
Assessment and education quality: Reflections on policy and practice in post-apartheid South Africa

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EDUCATION RESEARCH INDABA: PHASE 2

National education assessments in South Africa:
Supporting literacy and numeracy improvements

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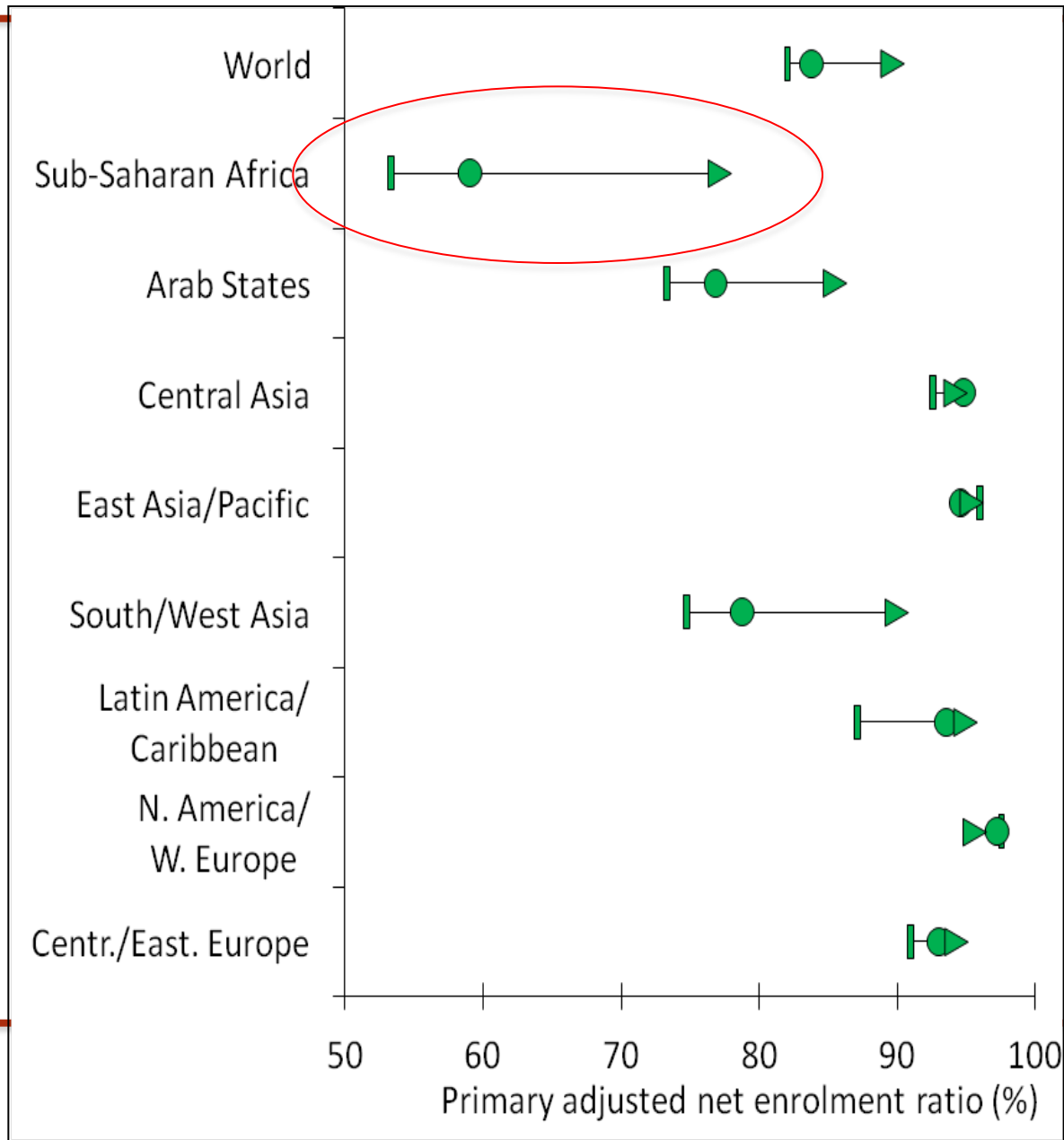
Overview

1. Meanings and understanding of education quality
2. Framework for reviewing education assessment systems
3. Case studies - assessment systems to address the imperative of equitable quality.
4. Assessment policies and practice in the post-apartheid era
5. Challenges to the implementation of an effective national assessment system

Education Quality

- Quality is at the heart of teaching and learning - impacts enrolment, attendance, retention, and completion
- Multiple and contested meanings
- Two faces of quality - learning to achieve (cognitive development) and learning to live (values, attitudes, citizenship)
- Current focus on cognitive learning outcomes to the detriment of non-cognitive outcomes

