recommended sweeping reforms for the integration of total quality in education and training.

The political class termed the recommendations postulated in this report as too expensive, idealistic and impractical. The government only chose to rationalize the curriculum instead of adopting the recommendations in totality (Ojiambo, 2009; Syomwene, 2013). The Task Force Report on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Government of Kenya, 2010) was also rejected for similar reasons (Bonyo, 2012). The objective of the task force was to recommend a framework to guide the alignment of the Education sector to the Vision 2030 blue print, the Constitution 2010 and the East African Community treaty. However, deeper analysis of the task force report reveals that the recommendations were perhaps the most progressive in the history of education in Kenya. Though the report was vilified, it is not lost to observers that the government has nevertheless gone ahead to implement some of the recommendations of the task force. Syomwene (2013) goes further to list some of the policies in Kenya that have been duly influenced and implemented with a heavy political hand. The policies include the 8:4:4 System of Education (1984), the Free Primary Education (FPE) programme (2003) and the Subsidized Secondary Education policy (2008).

Although policy making is in essence a political process (Atieno, 2009; Sihanya, 2013), experts point out that the political top-down process can be counterproductive. As a consequence of the elitism in policy making in Kenya, policy implementation has been affected

(Boit, 2008; Syomwene (2013). According to Atieno (2009) and Sihanya (2013), elitism is characterized by hegemonic control that ignores the grass-root stakeholders in favor of policy experts and outsiders. However, it is important to note that unlike in South Africa (see Poutiainen, 2009), the arguments by the Kenyan researchers are not entirely supported by empirical evidence. Claims of political patronage in policy making are serious and require systematic evidence in order to make a strong case for advocacy.

Apart from elitism, strong political hegemony and poor utilization of research to inform policy formulation, experts observe that perhaps the biggest challenge facing education policy arena in Kenya is the disconnect between preferred/desired education practices as espoused in policy instruments and the actual education practices on the ground (Abuya et al., 2015; Boit, 2008). Oketch and Somerset (2010) cite the Free Primary Education policy (Government of Kenya, 2002) as an example of a policy that is different as formulated on paper and in actual implementation. The Free Primary Education has eventually become expensive to implement with teachers taking advantage of the weak enforcement of the policy by the government to charge unauthorized levies (UNESCO, 2015).

Commenting on education policy in **Tanzania**, Msabila (2013) indicates that education reforms in this country have been motivated predominantly by economic need while Godlove (2012) observes that education policy reforms in Tanzania have been motivated by the need to respond to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to achieve EFA goals, especially the goal on achieving Universal Primary Education. Godlove (2012) further posits that the EFA Framework of Action has had great influence on policy formulation and practice in Tanzania. The author credits the inclusion of Information Communication Technology (ICT) instruction in the

Education and Training Policy (2014) and the emphasis to teach ICT in schools to the EFA Framework of Action. Other achievements as a result of EFA include the mainstreaming of gender in the secondary and tertiary level curricula and the prompting of the Ministry of Education to decentralize primary and secondary education – so as to facilitate equitable distribution and efficient utilization of resources.

Whatever the reasons that have motivated policy reforms, pundits agree that Tanzania has faced significant challenges in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The first challenge is political domination and influence in policy making (Ngungat, 2008). Mwaikinda (undated, p. 8) posits that education reforms in Tanzania are dominated by 'central agents' who control the reform process and ideology. According to the author, this domination leads to distortion in the intended objectives and therefore affecting the results of the reform processes. Echoing these sentiments, Haggerty (2007) observes that despite endeavors to experiment with and try out new forms of decentralization, policy formation and operationalization in Tanzania still adopts a top-down approach to governance. Haggerty (2007, p. 26) calls these 'central agents' 'personalized regional networks' describing them as the modern urban bureaucrats, often buttressed by the international donor community. The author concludes that these bureaucrats have had a long lasting sway in the manner in which policies are forged, informed, reviewed and formally implemented in the country. For instance, as highlighted in Chapter 4, the sustainability of the Big Results Now may have been hampered by lack of political goodwill because of regime change.

The second challenge is delayed realization of policy objectives due to a lack of proper planning and administration (Ngungat, 2008). Supporting his argument, citing the Education and

Training Policy of 1995 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995) as an example, Ngungat (2008) observes that decades later, the objectives and aspirations set-out in this policy have not been achieved. The other major cause is a high level of corruption and misappropriation of public funds, being practiced by civil servants in the education sector as well as by civil servants in central government. Other issues facing policy formulation include the disconnect between what is on paper, and what is eventually implemented. This is what Mwaikinda (undated, p. 8) terms as "the disconnect between the stated reforms and the actuality of the reforms". The distorted variation in resources and the technical know-how to implement the policies is another challenge facing education policy in Tanzania (Mwaikinda, undated). It is for these reasons that he deliberates upon whether reforms in Tanzania are informed by the neoliberal agenda.

Prior to 1995 when the Education Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995) was implemented, there was lack of a cohesive education policy in Tanzania. However, even then, the policy arena still relied on consultants hired or seconded by bilateral donors to complement policy implementation (Haggerty, 2007). Related to this, debates concerning the role of international forces in shaping the education policy processes in Tanzania still abide, with fears of undue hegemony. Haggerty (2007) observes that major policy decisions occurred only in response to international frameworks such as EFA and with the major donors influencing the government to make certain decisions as a pre-condition to the releasing of funding.

Another feature of the education policy in Tanzania is that despite the 1995 Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995), the curriculum has tended to focus and promote work-orientation education (education that focuses on preparing learners for function and transition into the job market). It is only recently that deliberate efforts in policy have been

initiated to shift this emphasis from mere work-oriented education to technology driven education (Weaver, 2011).

Despite the above challenges, experts agree that education policy formulation in Tanzania has continued to improve. Haggerty (2007) particularly identifies the increased expansion of the education policy round-table which include the donor community and civil society organizations (as opposed to the earlier unilateral decision making process by the government) as a major improvement. The author cites the Basic Education Development Committee (BEDC) established in 2001 as a good example of a structure that was meant to facilitate consultative policy formulation between the government, donors and the civil society.

6.5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current research, the following recommendations are made for practice, policy development and further research:

6.5.1. Recommendations for Practice and Application

A number of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the pace at which policies and strategies formulated on literacy development and learning are implemented. They questioned the efficiency and commitment by their governments to implement these policies. As discussed elsewhere in this document, policy researchers argue that the disconnect between policy formulation and implementation is due to unrealistic models during policy formation (Hallsworth et al., 2011). Exclusion of important stakeholders during policy formulation/implementation (Poutiainen, 2009), unrealistic processes (Todaro & Smith, 2011) and poor policy analysis methods (Hallsworth et al., 2011). The researcher has however

demonstrated that there are immense benefits that accrue from implementing sound policies that promote learning outcomes. It is nevertheless acknowledged that there are challenges in implementing these policies. It is therefore recommended that education experts and stakeholders in the three countries consult with each other to assess the extent to which these policies have been implemented and to find mechanisms to implement them fully.

