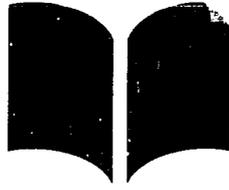


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**TAKING THE REFORM PROCESS
FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS FOR THE
MALAWIAN SITUATION**

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TAKING THE REFORM PROCESS FORWARD: SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MALAWIAN SITUATION

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¹In lieu of a formal trip report, I am submitting the report which the clients, Andy Sisson (USAID/Lillongwe) and Joe Destefano (USAID/AFR/SD/HRD) requested.

I. Introduction. This report offers a number of suggestions for furthering the education reform process in Malawi. To do this, however, required that some stock be taken of where Malawi's education reform process currently is, how it got there, and where it seems to be going. In addition, the suggestions presented in this report are offered against a background of understanding, albeit nascent, of the overall educational situation in Malawi and overview of the way in which policy is formulated within the education sector.

The first part of this report presents a discussion around these baseline issues. The second part of this report offers a broad overview of social sector reform in general: what it is, and how it should be carried out. This reform overview stands as the theoretical basis for the suggestions offered in this report. Having thus presented i) a broad understanding of the education reform situation in Malawi, and ii) the conceptual framework within which recommendations can be made, the report offers a basic reform strategy to which are tied a number of interrelated activities aimed at "furthering" the education reform process in Malawi.

II. The Education Reform Environment in Malawi. Malawi's education system is a substantial under-performer relative to the effort devoted to it. For example, Malawi's gross and net enrolment rates at the primary level are low (though not among the lowest in the world), its secondary enrolment rates -- at around 5% -- are indeed among the lowest in the world, as are its university enrolment rates which stand at around 1%-2% of the relevant age group. As for the social and financial effort devoted to Malawian education, it has been stable, at around 3.5% of GDP (counting only public spending), for the last two decades. The depressing fact of the matter is that a multitude of countries achieve enrolment rates of 100% at primary, 40% to 60% at secondary, and 5% to 10% at university *with similar levels of spending*. Conversely, a host of other countries achieve enrolment and quality levels similar to Malawi's for *half* the public fiscal effort. This would suggest that *Malawi's education system is twice as inefficient as most other developing countries'*. Add to this the observation that most of these countries' education systems, while perhaps twice as efficient as Malawi's, are not exactly paragons of efficiency, and it becomes painfully clear that Malawi has an enormous efficiency problem.

What is also clear, even from a cursory examination of the situation, is that if the current inefficiencies are simply carried as the system expands -- which, as a result of the recent policy (reform?) decision to make primary education free, it is doing meteorically -- either i) quality will dramatically plummet, and in so doing lead to a reversal in the recent gains made in access, especially among girls, or ii) budgets will have to increased to proportions as yet unprecedented in developing (or for that matter developed) countries.

The latter scenario is unlikely given i) competing demands on the public fiscus from other sectors, particularly health, ii) the reality of current expenditure limits due to various agreements with the World Bank and the IMF, and ii) the fact that both personal experience and an ever-increasing amount of research shows that Ministries of Finance throughout the developing world are becoming unwilling to boost education budgets unless

severe inefficiency problems are addressed first, or at the very least simultaneously, by Ministries of Education.

Unfortunately, the former scenario looms ahead ominously as a likely possibility. The quality-enhancing input requirements needed to accommodate the recent influx of pupils (over 50% increase in one year) would be difficult enough to meet. That primary education is now *free*, makes meeting these requirements all that much more onerous.

To some extent, the impending possibility of "retro-reform" stems from the fact that Malawi is a poor country, and as such, its resource base is very weak - this being so even when one considers the level of donor giving put forth to bolster it up. Malawi simply doesn't have the money to pay for the textbooks and other learning materials needed to meet the increased demand for quality education (in fact, Malawi was having a tough time meeting the demand for quality education *before* the recent influx in enrolment). Nor, does Malawi have the infra-structure necessary to produce the number of teachers and classrooms needed to bring pupil-teacher and pupil-classroom ratios, respectively, down to levels conducive to learning.