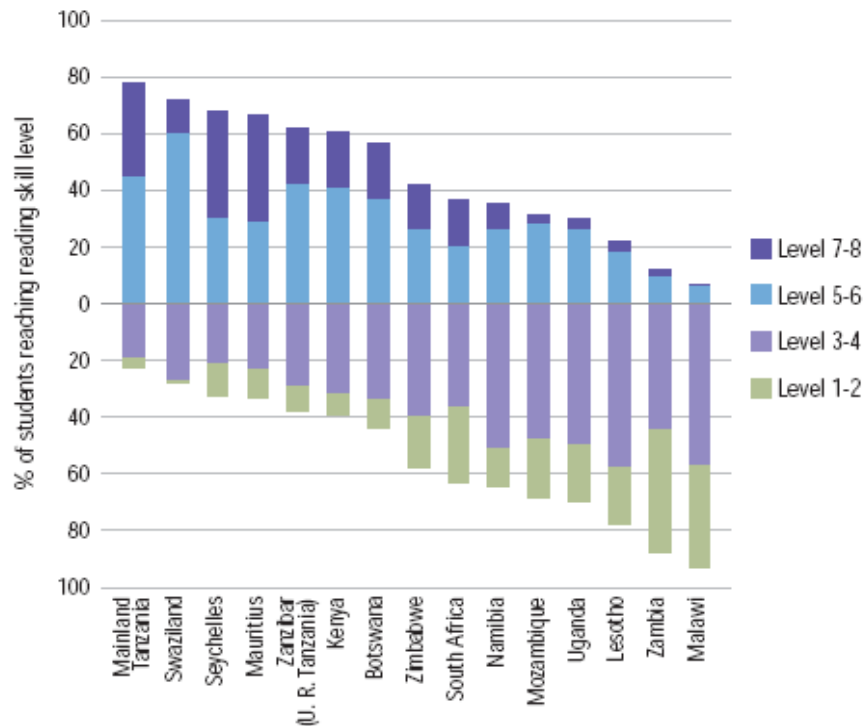
Increase in Access





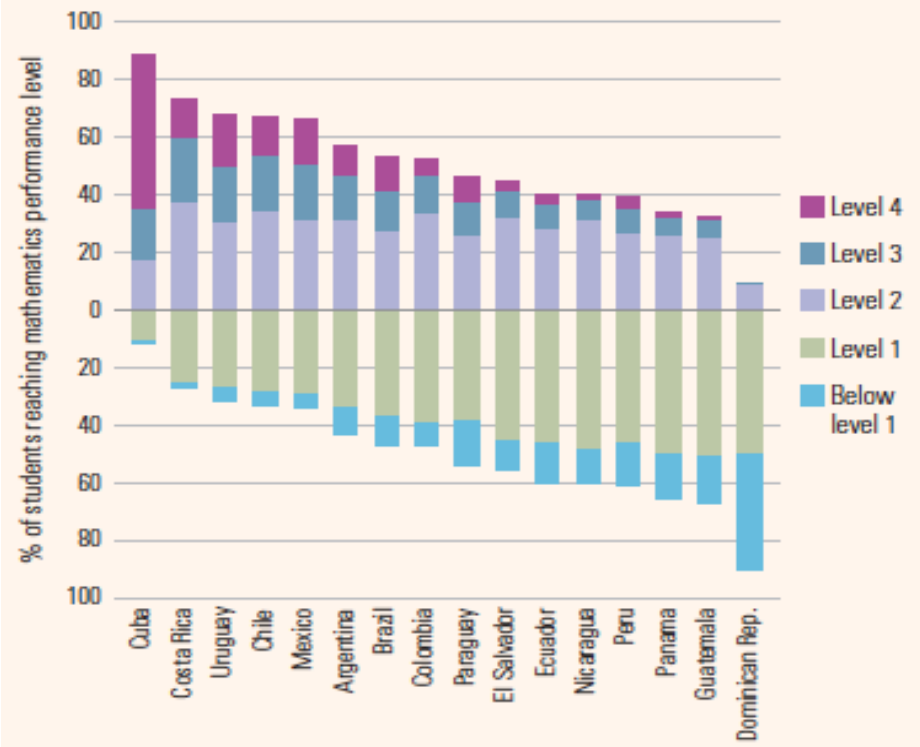
Insufficient attention to quality

Percentage of grade 6 students reaching SACMEQ skill levels for reading, 2007



Source: See Figure 1.37 in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report.