The study has indicated that Kenya and Tanzania are in the process of reviewing their curricula. The findings have indicated that the current curricula are weak on content, design, delivery mechanisms and assessment of literacy and numeracy programmes. Moreover, the Ministries of Education and other key informants participating in this study agreed that the teachers in these countries tend to lack measurement and psychometric skills. It also appears that the teachers have limited skills in designing learning assessments. The participants observed that this is mainly due to the limited training on learning assessments, measurement and psychometrics in the teacher training curriculum institutions. Therefore, the curriculum review in these two countries are aptly timed. As the curricula are reviewed, these issues need to be addressed so that the new documents are strong on literacy, numeracy and life skills at all levels and should incorporate measurement and psychometrics.

The study has established improved technical capacities in the public sector in South Africa and to extent Kenya to design and conduct independent learning assessments. However, although Tanzania has also demonstrated a commitment to establish official structures, the capacity necessary to sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes is doubtful. In all of these three countries, however, the researcher established that the available capacity to design learning assessments has largely remained at higher levels of the Ministries and has not

cascaded down to the grassroots-level (teachers and lower level education officials). Tanzania has however put in place plans to decentralize the learning assessments to the local councils. Although this is laudable, this should be implemented with caution. It is recommended that Tanzania establishes a national assessment body anchored with the National Examinations Council to coordinate learning assessments and to help build the capacities of the local councils before these functions are devolved.

The capacities of teacher training colleagues and hence teachers remain limited. Without capacitating teachers with skills to design and implement learning assessments, sustainability of a culture of evaluation will remain a mirage. Moreover, nation-wide learning assessments are costly and time consuming. They need specialized technical competencies – which cannot be continually assured. Furthermore, the question that needs to be answered is measuring for what? The recent controversy surrounding the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) in South Africa is therefore relevant as measurement should only happen after appropriate input in terms of proper teaching and supply of essential learning resources. Without appropriate investments in literacy programmes and projects, measurement becomes an end in itself which is time and resource consuming. Therefore, investing in the capacity building of teachers and in programmes that support learning should be a priority for governments and highly recommended based on the findings of this study.

Although Kenya and South Africa have established structures for monitoring learning outcomes (NASMLA and ANAs respectively), these monitoring systems need improvement. For instance, the monitoring systems should be able to provide continuous information on the progress learning disaggregated, for instance, by district/county, school and by learner. The

latter (result disaggregation by school and learner) require significant resources to implement and thus the need to decentralize the functions of monitoring of learning outcomes. However, the decentralization should be undertaken with caution, only after adequate capacities are build (The issue of capacity building is discussed in detail under section 6.5.2.). Moreover, within these national structures, competent monitoring and evaluation divisions/units should be established, headed by qualified Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists. Data management is a specialized field that should be handled by experts.

6.5.2. Recommendations for Policy Development

In Tanzania and Kenya, literacy programmes have been mostly donor driven. However, Tanzania has however put in place mechanisms to decentralize the learning assessments to the local councils by 2018/2019. Comparatively, much progress has been made by South Africa in resourcing and implementing independent national programmes and large-scale learning assessments. Despite the challenges facing the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) and the Work-book Initiative, local investments are more sustainable and is an important culture that other countries should seek to emulate. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is a possibility that resources indicated in this study as having been invested in each of the three countries for literacy programmes are underestimated. This is because the annual budget under the Ministries or Education was not sufficiently disaggregated in Kenya and Tanzania. In the current political climate of transparency, this should be done. It is therefore recommended that these two countries a) initiate publicly funded national programmes on learning b) set aside annual budgets specifically to support learning programmes and c) allocate specific annual

budget for learning assessments. It only after these two countries implement these that one can ascertain their commitment to taking learning outcomes to scale.

The findings of the study seem to demonstrate that the Tusome and the LANES Programmes in Kenya and Tanzania are technically donor driven. However, unlike the Tusome Programme, it appears the implementation of the LANES programme is well integrated into government structures and operations and could therefore be much easier to sustain. Interviews shows that although LANES is funded by the GPE, its implementation is done by the government with technical support from a secretariat appointed from outside public service. In contrast, the Tusome programme is implemented by a technical team under the Research Triangle International with the government understudying the model. The sustainability of Tusome programme is therefore quite unlikely post 2018, after donor funding and technical support comes to an end. Kenya should have adopted the LANES implementation model.

As earlier indicated, the researcher established that the capacity to design learning assessments has largely remained at higher levels of the Ministries and not at the grassroots level. The capacities of teacher training colleges and hence teachers still remain limited. Most importantly, the capacity of teachers to deliver content on literacy and numeracy was said to be extremely low. Moreover, large-scale national learning assessments are often designed centrally by technocrats with minimum teacher participation. To enhance monitoring of learning outcomes through learning assessments, it is suggested that governments should capacitate and devolve these responsibilities to lower echelons of administration (such as the Province, County/local government levels) so as to equip teachers and schools for continuous assessment in schools. Tanzania and South Africa have initiated plans to decentralize the learning

assessments. Provinces such as the Southern Cape in South Africa are good examples of such decentralization, although more capacity building is needed in order to implement high quality decentralized learning assessments in South Africa. In Tanzania, the government should take immediate steps to build the capacities of the local authorities before the decentralization takes place by 2018/2019. Without adequate capacities, implementing a monitoring system of learning outcome assessment at the local councils is unlikely to succeed. Moreover, the assessments should not be an end in themselves, but should be geared towards ensuring that learners improve their literacy and numeracy competencies. That is why it is important to accompany assessment with appropriate teacher training programs and provision of teaching and learning materials and equipment.

6.5.3. Recommendations for further research

In Chapter 2, the researcher highlighted recent education policies and initiatives that were formulated between the year 2000 and 2015. The challenges and debates surrounding the education policy environment in the three countries was also considered. Further analysis revealed a dearth of empirical studies and literature on these policies. An ongoing critical examination of these policy frameworks and initiatives and their efficacy and impact is recommended. Kanjee (2013) further indicates that limited information is available on the effect of large-scale assessments on the actual learning and teaching that takes place in the classroom. All these are potential areas for further empirical investigation.

The study established varying rates of progress in policy and programme formulation and resource investment in relation to literacy programmes across the participating countries. For instance, Kenya has made more progress in policy formulation than Tanzania and South Africa.