That Malawi is indeed a poor country amplifies the need for it to be immensely innovative and highly efficient in the use of what little resources it has. However, as has been posited already, the Malawian education system of grossly inefficient, and inasmuch as some blame for Malawi's educational crisis can be tagged to its weak resource base, it is offered here that it is Malawi's inability to deploy its scarce resources effectively and efficiently, that stands as the most likely impetus to the potential onset of "retro-reform."

Malawi's inability to deploy its scarce resources efficiently and effectively stems from a number of factors. Powerful interest groups channel these scarce resources into sectors where the returns are so low as to render those investments economically nonsensical. For example, a spectacular source of waste would appear to be the university system, which has one of the highest subsidy ratios of any country, yet shows some of the most meager results ever seen. But one would be foolish to assume that eliminating this wastage, or redirecting it to a more fruitful destination (i.e. in-service teacher training) is a simple proposition. It is not always a matter of cognitively recognizing such sources of waste, and proceeding to eliminate it. The private rate of return to a university education in Malawi, at 46% (as of the most recent estimate available), is *phenomenally* high -- among the highest in the world -- and certainly higher than the private rate of return for both primary and secondary education. Clearly, a profitability of 46% is not something most social groups give up without a fight, particularly since many of those benefiting from this divergence between the private and the public good are frequently the sons and daughters of powerful corporate leaders and government officials.

Similarly, politicians are wont, for political purposes, to affect policy in a manner that makes running an efficient education system a near-impossible task. Witness the recent political decision to make primary education free. First of all, it is not clear to what extent free anything on a universal basis is a wise social policy (aside from the fact that its gratuity is totally illusory in any case)². Frequently, whatever is made totally free in this

²Zimbabwe's Minister of Education, Fay Chung, expressed in a personal communication that upon retrospective reflection, their biggest mistake was offering free education.

manner becomes rapidly of very poor quality. As noted earlier in this regard, implementation limits are not recognized, budgets are not provided, and administrative capacity simply cannot cope. As a result, quality plummets, and with that the urban middle and upper-middle class opt out of the system, depriving it of stakeholders with capacity and clout to influence policy in the right direction. In the end, inefficiency reigns and the poor suffer. That there is *a/ways* some willingness to pay, however small that might be for some -- which, in this case is now not being tapped -- illuminates further the waste/inefficiency which is brought on by political whim.

Ironically, the donors can at times contribute as well to the system's inability to operate in an efficient manner vis a vis the provision of quality education. For example, unrealistic demands can be placed on the GOM such that all of the GOM's time is spent trying to meet those demands and not on the business of improving the efficiency of the ministry. Granted, some of the demands of the donors may well be to improve efficiency, but often times, because of the lack of capacity to meet those demands, excessive effort is spent by the GOM making it look like those demands are being met.

There is also the fact that Malawi lacks the capacity to design, develop, and implement, a reform agenda that is at once pedagogically sound, fiscally responsible, and politically doable. Moreover, to the extent that this capacity exists, it has neither the time nor the energy to really turn things around because it is stretched to the limit trying to put out fires - fires which for the most part have been ignited by the inefficiency-inducing factors mentioned in this part of the report. This does not mean to suggest that efforts to reform the system have not been summoned. The MOEST is currently putting the finishing touches on the Policy Implementation Framework (PIF). However, as well-meaning as these efforts may have been, the final product will likely prove to be illusory. Lacking the technical capacity to assess tradeoffs, explore options, and examine the long-term implications of various policy initiatives; pressed for time; and pressured by donors to get the product on the table; the MOEST has in the PIF, put forth nothing more than a wish list. It is not, at present, a coherent policy agenda for change. Put forth as a policy reform document, however, measures described within the PIF will be pursued, blind of the sundry implications they might have for the system at some future date. In the end, then, such a document could prove to be the system's demise as opposed to its salvation.

