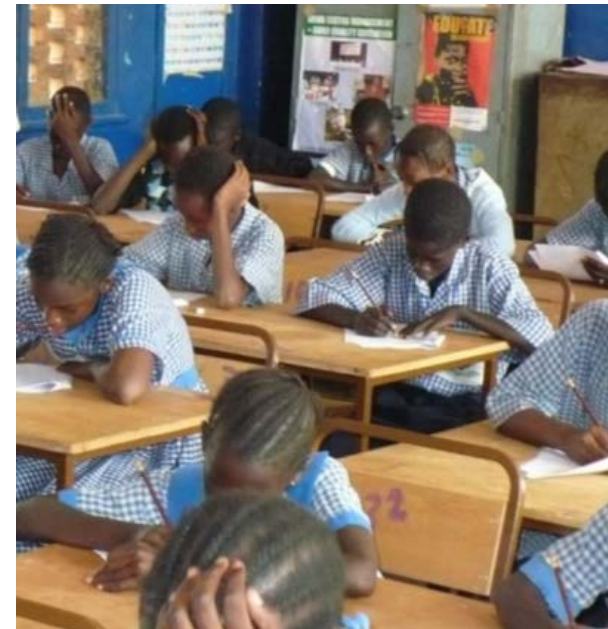




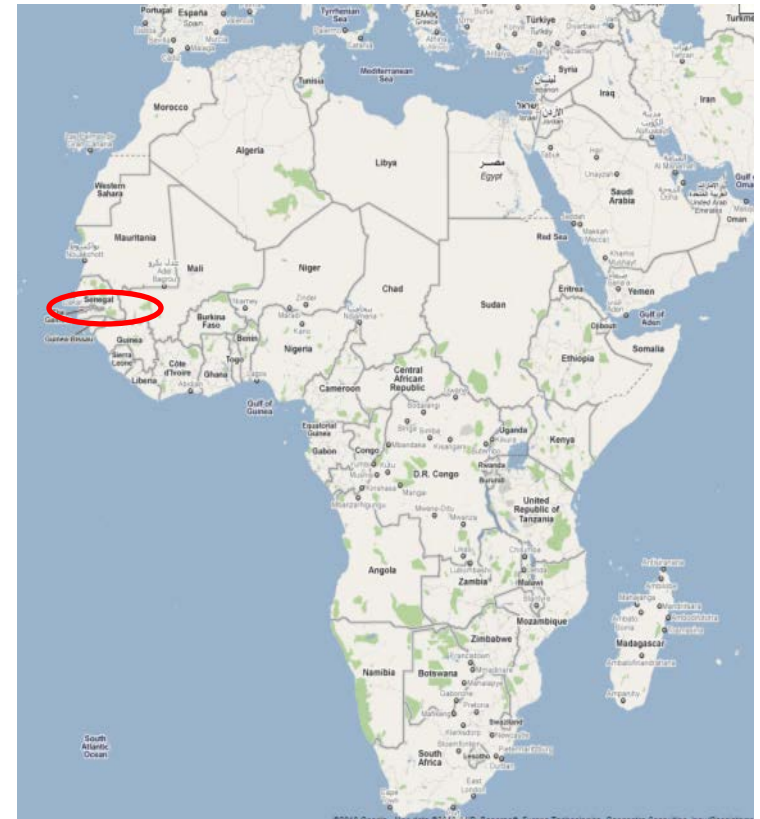
Assessment in The Gambia

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Where is The Gambia?

- About 10,380 sq km and 1.5 million people
- GDP Per Capita (PPP) = \$1,410 (2010)
- Mostly agricultural (70%+)
- Primary GER: 89% and PCR: 75%
- 70% of primary teachers have pre-service;
- Assessment experience EGRA, NAT, early reading in national languages
- Strong commitment for evidence base in the sector



What was the project about?

- Not a stand alone project but a sub-component of the third education sector program

Objectives:

- Review and improve national assessment in The Gambia
- Monitor progress on student achievement in grade 3 and 5 students on a yearly basis as well as curriculum coverage → MoBE's wish and the project aims to support it, looking at feasibility etc.
- Examine what students master and don't know
- Explore factors associated with student learning and fill in the gaps in the EMIS data.

What were the issues?