On the other hand, South Africa has invested more resources in programmes that support learning outcomes. The study also established that some countries have made more progress on the capacity to implement their own learning assessments thereby demonstrating more practical commitment to continue with the culture of monitoring learning outcomes. For instance, South Africa implemented about 25 different large-scale learning assessments between the year 1996 and 2015. Clearly, there is evidence of varied rates of development as far as policy formulation is concerned, investment and also in the adoption of culture of learning assessments across the three countries. This study did not however establish the reason for these varied rates of development. This is a possible area for further inquiry.

6.6. Conclusion

In **Kenya,** the findings indicate that the cross-national learning assessments have indeed contributed significantly to the policy discourse and have helped the nation realize the state of learning of children in the country. The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) and the Uwezo cross-national learning assessments particularly were cited by the Ministry of Education as having been useful in this regard. The Ministry of Education observed that from these studies, several policy analysis and briefs emerged. The results from the cross-national learning assessments have also been important agenda items during the learning outcome roundtable meetings where recommendations and approaches to improve learning have been agreed upon. With the intensification of learning assessments, several homegrown initiatives have been initiated. The Ministry of Education further observed that it has not just been learning assessments, but that interventions and programmes have been initiated to mitigate against the inconsistencies in the learning process.

This research study established that in **Tanzania**, the most recent policy document, the Education and Training Policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2014) strongly advocates for education quality issues and it addresses the aspect of learning outcomes at all levels of education in the country. The policy document cites the Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action as an important tenet that guides some of its critical elements. Furthermore, this research study shows that the Secondary Education Development Programme II (United Republic of Tanzania, 2012) document is well aligned to and makes reference to Education For All. It does this by emphasizing on access as enshrined in Goal 2 of the EFA Framework and gender based interventions in education. A similar strand runs through the Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan (United Republic of Tanzania, 2012) document. The Education Sector Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010) and the National Key Result Area Roadmap for Education (United Republic of Tanzania, 2013) are the policy documents that are quite clear on learning outcomes in Tanzania. They also cite the cross-national learning assessments.

The findings of this study reflect that at least three important curriculum reforms took place in Tanzania between the years 2000 and 2015. These reforms culminated in the curriculum for advanced secondary education (A-level), the curriculum for ordinary level (O-level) secondary education and the curriculum for the certificate in teacher education programmes. These strategic documents emphasize the relationship between the quality of the teacher and the quality of learning outcomes. Moreover, these documents recognize the central role of Education For All (EFA) in setting up the broad global guidelines, goals and targets for the expansion and improvement of Basic Education. The curricula are therefore tailored to equip

teachers to deliver and assess the basic learning needs espoused by EFA Framework of Action which emphasizes literacy, oral expression, numeracy and the ability to solve problems as important learning outcomes. This is a clear indication of the attribution role that the EFA Framework of Action has played in shaping the contents of these key strategic documents in Tanzania.

In **South Africa,** the research established that the Action Plan to 2014 (Department of Basic Education, 2014), includes strong reference to the Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action; it alludes to the UNESCO's Education for All campaign that includes six global goals for schools. It cites the sixth goal which focuses on "improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 4). Similarly, the Action Plan to 2019 (Department of Basic Education, 2015) refers to cross-national learner assessments and underscores that in order to move forward, information from internationally standardized testing programmes will continue to be a key basis for gauging progress with respect to learning outcomes in South Africa. This strategic document recommends a stricter national policy framework for monitoring service delivery in education. The third document, the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) also captures quality education as an important right, which plays a vital role in a person's health, quality of life, self-esteem, and the ability of citizens to be actively engaged and empowered. The document reasserts these basic values that have informed the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996) and which will continue to inspire everyone involved in education and training in the country. The White Paper

(Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013) also highlights the significant relationship between the Education for All (EFA) Framework and inclusive Education by attempting to address the diverse needs of the entire learner population so as to embrace a holistic education that facilitates learning for all (Tyobeka, 2006; Department of Education, 2001).

The National Development Plan 2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2010) is clear on literacy and numeracy. It is one of the documents in South Africa that demonstrates a strong technical awareness on the subject of learning outcomes and learning assessments. As far as attribution to cross-national learning assessments is concerned (in the context of Education for All), this strategic document gives pre-eminence to these tests. It observes that the country should focus on improving the quality of education so that by 2030, the performance of learners in South African learners in international standardized tests is comparable to the performance of learners from countries at a similar level of development (Republic of South Africa, 2010). As a long-term goal for basic education, the Plan proposes a specific focus on improving literacy and numeracy in the next 18 years. As far as specific attribution to cross-national learning assessments is concerned, the document identifies the Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) and the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study as important yardsticks at the baseline upon which future scoring on learning assessments in South Africa can be gauged.

In terms of programmes, the research has demonstrated that the launch of the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) and the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) can trace their origins to large-scale learning assessments. The Parliamentary Bill No. 34858 of 2011 that initiated the NEEDU acknowledges the role of cross-national learning

assessments. Moreover, the first NEEDU annual report (Department of Basic Education, 2013) gives prominence to East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) and acknowledges that Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tools were used to test reading fluency. It is clear that the establishment of NEEDU and the Workbook Initiative were influenced to a large extent by large-scale learning assessment programmes and there is a clear attributable relationship. The study has also established that the cross-national learning assessments and the ANAs to a great extent, informed curriculum reforms and programmes in South Africa. For instance, the study established that the results and recommendations by ANAs and SACMEQ influenced the formulation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2012) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2002).

Based on the above findings, the researcher concludes that participation in cross-national learning assessments by Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa has significantly impacted on policy and curriculum reforms and capacity development. These findings are consistent with Wagner et. al's. (2012) results which indicated that large-scale assessments indeed influenced policy and curriculum reforms in more than 40 developing countries.

On the other hand, the findings from this research study do not support Ferrer's (2006) argument that there is no evidence that the information derived from the large-scale learning assessments is fully exploited and that there has been limited impact on policy formulation. Concerning policy, the current study has demonstrated that at least 18 policy/strategic documents (7 each in Kenya and 5 each in Tanzania and South Africa) were formulated between 2000 and 2015. The formulation of these documents appears to have been influenced by the

results and recommendations from the large-scale learning assessment programmes that these countries participated. Furthermore, the research study has demonstrated that at least 5 curriculum reforms (3 in Tanzania and 2 in South Africa) took place between the years 2000 and 2015, attributable to large-scale learning assessments and Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action. Although there have been commendable impacts on the curriculum, policy formulation and the exchange of technical expertise, the latter is yet to cascade down to teachers.