Finally, the inefficiency which plagues the system can also be attributed to the country's fragile hold on democracy. Malawians don't yet fully appreciate the role democratic institutions can play in facilitating (i.e. rendering more efficient) the overall reform process. That democratic institutions can help to forge a common vision; that they can be the fora through which people gain a better understanding of how the education system works, the problems it faces, and the constraints delimiting what can be done in the way of reform; that they can be the venue within which people can come up with their own answers vis a vis the hard choices that have to be made in the way of policy options and tradeoffs; that they can engage people in deliberations over what shape reform should take vis a vis their own educational needs and aspirations; that they foster ownership in the reform process; that they can help to level the political economic playing field on which reform will

ultimately play itself out; that they can be the means through which valuable *partnerships* can be formed (and that partnership formation often times manifests itself in the form of additional resources that can be brought to bear on the reform process); are all notions which are not as yet fully understood. Instead, there is the mentality common among many within the GOM (and some within the World Bank) that it is the sole responsibility of the MOEST to come up with the education reform "answer." It is this mind set that exacerbates the inefficiency problem; in part because *there is no one answer*; in part due of the enormity of the task of trying to come up with one, the mere thought of having to do so has paralyzing effects on the MOEST³.

It is against this picture of the education reform situation in Malawi that an answer to the question, "What can be done to further the reform process?" is offered. In a nutshell, that answer is: *to reform the reform process*.

III. Reform: What have we learned? Over the past 15 years, RTI has worked to affect policy reform across a number of social sectors in numerous countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Recently, RTI staff were given the opportunity to reflect on this experience and to derive from it a basic understanding of sector-wide reform and how to go about doing it⁴. That reflection has been further substantiated by an intensive literature review touching on fields of academic inquiry ranging from planning and management to political philosophy and ethics. A brief overview of what has come out of this investigation follows. It is offered here because it is *this framework of understanding* which has influenced all of what is suggested in this report.

The basic findings of this investigation intimate that the following are fundamental features of reform:

Reform must be demand-driven. People must *want* to reform; they must *want* to change. Without this impetus behind change, it will neither be sustained nor fully enacted. That an agent's desire to/for change must largely emanate from the self-realization that change is in their personal and/or collective best interest, measures must be taken to *generate demand* -- facilitate learning -- for change among all key stakeholders of the reform process. Reform, then, must be premised on widespread participation -- it must be a shared process.

Reform must be premised on "home grown" answers. People will only want what is *theirs*, they will only back and support and help implement what they *own*. This being the case the "answers" to sundry educational problems must be *home grown*. To the extent that educational problems and issues differ from place to place, the answers to those problems will similarly differ. Accordingly, measures must be taken to *empower* people to come up with their own answers and to share these answers with others. This too speaks to the need for reform to

³This paralyzing effect was observed among key persons within the ANC as they were beginning to think about education reconstruction in the early 1990's.

⁴The opportunity was provided USAID/AFR/SD/HRD through a generous buy-in into the ABEL Project.

be a widely participatory process. It also point the centrality of partnerships to the reform process.

Reform must be learning based. Reform is fundamentally about *learning*, not just the learning that reform is intended to promote among children (and teachers) within the classroom, but the learning that must be associated with the process of reform itself. If people are going to come up with their own answers they must have the knowledge base from which good answers come: they must have a keen understanding of i) how the education system works, ii) what the constraints on the system are, iii) the options open to them, iv) the tradeoffs that have to be made, and v) the measures that can be taken to maximize effectiveness and efficiency vis a vis learning.

Reform is a never-ending process. Because reform is fundamentally a learning process, it must necessarily be a lifelong phenomenon. Reform, like development, is *not a one-shot deal*; it is a continuous and never-ending operation where product becomes process and process becomes product. The idealized reformed system, then, is one which is constantly reforming.

Reform requires democratic institutions. If reform is to be demand-driven, if it is about generating home-grown answers, and if it is a never-ending learning process, then democratic institutions must, to a great extent, become the vehicles of reform. Democratic institutions allow for change, they give people voice, they foster a sense of ownership, they promote compromise, they help forge partnerships, and through the deliberative process, they facilitate learning. Democratic institution building, then, is key to any reform effort.