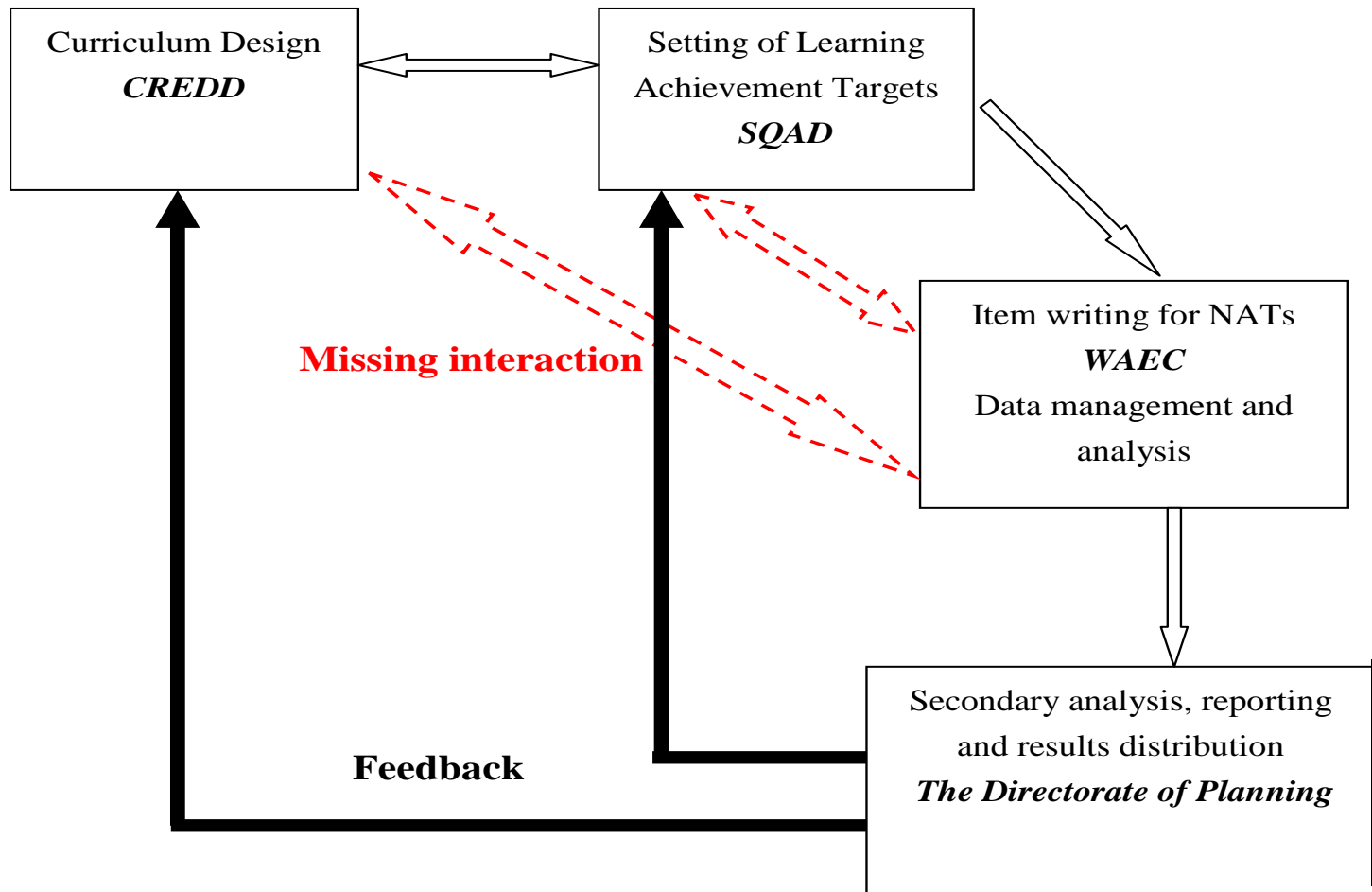
- NAT test items deviated from Learning Targets and curriculum
→ test did not measure competencies expected for the grade level
- Tendency to underestimate the difficulty levels of items → neglect the need to include items measuring basic literacy/numeracy
- NAT census based, annual, and serve the purpose of public exams
- Results were used to show improvement, or lack of
- Publish results for every single student and make them available nationwide (ranking of schools and average)
- An annual and costly practice, yet the results used in a very limited way (no NAT report, no diagnostic analysis of curriculum coverage or any other aspects)

What were the key challenges to implement the project?

- WAEC (examination body) resisting change
- Little collaboration between WAEC and MOBSE (curricular coverage vs test design)
- Limited knowledge of National Assessment and assessment design
- Lack of awareness of responsibility within the process of design, reporting and making use of the results amongst all parties

Situational analysis of National Assessment Test (NAT) development process

Summary flowchart of NAT process



What was achieved?

- Core team established (WAEC, MOBSE) and involved in every step
- Permanent Secretary played key role in bringing people together, and keen interest in learning assessment
- Test blue print and specifications to allow adequate coverage of difficulty and curriculum content, and, presentation of more diagnostic results
- Background data on students, and linking NAT with EMIS (same school codes)
- Gradual capacity building in test design and analysis
- Linkage of items to assess progress over time (every 3-5 years)
- Diagnose and address absenteeism problem (reported malpractice of discouraging students registering or taking part in NAT)

What were some drawbacks?

- After agreements on items and test forms, easy ones were removed or modified before printing due to lack of understanding in the assessment design
- Reporting capacity was weaker than expected: conclusion and explanations drawn from analysis (how to make the data useful)
- Regional directorates still confused—and making wrong inference with the results)

What are some lessons for other TTLs?

- Strong engagement is necessary at all steps of the process---“tendency to take it lightly”
- Build strong ownership and involve planning and curriculum staff into the assessment process
- Reporting of and use of results is critical—this was delayed in The Gambia
- Bring parents on board and provide them with guidance on how to engage their child
- Share with teachers the type of concepts students have difficulty with