In an increasingly interconnected world and with globalization, it is difficult for a country to exist in isolation. This study served to demonstrate the influence of international policy frameworks and initiatives on local policies and practice. The findings illustrate how the EFA Framework of Action, through the implementation of cross-national learning programmes, has affected education policy developments, curriculum reforms and technical capacities in Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania. Applying the theories of change and social development, the researcher demonstrated how the policy and curriculum reforms are likely to affect learning outcomes especially in the early grades and how these could eventually impact on social development within these three countries. The analysis contributes to the body of knowledge as far as impact evaluation of participating in cross-national learning assessments is concerned. The study therefore makes a contribution to the summative evaluation for the Education for All (EFA) Framework (UNESCO, 2000), especially on Goal no. 6 of ensuring quality education through measurable learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Institutions/organizations participating in the study

#	Respondent	Rationale	Thematic area of focus (based on objectives of the study)
Kenya			
1.	Research Triangle International	RTI is a premier learner outcome assessment centre and implementer of literacy programmes in Africa and beyond	• Comment on comprehensiveness of the literacy development policy environment • Feedback on government's (MoE) ability/readiness to train and evaluate learner outcomes (literacy) • Comment on the capacity of national staff to conduct own learner assessments especially when Uwezo, AKF, and RTI pull out.
2.	The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC))	This is the national examinations centre in the country. Moreover, the Council established The National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (*NASMLA*) centre, has previously conducted own learner outcome assessment and has also been collaborating with other partners to conduct these studies	• Comment on the implementation of policy recommendations by SACMEQ- to improve literacy • Assess the literacy development policy environment in Kenya • Assess the Council's ability/readiness to conduct international-standard learner outcome assessments (literacy) • Comment on the capacity of own (Council's) and national staff to conduct learner • Comment on link between these achievements (if any) and the EFA framework on learner assessments-cross-country
3.	The Directorate of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Education	Manages, monitors, supervises and delivers the curriculum	• Perspectives on comprehensiveness of the literacy policy environment (processes, achievements, challenges, opportunities) • Assess MoE's ability/readiness to deliver a curriculum that is strong on literacy, including availability of human resources and funds • Comment on the capacity of national staff to inspect, monitor, evaluate and sustain learner assessments on culture in Kenya • Comment on link between these achievements (if any) and the EFA framework on learner assessments-cross-country
4.	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development	Curriculum development and monitoring centre, Keya	• To comment on the readiness and capacity of KICD to deliver a literacy specific/strong curriculum to teachers and schools(triangulation) • Comment on the preparedness and capacity of post-secondary teachers to deliver a strong literacy specific content to learners
5.	Africa Population and Health Research Council	Premier education and social research think tank	• Perspectives on comprehensiveness of the literacy policy environment (processes, achievements, challenges, opportunities) • Assess MoE's ability/readiness to deliver a curriculum that is strong on literacy including availability of human resources

#	Respondent	Rationale	Thematic area of focus (based on objectives of the study)
			and funds • Comment on the capacity of national staff to inspect, monitor, evaluate and sustain learner assessment culture in Kenya • Comment on link between these achievements (if any) and the EFA framework on learner assessments-cross-country
Tanzania			
1.	Uwezo	Similar rationale like the RTI's in Kenya. See # 1 above	Similar thematic focus RTI's. See # 1 above
2.	The Directorate Policy and Planning, Ministry of Education	Similar rationale like the sister chapter in Kenya. See # 3 above	Similar thematic focus like its sister chapter in Kenya. See # 3 above
3.	The National Examinations Council of Tanzania	Similar with # 2 above	Similar with # 2 above
4.	The University of Dar-es-salaam	Similar with # 4 above	Similar with # 4 above
5.	LANES	Similar with # 5 above	Similar with # 5 above
South Africa (S.A)			
1.	Directorate of Schools to Government Unit	Public schooling, Western Cape Province	Same as # 2 above
2.	Department of Basic Education	Same as # 2 above	Similar thematic focus as # 2 above
3.	University of Cape Town	Premier research and teacher training (post primary) centre in S.A	• To comment on the readiness and capacity of curriculum development centre of the department of education to deliver a literacy specific/strong curriculum to teachers and schools(triangulation) • Comment on the preparedness and capacity of secondary and primary school teachers to deliver a strong literacy specific content to learners
4.	SACMEQ regional Coordination Office, S.A country chapter	A cross-national learner assessment organization	• Comment on effects of the regional learner assessments on policy development in the participating country • Analyze the capacities of the 3 countries to conduct own learner assessments and the sustainability of the same
5.	Independent Examinations Board (IEB)	Statutory body responsible for quality assurance for school, assessments and provides training in assessment.	• Comment on the implementation of policy recommendations by SACMEQ- to improve literacy • Assess the literacy development policy environment in S.A • Assess the S.A's ability/readiness to conduct international-standard learner outcome assessments (literacy) • Comment on link between these achievements (if any) and the EFA framework on learner assessments-cross-country

Appendix 2: List of policy documents/strategic papers reviewed in Kenya

1. Free Primary Education (FPE) policy of 2003;
2. Sessional Paper No. 1 (Republic of Kenya, 2005a) which became the basis for the development of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP);
3. Sessional Paper No 1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research
4. Early Childhood Development (ECD) Service Standard Guidelines for Kenya- 2006;
5. The Gender Policy in Education of 2007;
6. MOHEST strategic plan (2008);
7. The Safety Standards Manual for Schools in Kenya, 2008
8. Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2009);
9. The Public Procurement Manual for Schools & Colleges of 2009;
10. The Task Force Report on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010
11. The Health and Nutrition Policy of 2011;
12. The education sector on HIV/AIDs of 2011;
13. Policy Framework for Nomadic Education in Kenya;
14. The Education and Training policy framework, 2012;
15. Science, Technology and Innovation policy framework, 2012;
16. Kenya National Examination Act, 2013;
17. Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Act, 2013;
18. University Act;
19. Science, Technology and Innovation Act;

20. Kenya National Qualification Framework Act (KNQF), 2012;

21. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development Act, 2012;

22. Sessional Paper, 2012. A policy framework for education and training;

23. Basic Education Act, 2013; and

24. The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2013-2018: Basic Education Programme Rationale and Approach.

Appendix 3: Analytical framework for education policies in Kenya (example of the checklist tool)

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
Title of the policy/document	SESSIONAL PAPER NO…..OF 2012 A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING: *"Reforming Education and Training in Kenya"*	NATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN (NESP) Volume One: *Basic Education Programme Rationale and Approach*
Brief description of the policy (focusing on the motive of formulation)	This is a 'Science, technology and innovation –ST&I' policy meant to support Vision 2030. The premise is that the foundations for socio-economic transformation is anchored on a progress ST&I platform	The NESP is a five-year plan (2013 – 2018) that outlines the education sector reform implementation agenda in six priority areas based on challenges affecting the sector and lessons learnt in KESSP. The areas include Sector Governance and Accountability; Access; Equity; Quality; Relevance and Social Competencies and Values
The date it was formulated and implementation period	19th June 2012	Implementation period 2013/2014 – 2017/2018
Specific reference to learner outcomes/outcomes/learner achievement	Page 25: (iv) Improve the quality of education and training so that Kenya's measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, scientific and communication skills are in the upper quartile on recognized international standardized tests by 2017; Page 32 **4.19** In 2003, the Government introduced Free Primary Education, which has enhanced access to education for both boys and girls. However, acquisition of learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills are still low.	Page xx: Despite these achievements, Kenya's education sector has had challenges of governance, management and administration leading to gaps in: service delivery, learning outcomes, teacher management, competence and performance levels hindering the meeting of education sector targets. Page 4: *Percentage of pupils able to read with comprehension at grade 2 in Kiswahili; and English. This indicator of learning achievement can be calculated from the EGRA data collection.* Page 7: Kenya is doing relatively well in terms of the level of access to basic education but there are major inequalities across regions in terms of access, educational learning attainment and literacy.