Reform must be systemic. The education system is, indeed, a *system*; one comprised of numerous interrelated parts, *all* of which affect each other in one way or another. This being the case, reform cannot be successfully pursued unless one fully understands the nature of these relationships and so appreciates the fact that a *host of complementary interventions* must be pursued. Without this systemic perspective of and approach to reform, isolated instances of intervention will fall prey to the square-peg-in-round-hole syndrome⁵.

Reform takes place within a political economy. Policy is the product of a number of interest groups all trying to influence policy makers to make decisions

⁵An example of the square-peg-in-round-hole problem is when a person goes off to get trained and comes back to work in an organization, which because measures have not been taken to change it, renders the training received by that person inoperative. The organization simply isn't structured to accommodate, and so benefit from, the training that person received. As a result, the trained person either leaves (often times for the private sector) or doesn't use the skills acquired. In both case, they are a waste to the ministry that was intended to gain from the development investment.

that will favor their own particular situations. Moreover, the relative capacity of each interest group to influence policy in this manner varies greatly: some are quite powerful (politicians, unions, university students), while others are considerably weaker (children, parents). Unfortunately, the interests of the most powerful interest groups seldom coincide with policy initiatives that are in the best interest of children. What results are the gross inefficiencies described earlier in this report. To the extent that reform is about changing the status quo and that such change will be resisted by the political economy's most powerful interest groups, good information alone will often times *not* precipitate change. Information must be wedded to coalition-building and consensus-generating political strategies.

Reform must be driven. It should be reasonably obvious that systems do not reform themselves: demand must be engendered, home-grown answers must be generated, learning must be facilitated, political-economic battles must be fought, democratic institutions must be built and safeguarded, etc.. This being the case, efforts must be made to put in place the mechanisms and structures necessary to drive the reform process. Put another way, the match must be held to the log long enough for it to ignite.

Given this understanding of reform, it becomes evident that *dialogue, institution building, and partnership formation* stand as the cornerstones of a successful reform strategy⁶. With regard to dialogue, it must be *informed, democratic, and strategic*. That it must be informed should be self-evident. Unless people know what it is they are talking about (i.e. what the educational situation is, how the system works, what the implications of various policy options are, what the reality constraints are, what the tradeoffs are, etc.), they simply can't participate meaningfully in a dialogue over reform. Either ludicrous policy decisions will be made or the debate will collapse as a result of unbridled emotions and ideologically-driven rhetoric winning the day. Critical to effective dialogue, then, is good information flowing from valid data and sound analyses.

That the dialogue must be informed logically requires that it also be democratic, for it is through the process of democratic deliberation that different views are aired, opposing opinions defended, and multiple perspectives revealed; all of which help to provide a more complete picture of what education is all about and so lend a greater understanding of the issues at hand.

Finally, it is not enough to simply inject good information into the debate. As noted earlier, policy is influenced minimally by three things: interests, ideology, and information; with information often times being the least influential of the lot. This being the case, information-based dialogue must be deployed strategically. One strategy is to tether the dialogue to people's interests and/or ideologies and so facilitate a realization (i.e. a learning process) that it is in their (personal and/or collective) best interest to change. Another strategy is to use dialogue to build coalitions/networks (i.e. partnerships) that can, through sheer numbers (i.e. strength and power), make change something that is in the best interest of key power brokers in the political economy of education reform.

These coalitions underscore a point that institution building and partnership formation are

⁶Here, a "successful" reform strategy is one that leads to sustained sector-wide reform.

critical facets of the reform process outlined in this report. Democratic institutions offer the means through which home grown answers can be sought. If firmly entrenched, these institutions also assure people that the pursuit of home grown answers be an on-going process. And by connecting these institutions, through dialogue, not only can valuable information be exchanged that will facilitate the learning which is central to reform, but alliances can be forged that can help uproot those vested interests that actively work against change. What should be obvious then, is that by building democratic institutions (i.e. school committees, district committees) and linking them to themselves and an ever-expanding NGO network, the State enters into a partnership with civil society and so taps a resource base that otherwise would not have been drawn into the process.