Percentage of grade 3 students reaching SERCE skill levels for mathematics, 2006



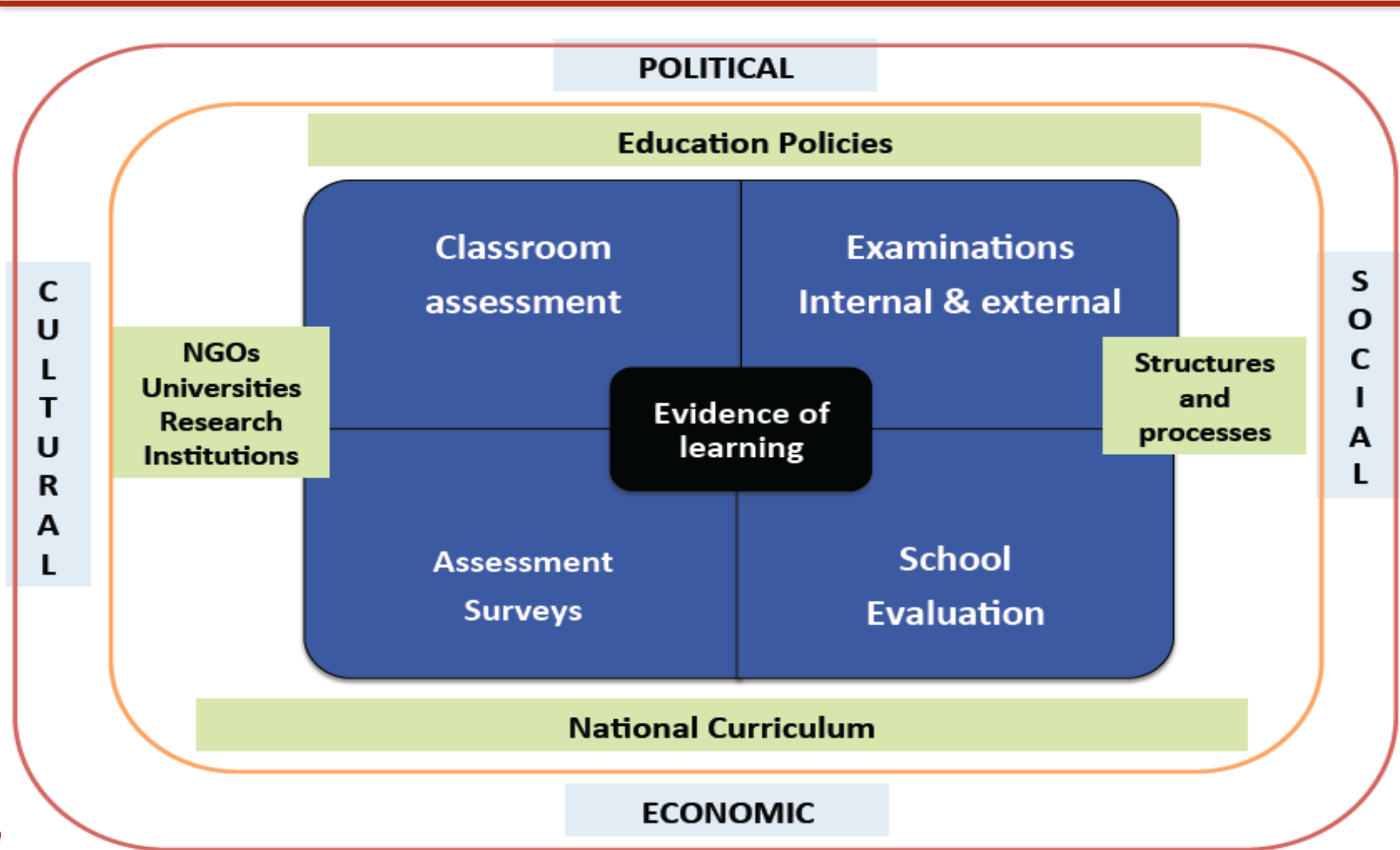


Assessment and Quality

- Increasing emphasis on assessment due to concern with declining quality
- Emphasis translates to focus on achievement scores, in “core subjects”
- The discourse of quality redolent with the technology of testing mania
 - In many countries - National assessment, TIMSS, PIRLS, SACMEQ, project evaluations, exams
- However, testing indicates areas in need of intervention but not what is required
- Assessment and testing does not equal quality
- You don't fatten the chicken by weighing it

Framework for reviewing education assessment systems

Assessment System Framework



Definition of assessment



“the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy and to inform policy”

(AFT, NCME, NEA, 1990: 1)