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
	Page 46 **6.12** To address the above challenges in assessment and examinations, the Government will implement the following policy: standardize assessment of core learning outcomes, transferable skills and subject related knowledge. Page 48 **6.17** Given the heavy investment in education (6.4% of GDP), it is a matter of considerable concern to the taxpayer that it is not getting value for money from the education sector. While enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels have increased, learning outcomes have not done so. Page 65 (xxi) Build the capacity of teachers in developing and using school based assessment of learning achievements. Page 78/9 **12.15** However, the sub-sector faces challenges including; resource mismanagement, poor infrastructure, impropriety in procurement, failures in	Page 11: Sharp inequalities were also observed across counties with Nairobi and central regions recording better literacy and numeracy outcomes compared to their peers in ASAL areas. Page 17 v. Improve the quality of all aspects of education and training so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life-skills Page 18 By 2014, commission the review of a Basic Education curriculum (pre-primary, Primary and Secondary) which will deliver the following outcomes: Literacy, numeracy, and enquiry skills, thinking skills, communication skills, observation and investigative skills, application and transferable skills, social and ethical skills and entrepreneurial skills. Page 19 38. A recent assessment of the Kenya Education Support Project, KESSP (2005-2010) revealed that Kenya's education sector had challenges that hindered the achievement of some of its targets. These challenges include those of governance, IFMIS and EMIS data management, gaps in service delivery, learning outcomes as well as unacceptable levels of teacher absenteeism. Page 42 106. Good physical facilities are important to enhancing school attendance, and in turn pupils' achievement.

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
	monitoring, maintenance and equipping schools; all of which will require considerable financial investment to remedy. Equally challenging is the need to improve the efficiency of the sub-sector, not least to ensure the application of efficient staffing norms, improved value added from teachers, cutting the levels of teacher absenteeism and improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Page 115 on the **National Philosophy and Concept of Kenya Qualifications Framework** 17.1 Learning and teaching and or training resources ultimately determine the mode of access, lesson delivery and hence the quality and relevance of the acquired skills and competences characterizing learning outcomes. Page 116 **Mission:** **17.7** To establish and administer the Kenya Qualifications Framework for regulating and systematizing the accreditation of educational programmes, assessment of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications obtained in the formal, alternative delivery settings and industry	Page 53 Page 65 x. Assessment of learning achievements, literacy and numeracy surveys and programmes that enhance the quality of the learning environment. Page 68 Literacy and numeracy assessments in Kenya over the last three years reveal learning outcomes that are lower than expected. For example, in 2010, the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) showed that fewer than half of Grade 3 pupils were able to read at Level 3 (Basic Reading) or Level 4 (Reading for Meaning) (KNEC, 2010). The 2011 UWEZO report showed that fewer than 30% of pupils in Class 3 could read at a Grade 2 level (UWEZO, 2011). Page 69 226. Efforts to improve the quality of early grade reading and mathematics in Kenya include: i. The NASMLA study and UWEZO reports (2009) have highlighted the important need to improve reading and mathematics outcomes and have provided valuable input into early grade policies and approaches. ii. The commissioning of the USAID-supported PRIMR in 2011 to undertake research on how to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for pupils. v. The ICT study, implemented under PRIMR, in 60 schools in Kisumu has been evaluating the effectiveness of ICT approaches in literacy outcomes in primary school.

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
	based education, training and assessment systems in Kenya. **17.11** Each descriptor consists of a qualification level and a set of associated competences defining generic learning outcomes at the respective levels, clearly distinguishing qualifications in terms of their relative weights and the logical connection between the different qualification levels. Page 121 **17.34** To address these challenges the government will adopt the following policies: Establish the Kenya Qualifications Framework for regulating and systematizing the accreditation of educational programmes, assessment of learning outcomes, recognition of prior learning and skills, credit accumulation and transfer.	227. The quality of Early Grade Reading and Mathematics is constrained by the following factors: v. Improvement in early grade literacy and numeracy pedagogy and support materials to ensure that pupils have adequate practice in the sort of skills necessary to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes. …Education reforms emanating from the Sessional Paper will include improving learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, scientific and communication skills based on international standardized tests. 229. The Department will ensure that the objectives of primary education, including "acquire literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills" are achieved through a curriculum that enhances these skills. Therefore, the ongoing education reforms will improve the quality of education and training so that Kenya's measurable learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy, scientific and communication skills are in the upper quartile on international standardized tests by 2017. Page 70 iii. To review the current syllabi so as to refocus them on learning achievements in EGR and EGM. Page 85 ii. Gender disparities in terms of access, retention, transition and learning outcomes in ASAL, urban informal settlements and pockets of poverty.

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
		Page 95 i. Introduce standardized assessment of core learning outcomes, transferable skills and subject related knowledge. Page 115 ***School Surveys*** 414. The learning achievement surveys will be the opportunity to perform school surveys under the leadership of KNEC. Specific school surveys could be organized in certain domains or performed along with impact evaluation. Technical capacities of NASMLA will be used in sampling, questionnaire development, data control and statistical analysis. ***Learning Achievement Surveys*** 416. Learning achievement surveys can be split in two categories: oral and individual assessment such as EGRA, EGMA and UWEZO which are run by external institutions and paper pencil test run by NASMLA. The collaboration and harmonization of approaches will be strengthened and a learning achievement work plan including project supported by donors will be established under the leadership of NASMLA. As said before, learning achievement surveys will also include a teacher and school survey. Page117 439. Communities will be especially involved in the monitoring of capitation grant, teachers effective time on task and learning achievement.