IV. Reforming the reform process in Malawi. This report maintains that in spite of a number of positive measures that have been taken to improve the educational situation in Malawi⁷, the education reform picture in Malawi is *dire*, and that certain measures should be taken immediately to launch a set of related activities that will initially put into motion a informed, democratic, and strategic policy dialogue process aimed at coming up with a policy reform agenda (or set thereof) that is at once pedagogically adroit, fiscally responsible, politically doable, administratively feasible, and implementable. Over time, these activities should begin to put in place the capacities, the mechanisms, the structures, and the networks needed to make reform the widespread, learning-based, and on-going process it should be. To these ends, the following measures are recommended.

IV.a. Development of a tool designed to facilitate and inform a broad-based policy dialogue process. Though the actual design of such a policy support tool will be the product of a process that seeks input, vis a vis tool capacity, from a wide cross-section of stakeholders within the education sector, it can be assumed for purposes of this report that it will have a number of basic features. Accordingly, it is offered that this tool be premised on a demographically-driven enrolment, input, and cost projection policy options model.

Single-year single-year-age-group population projections for the school-going⁸ population will be exogenously derived and imported into the tool. Capacity will exist for users to explore the impact of different population growth rates -- to reflect changes in TFR or the onset of HIV/AIDS -- on enrolment, and with that, assess the implications those rate changes might have on various input and cost requirements.

Enrolment will be projected using standard grade-transition methods. Accordingly, enrolment will be driven by population growth, access of the population to the formal

⁷Most notably USAID/Malawi's Girls' Attainment of Basic Education and Literacy (GABEL) Project.

⁸School-age children would, for primary be 6-18 year olds. School-going persons would include a broader range, say 5-24 year olds.

education system (i.e. intake into Grade 1), and internal efficiency parameters (i.e. promotion, repetition, and drop out). Enrolment will be projected for all grades on a year-by-year basis. If desired (and if data permits), these enrolment projections can also be broken down by gender, age, and region. By altering any one of these variables, the impact of various policy options having to do with the flow of pupils into and through the system can be examined.

Inputs will be driven by linking enrolment projections to a host of service ratios. So, for example, the required number of teachers (i.e. teacher demand) will be derived from the following equation:

$$T = 1/(CH/T) * CH/CP * CP/C * 1/(P/C) * P$$

where

T: teachers

CH/T: contact hours per teacher per week

CH/CP: contact hours per contact period per week

CP/C: contact periods per class per week

P/C: pupil-class ratio

P: pupils.

Clearly, as enrolment grows so too will the demand for teachers, all else being the same. Data permitting, teacher demand can be broken down by level, qualification, type, and gender. A host of other input requirements (i.e. textbooks, classrooms, pedagogical materials) can be projected in a similar manner. The level of detail in this regard will depend on a host of factors not the least of which are i) what the Malawians want to see in the way of input projections, ii) data availability, and iii) relevance to the major issues at hand.

Costs will be projected by linking input projections to unit costs. So, for example, if the average teacher salary in 1998 is K10,000 and the total number of teachers needed for 1998 is 25,000 then the total cost of teachers for that year would be K250,000,000. Teacher costs can be broken down by qualification level and salary grade. Recurrent costs will be calculated by multiplying nominal input requirements by unit recurrent costs, while capital costs will be calculated by multiplying capital input requirements (nominal inputs requirement for time $T + 1$ minus nominal input requirement for time T) by unit capital costs. Total recurrent costs will be the sum of all recurrent costs, total capital costs will be the sum of all capital costs, and total cost will be the sum of total recurrent costs and total capital costs.