Purpose of assessment



to gather evidence
about learning



DEFINITION - Assessment System

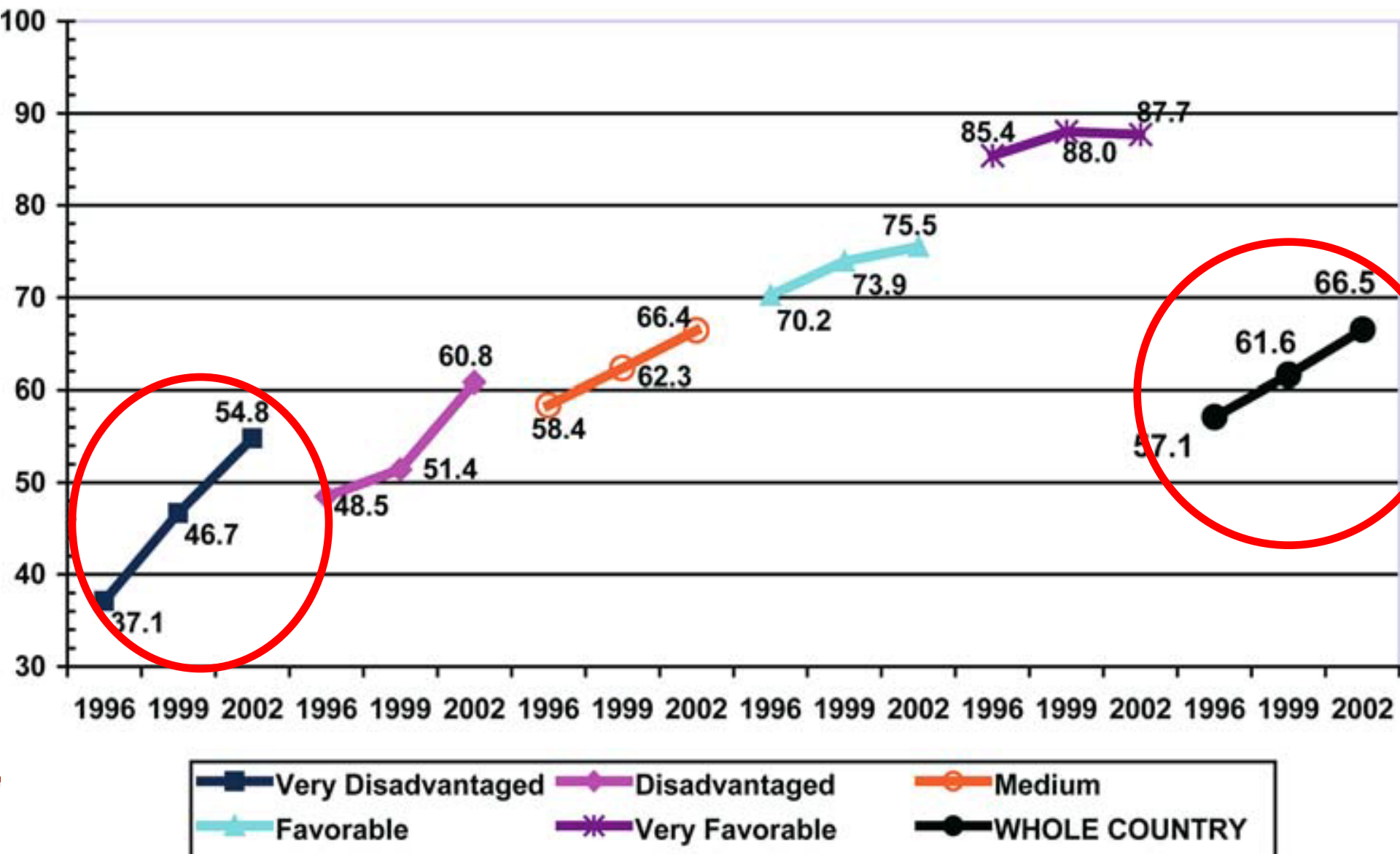
an assessment system can be defined as a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent policies, practices, structures and processes for obtaining and applying evidence with relevant roleplayers at the different levels of the education system for improving learning