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
		440. To monitor learning achievement, education input, ICT, drop out and out of school children, UWEZO survey is a powerful tool. 443. Access to electricity in school will be better measured. ICT monitoring will include the use of computers by teachers and pupils and an assessment of teachers ICT skills and the impact on learning achievement. Page 131 487. Finally, sector consideration has to be given to measures towards improving the quality of education, efficiency and effectiveness in teachers' utilization, including reforming the staffing norms, instituting performance contracts and linking education inputs to results for improved outcomes. Page132 It is recommended that the primary education curriculum should be divided into three 3-year periods to facilitate formative assessment of learning outcomes as recommended in the Odhiambo taskforce report (2012). Page 146 *vi. Percentage of pupils able to read with comprehension at grade 2 in Kiswahili; and English. This indicator of learning achievement can be calculated from the EGRA data collection.*

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
Specific reference to learner assessments	Page 26 (xi) Ensure that the design, implementation, assessment of the system of education is aligned to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the national development goals, including the Kenya Vision 2030; Page 36 (xiv) Develop professional assessment programmes to identify children with special talents and abilities and support by offering them specialized teaching and training; Page 38 (v) Develop and standardize diagnostic assessment tools to facilitate the early identification, assessment and placement of learners with special needs; (ix) Strengthen the multi-disciplinary approach in assessment of leaners with special needs and disabilities. Page 45 **6.7** East African Community (EAC) member countries (Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda) have adopted competency based curriculum and assessment. The examination oriented Kenyan curriculum shall be revised, and competencies and skills, will be assessed. Page 46	Page 65 x. Assessment of learning achievements, literacy and numeracy surveys and programmes that enhance the quality of the learning environment. iv. In cooperation with county governments monitor the conduct of assessment and examination in Basic Education institutions. Page 66 **ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS** x. Constrained funding preventing standards assessment for all basic education institutions. Page 67 vi. To monitor assessments and co-ordinate the development of internal examinations in the institutions of Basic Education. **STRATEGIES** vii. Monitor the conduct of assessment and examinations in institutions of Basic Education and training. Page 68 Literacy and numeracy assessments in Kenya over the last three years reveal learning outcomes that are a lower than expected. For example, in 2010, the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) showed that fewer than half of Grade 3 pupils were able to read at Level 3 (Basic Reading) or Level 4 (Reading for Meaning) (KNEC, 2010).

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
	(iv) Develop a progressive assessment framework which identifies the knowledge, skills and competencies that will be assessed at basic and tertiary education levels. (xvii) Develop an assessment framework for the APBE curriculum to ensure accreditation and linkages with formal curriculum and NQF Page 47 **6.11** The current summative assessment at the end of primary and secondary cycle does not adequately measure learners' abilities while school based assessment is not standardized. In essence, the current system of summative assessment at the end of the various cycles together with the limited availability of student places at secondary and higher education level dictates the teaching/learning process towards examinations as opposed to assessment of attainment of skills and competences. Assessment must inform teaching and learning processes that are in tandem with Vision 2030 and to enhance learner achievement, skills and competences. Further school level KNEC examinations are uniform throughout Kenya irrespective of region or the cultural /urban divide	

Theme	Policy document 2	Policy document 3
	Page 65 (xxi) Build the capacity of teachers in developing and using school based assessment of learning achievements. Page 95/6 **15.22** Although there are many service providers of curriculum development and assessment within the tertiary TVET level, the reform to competency based assessment and training will require specialized institutions and coordination. This scenario requires a reform of curriculum development and assessment, to allow for multiple providers of curriculum, examinations, assessment and training services to ensure global competitiveness. Page 100	
Specific citations of national assessment studies	No specific citations	1. RTI's (PRIMR initiative) 5 times 2. Uwezo surveys cited 14 times 3. Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya (EMACK) cited once. 4. SACMEQ cited 7 times 5. NASMLA cited 27 times **Total citations=54 times**

Appendix 4: List of policy documents/strategic papers reviewed in Tanzania

1. The 2003 Tanzania National ICT Policy;
2. Technical and Higher Education Sub Master Plan, 2003–2018;
3. Adult Education and Non-formal Education Strategy; 2003/4-2007/8;
4. Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP II) 2010-2014;
5. Teacher Development and Management Strategy (TDMS) 2007 -2012;
6. Folk Education Development Programme (FEDP) 2007 - 2012;
7. The 2007 ICT Policy for Basic Education;
8. Adult and Non Formal Education Development Plan
9. Curriculum for Advanced Secondary Education in Tanzania;
10. The Curriculum For Ordinary Level Secondary Education in Tanzania and
11. The Curriculum For Certificate and Diploma Teacher Education Programmes in Tanzania
12. The Education Sector Development Programme (2008-17);
13. Inclusive Education Strategy (2009-2017);
14. Higher Education Development Programme (HEDP) 2010-2015;
15. Technical and Vocational Education Development Programme – TVEDP;
16. Gender Strategic Plan (2010/11 – 2014/15);
17. HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan (2008/09 – 2011/12);
18. Environmental Education Strategy (2010-2014);
19. Secondary Education Development Programme II;
20. The Higher Education Development Programme Strategic Document (2010 -2015);
21. The Education and Training Policy of 2014;

Appendix 5: List of policy documents/strategic papers reviewed in South Africa

1. The Adult Basic Education and Training Act, no.52 of 2000;
2. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) act of 2000;
3. White Paper 6 of 2001;
4. Curriculum 2005 (C2005);
5. Training Colleges Act of 2006;
6. The National Protocol on Assessment;
7. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa of 2007;
8. Education Laws Amendment Act, 2007;
9. National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12;
10. National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS);
11. National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS);
12. The Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity;
13. Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025;
14. Action Plan to 2019: Towards the realization of Schooling 2030;
15. Handbook - Introduction to Whole School Evaluation; and
16. Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule Guide for Ministry of Education/Examinations Council Officials

Section A: Demography

1. Country the interview is being conducted (To be filled by principal researcher or research assistant) _____Date_____
2. Name of the Ministry/Council? _____
3. What's your title in the Ministry/Council?_____
4. How long have you held this position? _____
5. Briefly describe your role in the Ministry? _____

Section B: Learner Outcome Assessments and Effects

6. Your country has in the past 14 years participated in a number of international and regional surveys meant to assess the competency levels of learners in reading and numeracy (literacy). Can you please identify these surveys, when they were done and under whose auspices they were conducted?
7. To what extent have these international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments contributed to improvements in literacy levels in the country?
   a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all*

      Explain your answer_____
8. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments contributed to formulation of educational policy in the country?
   a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all*

By citing specific policies/legislations, explain your answer_____

9. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments supported the development of technical expertise in the country?

   a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all

   Giving examples, please explain your answer_____

10. In your opinion, is this country ready and committed to conduct own literacy assessments? Explain your answer? _____

11. Has your country conducted own national literacy assessments? if yes, name them_____

12. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments motivated the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

    a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all

    Please explain your answer_____

13. What do you recommend should be done to sustain the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule Guide for Curriculum Development Centres

Section A: Demography

1. Country the interview is being conducted (To be filled by principal researcher or research assistant) _____Date_____
2. Name of the institution? _____
3. What's your title in the institution? _____
4. How long have you held this position?
5. Briefly describe your role? _____

Section B: Learner Outcome Assessments and Effects

I will ask you questions related to your country's participation on a number of international and regional learner surveys meant to assess the competency levels of learners in reading and numeracy (literacy) during the past 14 years.