It should be emphasized that this will be policy *options* tool and as such, the user will be able to change a host of variables (i.e. everything mentioned above) so as to assess the impact of those changes on certain and various aspects of the system. Projected impacts are based on both population and enrolment growth and changes made in either target

year figures or growth rates. Target year figures are user variable and are approached by base year figures through standard linear interpolation techniques. So, for example, target year (i.e. set by the user at 1999) values for Grade 1 pupil-class ratios may be set by the user at 40-to-1. Year-by-year figures for the Grade 1 pupil-class ratio between the base year figure (i.e. 60-to-1) and the target year value will be derived from the interpolation procedure. Once the target year value has been reached, it will no longer vary. So, in this particular instance, the Grade 1 pupil-class ratio will remain at 40-to-1 from the year 1999 on. In some instances, it is more intuitive to use growth rates over a certain period of time. Teacher salaries, for example could be varied by making them grow at, say, 1% per annum. In this case, the user would be able to vary the growth rate.

In addition to all of the above, the tool will, depending on data availability and client demand, also facilitate the examination of policies and issues having to deal with: tertiary education (i.e. enrolment, input, and costs), teacher supply (gross numbers and by qualification level), teacher upgrading, teacher salary scales, and finance.

To help both the MOEST and USAID better envision these additional capabilities, technical descriptions of other models RTI has made in which these capabilities were incorporated will be forwarded under separate cover. At present, it is planned that the tool described here will be developed using Quatro Pro for Windows.

IV.b. Caveats about policy dialogue tools. As powerful and useful as these policy dialogue tools can be, they have their limitations. It is critical to remember that these tools are not answers machines that spew out "magic bullets." *Answers, as such, will have to come from the Malawians themselves.* The best these tools can do is open up, inform, and guide a series of discussions that will facilitate the process of Malawians coming up with their own answers. Any tool that portends to be able to come up with real answers to reform problems is charlatan.

Because these policy dialogue tools are verily models, and as such, stand as mere representations of reality (as opposed to replicas of reality), they cannot and do not do everything. Their entire raison d'être is to simplify reality by eliminating the noise that makes it so difficult to see key relationships in the real world. Experience dictates that there will be a constant, and healthy, tension between the Malawian users of the tool and the developers of the model with regard to how much the model will/should do. The point being that care must be taken to keep the reins in, for as the model begins to look more and more like reality (i.e. as it begins to do more and more), it becomes as useless as reality vis a vis its ability to enhance understanding and facilitate insight.

Finally, the tool envisioned here is *not a planning tool*. Planning tools stem from a mind set that is largely antithetical to the operational framework laid out in this report. Unlike planning tools which are designed to be used in closed rooms with a few "technical experts" to hash out a couple of scenarios from which will come one "answer" which will

then be imposed on an entire populous, policy dialogue tools are designed to initiate and facilitate the vision of reform delineated in this report. That the tool described here could in fact be misused as a planning tool is, in being well within the realm of possibility, something that should be closely monitored. This is not to say that the tool cannot be used to inform key policy makers, say, of the fiscal folly of certain policy considerations. To the extent that it does, great. That policy dialogue tools can indeed be seen as carrying out a number of planning functions is why they are often times initially misperceived as planning tools, and it is this misperception that should be carefully guarded against. One would hope that the lessons of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are enough to prevent this misperception from occurring.

IV.c. Implementation of the tool to facilitate and inform a broad-based policy dialogue process. It should be noted that the tool-instigated dialogue process will have already begun well before plans for the model's use as a dialogue tool are initiated. Consistent with the approach to reform described in this report, the tool will be developed in close collaboration with a broad spectrum of stakeholders so as to gain Malawian input into the tool's design and operation. Through this collaborative process, the dialogue will have already been well underway.

It is too early to lay out a plan for how the tool, once developed, will be used. However, to facilitate USAID's and the MOEST's insight into how such a process could proceed, a description of how the Namibian policy support tool, Namod, will be implemented is provided in Appendix A.

IV.d. Is the tool necessary? Fundamentally, this entire report is about reform; *it is not about tools*. Accordingly, to the extent that tools are necessary to help initiate or facilitate aspects of the reform process, then indeed they should be developed. Theoretically, a case can be made that a tool like the one described here is not necessary - that the multifarious role it plays in furthering the reform process could be carried out by whole range of other activities. Similarly, a case can also be made for not owning a car in Iowa: a whole range of alternative activities can be described that will accomplish all that a car does, say, for one family in half a year's time. The point is that although a case can be made, need it be? What is gained? The car has proven to be efficient and expedient in facilitating a number of family needs, and in so doing, it frees that family up to pursue other meaningful endeavors. The same can be said of these policy dialogue tools. They are efficient and expedient in facilitating number of reform needs. Accordingly, reform participants are freed up to pursue other reform-related activities. This being the case, it is maintained here that the tool described in this report is necessary, but certainly not sufficient.