Examples

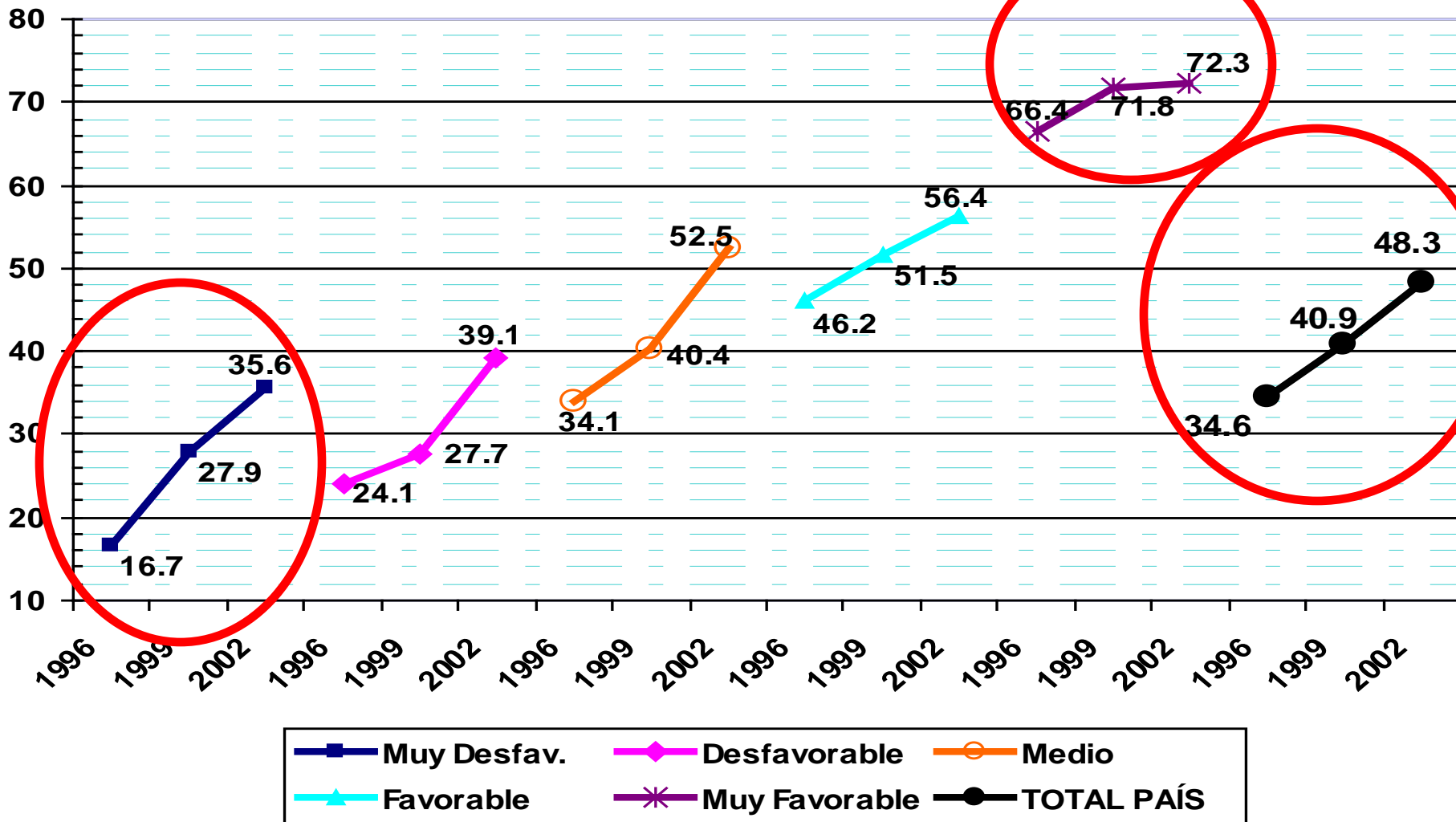
**Due to limited time - will focus on LSAS -
two countries - Uruguay & Vietnam**

Uruguay - Results by poverty level - Language



Uruguay Results by poverty level - Maths

Results by poverty level in % of students with "sufficient" knowledge - math



School Evaluation - Vietnam

Activity	Prov	Distr	School
Evaluation of teacher's teaching activities	X	X	
Evaluation of other activities	X	X	
Comprehensive/total Evaluation	X	X	
Education quality assessment (self assessment by schools)	X	X	X
Education quality assessment (external assessment)	X	X	X
Accreditation of National Standard schools	X	X	



Education Assessment in South Africa - post 1994



Policy & Assessment: 1994-2012

Term	Focus	Assessment
1994 - 1999	Policy frameworks & documents	1998 Assessment Policy
2000 - 2004	Policy implementation, systems development & delivery	MLA; Sys Eval (3 &6) SACMEQ; CTAs; Provincial Assess
2005 - 2009	Improving quality and understanding impact	2007 Assess. Policy; Sys. Eval (3); Provin. Ass; FLC Common Exams
2010 - 2014	Improving quality - accountability systems	Action Plan 2014; NEEDU 2012 Assess. Policy, ANA, TIMSS & PIRLS - under DBE