6. To what extent have these international and regional learner outcome assessments contributed to improvements in literacy levels in the country?
   b) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all

a) Explain your answer_____

7. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments contributed to formulation of educational policy in the country?
   a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all

By citing specific policies/legislations, explain your answer_____

8. To what extent has the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments supported the development of technical expertise (to design and conduct similar assessments) in the country?

   a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d d) To some extent e) not at all

   Giving examples, please explain your answer_____

9. In your opinion, is this country ready and committed to conduct own literacy assessments? Explain your answer? _____

10. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments motivated the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

    a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To some extent e) not at all

    Please explain your answer_____

11. What do you recommend should be done to sustain the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

12. To what extent is the teacher training curriculum in your institution tailored to equip teacher graduates with skills to teach, design tests and evaluate learners in literacy and numeracy?

    a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all

    Explain your answer_____

13. To what extent is your answer above true for other teacher training institutions in the country?

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

14. Various assessment frameworks that spearheaded reading and numeracy (literacy) surveys in your country during the same period including SACMEQ recommended the following recommendations. To what extent have they been implemented?

i. Curriculum Centre/department in your country (for primary, secondary and post-secondary) to initiate mechanisms to improve the quality of reading and mathematics instruction in schools

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

Please explain your answer_____

ii) Curriculum Centre/department in your country to be more aggressive in promoting the policy on the use of textbooks during classroom lessons

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

Please explain your answer_____

iii) The teacher training curriculum should incorporate assessment techniques which include item response theory

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

Please explain your answer_____

Appendix 8: Interview Schedule Guide for Institutions Implementing Leaning Assessments

Section A: Demography

1. Country the interview is being conducted (To be filled by principal researcher or research assistant) _____Date_____
2. Name of the institution? _____
3. What's your title in the institution? _____
4. How long have you held this position? _____
5. Briefly describe your role? _____

Section B: Learner Outcome Assessments and Effects

I will ask you questions related to this country's participation on a number of international and regional learner outcome competency surveys (reading and numeracy) during the past 14 years-some of which your organization has spearheaded.

6. To what extent have these international and regional learner outcome assessments contributed to improvements in literacy levels in this country?
   a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

      Explain your answer_____
7. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome (literacy) assessments contributed to formulation of educational policy in this country?
   a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

      By citing specific policies/legislations, explain your answer_____

8. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome assessments supported the development of technical expertise (to design and conduct similar assessments) in the country?

   a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all

   Giving examples (and a number if possible) please explain your answer_____

   In your opinion, is this country ready and committed to conduct own literacy assessments? Explain your answer? _____

9. To what extent have the international and regional learner outcome assessments motivated the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

   a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all

   Please explain your answer_____

10. What do you recommend should be done to sustain the culture of assessment and monitoring of learner outcomes in the country?

11. To what extent is the teacher training curriculum in this country been tailored to equip teacher graduates with skills to teach, design tests and evaluate learners in literacy and numeracy?

    a) To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all

    Explain your answer_____

12. To what extent is your answer above true for other teacher training institutions in the country?

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

13. Various assessment frameworks that spearheaded reading and numeracy (literacy) surveys in your country during the same period including SACMEQ recommended the following recommendations. To what extent have they been implemented?

ii. Curriculum Centre/department in the country (for primary, secondary and post-secondary) to initiate mechanisms to improve the quality of reading and mathematics instruction in schools

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

Please explain your answer_____

iv) Curriculum Centre/department in this country to be more aggressive in promoting the policy on the use of textbooks during classroom lessons

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all*

Please explain your answer_____

v) The teacher training curriculum should incorporate assessment techniques which include item response theory

a) *To a very large extent b) To a large extent c) Not sure/no opinion d) To a low extent e) not at all.* Please explain your answer_____

Appendix 9: Interview: Content Review (Policy Documents) Checklist/guideline

Theme	Data
Title of the policy/document	
Brief description of the policy (focusing on the motive of formulation)	
The date formulated and implementation period	
Explanation of the specific issue related to learner outcomes the policy addresses (if any)	
Education level does the policy cover (preschool, primary, secondary or post-secondary? that is, major beneficiaries	
Reference to the EFA framework of action? Any attribution to cross-national learner assessments?	

Appendix 10: Letter of Permission – Research Commissions/ National Departments of Science, Technology and Education

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

To the Director of Research,
(One each for Tanzania, Kenya and South-Africa)

Dear Sir/Madam, (was personally addressed)

Good Day. My name is Godfrey Mulongo and I am conducting a research study for my P.hD degree in Social Development and Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. The general objective of my study is to analyze the impact on educational policy development and reforms as a result of the country's continued participation in the cross-national learning assessment frameworks. This research could make a contribution to existing knowledge in this field of study. Your country has purposively been identified amongst three countries that have participated in cross-national learner assessments and is therefore well positioned to offer critical insights into this issue.

This letter is therefore to introduce myself as a bonafide student and to request formal permission to conduct the study in the country. The study will review various policy documents that are in the public domains as well as policy statements and technical papers. I would also like to interview a representative each from the Basic Education/Policy Department, the National Examination Directorate/Council, public university and one teacher training college. The proposed interviews will last approximately an hour and 15 minutes, arranged at a time that is most convenient for the interviewees. They will be asked questions related to reforms, plans, strategies and policies put in place or proposed to improve learner outcomes. There are no risks involved in the participation and involvement in this study would be entirely voluntary. The participants may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. My supervisor and I are the only people who will have access to the recorded interviews and these tapes will be destroyed after I finish my research thesis.

Appropriate measures will be taken to protect confidential information (such as the names of the participants). However, the respondents will be made aware that the data provided will be analyzed and written up in the form of a PhD thesis. The research findings may be published in a scientific peer reviewed journal. However, relevant officials (Ministry of Education) from the participating countries will be allowed to review the draft manuscript for permission before submission to a journal. A summary of my research findings will be forwarded to you once the research thesis has been completed.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding the research on +255 7888 212 12, +254 720 616 439 or mulongoe@gmail.com. Alternatively, you are welcome to

contact my research supervisor Dr. Zaytoon Amod on +27 117 178 326 or Zaytoon.Amod@wits.ac.za. It would be appreciated if you could notify me by e-mail as to whether permission is granted or not for the research study.

Attached herewith is the abstract of the study.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Kind regards,

Godfrey Mulongo

Appendix 11: Letter to the Permanent Secretary/Principle Secretary Department of Basic Education for permission to conduct research.