V. A Reform Support Infrastructure. It should be fairly obvious that none of this happens on its own accord: logs rarely, if ever, spontaneously ignite. Moreover, the match used to light a log has to be held to it for quite a while before it does catch fire. And once ablaze, the log occasionally needs to be poked and prodded to stay ignited. Furthermore, it is important to note that inasmuch as there is an outside agent lighting the fire and occasionally poking and prodding it, *it is the log that does the burning*.

Why this lesson in Scouting 101? To emphasize the point that reform is a process that must be *driven and facilitated*. Someone has to come to Malawi and talk about reform. Someone has to generate a demand for dialogue. Someone has to build a policy dialogue

tool. Someone has to map out the political economy. Someone has to orchestrate the dialogue process. Someone has to build coalitions and establish networks. Someone has to influence policy. Someone has to build local capacity. Someone has to help clear the space for local-level efforts to blossom and expand. Someone has to empower the localities to take charge. In short, someone has to create the enabling environment to allow reform, as envisioned here, to happen. This loose organization of "someones" all working together to facilitate the onset of reform is what is referred to here as the Reform Support Infrastructure (RSI). A key point to make here is that the job of the RSI is to support and facilitate the reform process by enabling and empowering people to do it themselves.

Operationally, the RSI must do two things which, to some extent, must be carried out concomitantly. The first is that it has to create the space within which reform can take place; the second is that it must facilitate reform's expansion into that space.

Structurally, the RSI is comprised of a capacity embodied in what might be called a Policy Support Unit (PSU). It is here where much of the initial policy dialogue work is carried out. In particular, generating demand for reform; mapping out the political economy of reform; assessing the educational situation and identifying key issues; designing, developing, and implementing various policy support tools aimed at informing, facilitating and broadening the debate over reform; transferring the capacity to do such policy support work to other organizations with which networks and coalitions can be formed; and strategically deploying these and a host of other processes to affect changes, be they policy-related, or related to the way in which the bureaucracy is organized vis a vis the functions it serves in the way of providing education. In short, the job of the PSU is to drive the process and to create space.

As for what shape the PSU takes or where exactly it is located, will largely depend on the capacities that already exist within the country in this regard. In Malawi, for example, there exists the planning unit within the MOEST. Outside of government, there is a host of organizations (i.e. Center for Social Research (CSR), Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM), Association of Christian Education), some of which extend all the way down to the school level. Clearly, some policy support capacity will have to be located within the MOEST, most likely within the planning division, though it is conceivable that it could be located within the Principal Secretary's Office. Outside of government it is too early to tell. CSR is in the business of generating policy-related information and using it for purposes of policy advocacy. Moreover, it has the advantage of being independent of government, and appears to be well-connected to the donor community. TUM is thinking about putting in place a research unit which could eventually play the role of a PSU. And the Association of Christian Education has, through its member organization the Catholic Secretariat, already pushed (successfully) for their headmasters to be able to suspend teachers.

All of this is very promising vis a vis locating and expanding a PSU capacity within the NGO sector. Whether this capacity is ultimately located in a single organization (i.e. CSR) or in a network of bodies is something that should be considered as the reform process

outlined here begins to unfold. For now, the task at hand is simply i) to continue mapping out the NGO sector, ii) to engage them in a dialogue over the reform ideas presented in this report, and iii) to encourage them to network among them. As some of the reform processes discussed in this report begin to unfold, NGO involvement should be solicited. For example, if a policy dialogue tool is to be developed, the CSR for example should, together with the MOEST's planning unit, be *integrally* involved, so as to transfer that capacity to the NGO sector.