Note above in the context of Curriculum Reform

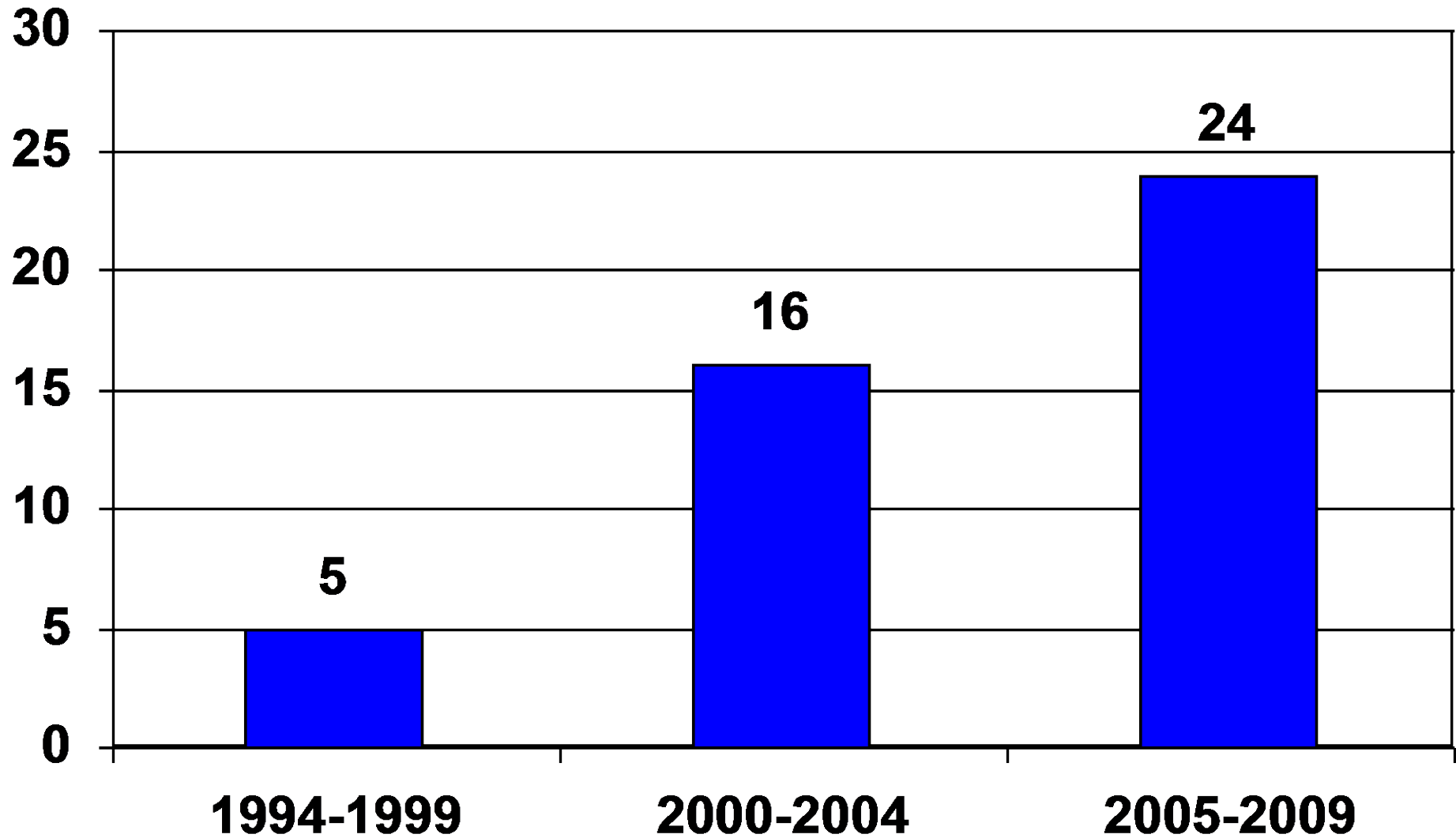
Assessment in South Africa - History

- assessment practices and systems played a critical role in maintaining oppressive apartheid policies
- assessment was the most neglected aspect of new policy initiatives, even though assessment formed the basis of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) that underpinned the new education system
- there is limited information on the impact of assessment policies and practices, within the new education dispensation in South Africa.