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

To the to the Permanent Secretary/Principle Secretary, Ministry/Department of Basic Education
Dear Sir/Madam, (personally addressed)

Good Day. My name is Godfrey Mulongo and I am conducting a research study for my P.hD degree in Social Development and Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. The general objective of my study is to analyze the impact on educational policy development and reforms as a result of the country's continued participation in the cross-national learning assessment frameworks. This research could make a contribution to existing knowledge in this field of study.

This letter is therefore to introduce myself as a bonafide student and to request formal permission to conduct the study in your ministry. The study will review various education policy documents that are in the public domains as well as policy statements and technical papers. I would also like to interview representatives from the Basic Education/Policy Department, the National Examination Directorate/Council, public university and one teacher training college. The proposed interviews will last approximately an hour and 15 minutes, arranged at a time that is most convenient for the interviewees. They will be asked questions related to reforms, plans, strategies and policies put in place or proposed to improve learner outcomes. There are no risks involved in the participation and involvement in this study would be entirely voluntary. The interviewees will also have the liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. My supervisor and I are the only people who will have access to the recorded interviews and these tapes will be destroyed after I finish my research thesis.

Appropriate measures will be taken to protect confidential information (such as the name of the participant, department). However, the participant will be made aware that the data provided will be analyzed and written up in the form of a PhD thesis. The research findings may be published in a scientific peer reviewed journal. However, relevant officials from your Ministry will be allowed to review the draft manuscript for permission before submission to a journal is made. A summary of my research findings will be forwarded to you once the research thesis has been completed.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding the research on +255 7888 212 12, +254 720 616 439 or mulongoe@gmail.com. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact my research supervisor Dr. Zaytoon Amod on +27 117 178 326 or Zaytoon.Amod@wits.ac.za. It would be appreciated if you could notify me by e-mail as to whether permission is granted or not for the research study.
Attached herewith is the abstract of the study.
Kind regards,

Godfrey Mulongo

Appendix 12: Participants from the Curriculum Development Institutes, National Examinations Councils/and NGO Implementing Learning Assessments

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Dear Sir/Madam, (was personally addressed)

Good Day. My name is Godfrey Mulongo and I am conducting a research study for my P.hD degree in Social Development and Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. The general objective of my study is to analyze the impact on educational policy development and reforms as a result of the country's continued participation in the cross-national learning assessment frameworks. This research could make a contribution to existing knowledge in this field of study.

This letter is therefore to introduce myself as a bonafide student and to request you to participate in the study as a participant. You have been nominated to participate because of the important position you hold in education sector of your country and your views will provide me an important perspective as far as the aforementioned research topic is concerned. The proposed interview will last approximately an hour and 15 minutes, arranged at a time that is most convenient to you. You will be asked questions related to reforms, plans, strategies and policies put in place or proposed to improve learner outcomes. There are no risks involved in the participation and involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. As an interviewee, you will also have the liberty to withdraw from the study at any time. My supervisor and I are the only people who will have access to the recorded interviews and these tapes will be destroyed after I finish my research thesis.

Appropriate measures will be taken to protect confidential information (such as your name or your department). However, it is important to know that the data provided will be analyzed and written up in the form of a PhD thesis. The research findings may be published in a scientific peer reviewed journal. However, relevant officials from your Ministry will be allowed to review the draft manuscript for permission before submission to a journal is made. A summary of my research findings will be forwarded to you once the research thesis has been completed.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding the research on +255 7888 212 12, +254 720 616 439 or mulongoe@gmail.com. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact my research supervisor Dr. Zaytoon Amod on +27 117 178 326.
Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Godfrey Mulongo

Appendix 13: Participant consent form (interview)

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

I_____consent to being interviewed by Godfrey Mulongo for his study on impact of cross-national learner assessments on educational policy and practice. I understand that:

- My participation is entire voluntary.
- I am free to withdraw from the research anytime or refuse to answer any question I find uncomfortable.
- I will not receive any direct benefits by choosing to participate in the interview.
- My identity will remain anonymous. If my words are quoted, I will be referred to as 'a participant in country x' or a pseudo name will be used.

Signature of participant_____

Date_____

Appendix 14: Consent form for audio recording of research interview

Psychology Department
School of Human and Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050
Tel: (011)717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559

Statement of consent:

I agree to the audio recording and transcribing of all research interviews I take part in. I am made to understand that this audio recording and its transcription is governed by the following conditions:

- Only the researcher and his research supervisor will have access to the recordings and the transcripts of the recordings.
- No identifying personal information will be used in the transcripts or the journal articles.
- Direct quotes from interviews may be used in the journal articles. However, no identifying personal information will be included.
- After the research is finished, the recordings and transcripts will be kept in a safe place with protective passwords accessible only by the researcher and his supervisor. However, all these will be destroyed not later than two years after completion of the study.

  Name of participant_____

  Signature of participant_____

  Date_____

Appendix 15: Ethics clearance certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mulongo

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/02/19**
PROJECT TITLE	Cross-national learner outcome assessments: relationship to educational policy and capacity development in East and South Africa
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr G Mulongo
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human & Community Development/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	20 February 2015
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	26 February 2017

DATE 27 February 2015 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor T Milani)

cc: Supervisor : Dr Z Amod

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature **Date** 25/03/2015

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix 16: Research permit to conduct research in Tanzania

TANZANIA COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (COSTECH)

Telephones: (255 - 022) 2775155 - 6, 2700745/6
Director General: (255 - 022) 2700750&2775315
Fax: (255 - 022) 2775313
Email: rclearance@costech.or.tz

Ali Hassan Mwinyi Road
P.O. Box 4302
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania

RESEARCH PERMIT

No. 2015–149-NA-2015-106 **7th September 2015**



1. Name : **Godfrey W. Mulongo**

2. Nationality : **Kenyan**

3 Title : **Cross-national Learner Outcome Assessments: Relationship to Educational Policy and Capacity Development in East and South Africa**

4 Research shall be confined to the following region(s): **Dar es Salaam**

5. Permit validity from: **7th September 2015** to **6th September 2016**

6. Contact/Collaborator: **Ms. Magreth Benjamin, Helen Keller, P.O. Box 34424, Dar es Salaam**

7. Researcher is required to submit progress report on quarterly basis and submit all Publications made after research.

M. Mushi
for: DIRECTOR GENERAL

Scanned by CamScanner

Appendix 17: Clearance Conduct, Western Cape



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20151111-5147
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Godfrey Mulongo
Private Bag 3
WITS
2050

Dear Mr Godfrey Mulongo

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: CROSS-NATIONAL LEARNER OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from**18January 2016 till 30 September 2016**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN -8000

We wish you success in your research.
Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research

DATE: 12 November 2015