Assessment Policy

- Flagship assessment policy promulgated in 1998 and revised in 2007
- Current 2012 policy - similar to revised 2007 policy
- Key features:
 - Greater emphasis on classroom based assessment
 - Requires teachers and schools to apply a greater range of assessment methods beyond paper and pencil tests
 - More structured in terms of frequency and type of assessments (how and what)
 - Provides a reporting and interpretation framework
- **Assessment focus & Measurement driven**

Large-scale surveys in SA 1994 - 2009



Challenges - 1

- Determining the level of functionality or stage of development of the different components of the assessment system
 - To identify area of focus and development over the short, medium and long term

Assessment Systems Stages of Development

Beginning	Developing	Established	Advance
NATIONAL ASSESSMENT SURVEY			
Angola	Zambia	South Africa	New Zealand
CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SYSTEM			
Zambia	South Africa	Uruguay	New Zealand
EXAMINATION SYSTEM			
Mozambique	Zambia	South Africa	Kenya
School Evaluations			
Ethiopia	Zambia South Africa	Vietnam	New Zealand

Challenge - 2

- Improved confidence in value and use of the national assessment system - (public, teachers, parents)
 - LSAS - i.e. ANA
 - exams - Higher Education & Business sectors

Challenge - 3

- Greater and more effective use of data for
 - Policy decisions
 - Improving learning and teaching practices
- Improving **teacher** capacity and skills for using assessment information –
 - Formative AND Summative
 - Provide range of assessment tools
- Core Problem

DATA RICH and INFORMATION POOR

Challenge - 4

Cost of maintaining assessment system

- Limited information available wrt to costs
 - Most research on large scale assessment surveys
- Review of investment into assessment system; “rate of return” and impact on other national needs

Concluding remarks

- Quality remains a key but elusive goal in education
- Assessment testing is important in improving quality but a means to an end, not an end in itself

Questions?
Comments ?
Suggestions ?

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Extra Slides

maybe required for further explanations

Examinations

Exams: Trends

- Examinations systems:
 - Are **most developed** component across all countries
 - have shown marked improvement over the last decade.
- However, there are still a number of challenges to improve systems and structures to:
 - ensure fairness in the test development and grading processes,
 - promote easy access for enrolling and taking examinations,
 - minimise cheating and other forms of malpractice, and
 - improve systems for reporting and dissemination of examinations results
 - Effective use of results for improving learning and teaching

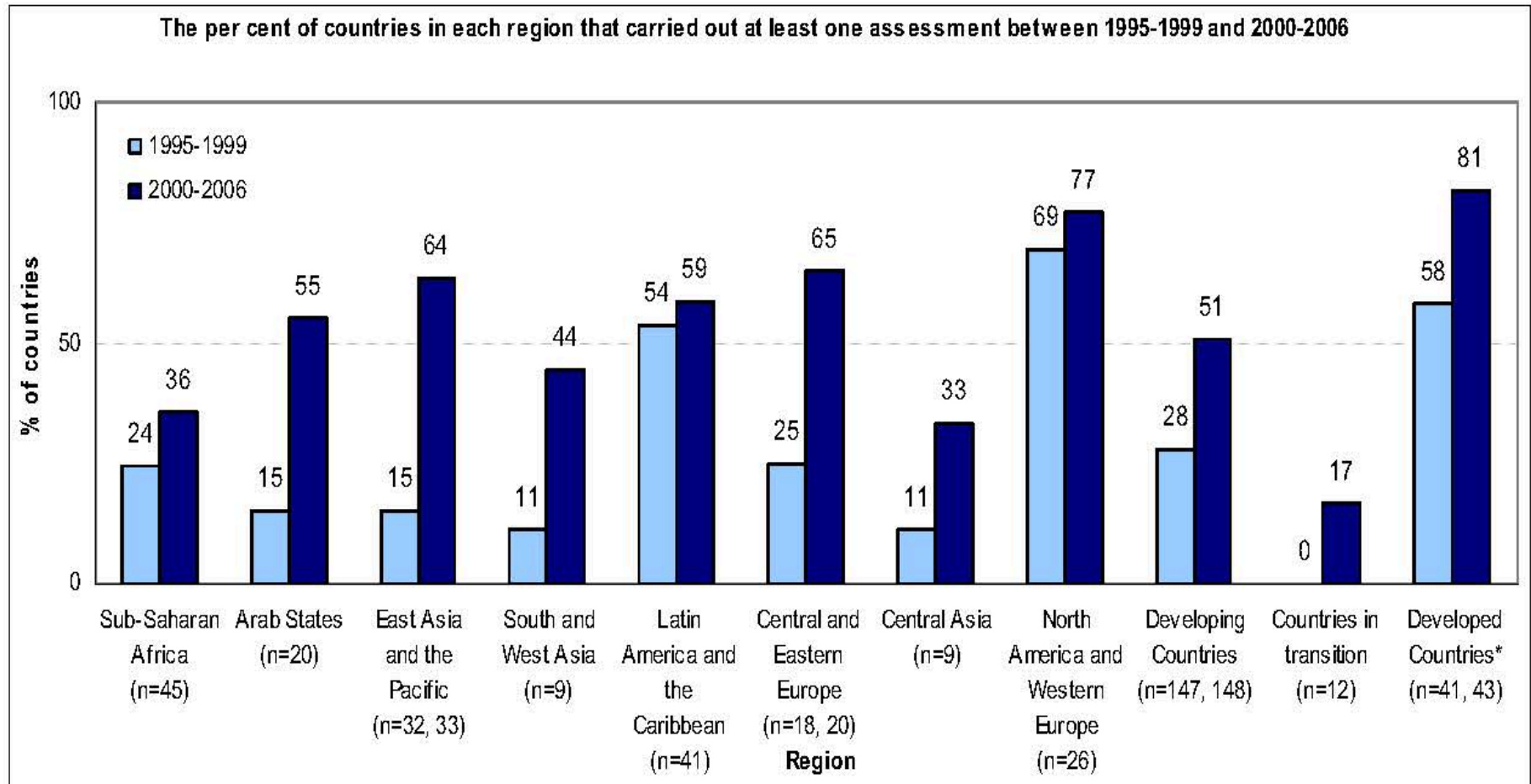
School Evaluations

- Usually school evaluation are based on on-site visits to support schools address key challenges relating to school polices, practices, problems and performance of learners, teachers, school management, school governing bodies, etc.
- Acknowledge that school evaluations per say are not a direct assessment activity
- In many systems - school evaluation unit responsible for **ACTING** on assessment results

LSAS - Trends

- In many countries, large scale assessment surveys are established or beginning to becoming more common.
- LSAS include the following:
 - National assessment, TIMSS, PIRS, SACMEQ, PASEC
- Increasing number of countries have developed significant capacity over time
- Small but growing number - in high level expertise, e.g. IR
- Improvement in reporting - focus still at policy level

Increase in LSAS internationally



Key trends - 2 cont

- Specific mention should be made about:
 - household surveys - UWEZO in East Africa,
 - Potential to reach high number of out of school learners
 - Census based surveys conducted in South Africa
 - since 2010, every learner approximately 6 million assessed in Grade 1 to 6 & 9 Maths and Language
 - Focus on accountability and interventions at individual learner level

Key trends - School Evaluations

- In a number of countries, school evaluation or quality assurance or standards authorities (formerly known inspectorate) - have been established for many decades
- Many still struggle to effectively carry out its mandate due to limited resources - like lack adequate staff, funding, equipment, transport, large workloads, etc.
- Consequence - impact on system limited, or not adequate to address specific needs

Classroom Assessment - trends

- Classroom assessment systems in almost all countries are the **least developed component**
- Often manifest in different ways across most countries
 - used in certification exams (SBA),
 - used for promotions to next grade,
 - used primarily for reporting - automatic promotion
 - focus on portfolio as primary form of evidence,
 - prescription in number and types of assessments,

Classroom Assessment - Trends cont

- Limited evidence on use of assessment for improving learning
- Number of countries have attempted to address this issue - yet to succeed beyond piloting, and have yet to go to scale - e.g. Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, South Africa and Zambia.
- However, evidence that a growing number of countries are taking this aspect more seriously and
- this is one area that we can predict extensive growth in the near future.



Assessment for Learning approaches

- AfL approaches are more inclusive and take account of the different learning styles, background and needs of all learners within a classroom promoting equity.
 - Teachers using these “approaches and techniques are better prepared to meet diverse students’ needs through differentiation and adaptation of teaching to raise levels of student achievement and to achieve a greater equity of student outcomes” (OECD CERI, 2008, p. 1).
 - “in classrooms of the most effective teachers, students from disadvantaged backgrounds learn just as much as those from advantaged backgrounds, and those with behavioural difficulties learn as much as those without” (William, 2011, p. 9)

SBA & Exam marks

Phase	SBA Component %	End-of-year examination %
Foundation	100	0
Intermediate	75	25
Senior	40	60
Further education & Training	25	72

Formal assessments for Maths IP

	Forms of assessment	Minimum requirements per term				Number of tasks year	Weighting
		Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4		
	Tests	1	1	1		3	75%
	Examination		1			1	
	Assignment	1			1	2	
	Investigation				1	1	
	Project			1		1	
	Total	2	2	2	2	8	
	End of the year Examination					1	25%