That there should, indeed, be a PSU-type capacity within the NGO sector is a position strongly taken here. Government usually is not in the business of criticizing itself, and as such, as important as a PSU-capacity is within the MOEST, every effort should be made to locate and entrench the same capacity outside of government (i.e. in the CSR).

In addition, the RSI is structurally comprised of local-level change agents whose job it is to help make reform happen on the ground. For purposes of this report, these local level bodies will be referred to as Education Resource Centers (ERC). It may all be well and good to decentralize the reform effort and charge the localities with the daunting task of doing their own reform. But unless the support structures exist at the local level to empower the localities to actually do it, it will never happen. The exact role of an ERC will depend on the existing capacities and needs of the localities. Some, for example, may require support in the form of helping them incorporate Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences into a time table. Others may require help in the way of how to go about the day-to-day business of running a school. Still other localities may need help in organizing an in-service teacher training program. The point is that it is the job of the ERC's to facilitate and guide on-the-ground reform processes.

The work currently being carried out by Save the Children renders them, at least in spirit, an ERC. It is envisioned now, that there should be in the order of 20-40 schools per ERC. Clearly, a key part of this reform strategy is to come up with a set of measures that will, over time, put the requisite level of ERC capacity within the sector. Coordinating various NGO and donor-driven activities currently taking place at the ground level could constitute the nascent formation of a number of ERC's. It is suspected that many ERC-type functions are being carried out at the ground level, but that they are not organized in the form of an ERC. Efforts made in this regard should at least be considered.

The RSI, then, is comprised of a PSU-type capacity (at the top) the job of which is to create the space within which reform, defined and fostered at the local level by an expanding network of ERC's (at the bottom) can take root and spread. That there are, indeed, positive things happening at the local level is key information needed to help create the space necessary for its expansion, since a case can hardly be made to clear away space unless there is evidence that something good will fill the vacuum. This speaks to the need for communication between the ERC's and the PSU; thus the concept of a reform support infrastructure, or network.

Finally, that all of this (the work of the PSU and the work of the ERC's) needs to be orchestrated should be seen as critical to this strategy's potential success. Right now, it is offered that this driving function ultimately be carried out by the PSU. Initially, it may have to be driven by some outside technical assistance working closely with 1 or 2 well-connected Malawians.

This depiction of a RSI is but an overview of some very general and nascent ideas of how to make reform, as delineated in this report, happen. Clearly, there are a lot of loose ends, not the least of which deals with the issue of sustainability. If, for example, the RSI is to be a permanent feature of the educational landscape, as is suggested by the claim that reform is both never-ending and something that must be facilitated, then sustaining the RSI, both with regard to technical capacity and finances becomes a very key consideration. RTI, as part of its investigation into reform has with the issue of sustainability in mind, discussed the concept of endowments with key persons in USAID and the World Bank. That endowed policy-advocacy NGOs have been put in place (by USAID) in Latin America seems to suggest that this mechanism is one that donors can, at the very least, consider.

VI. Additional measures. Aside from all of the above, there are a few additional things that could be done to advance the reform process.

Institutionalization of education reform columns in the press. One way to facilitate and inform a widespread debate over education reform is to enter into a national-level dialogue in the press. Education reform columns could cover a range of activities from simply heightening peoples awareness over certain issues (i.e. the economic inefficiency of university subsidies) to putting forth a arguments against a particular policy consideration. A corporate sponsor should be sought to help cover the costs and a cadre (3-4) of education professionals should be enlisted to make contributions. Model: the Education Supplement in the Weekly Mail and Guardian.

Collection of school level data by NGO's. The idea here is not to duplicate what is currently done by the GOM, but to safeguard access to data, and to verify the data that is currently being collected. The Association of Christian Education covers nearly 40% of Malawi's basic education enrolment. The teachers' unions also cover a large section of the school system. Through these organizations, additional data could be collected and channeled up to a central NGO (i.e. PSU-type body) for purposes of analysis and policy advocacy.

Exposure to new ideas. There is a lot happening in the US school reform movement and much of it has relevance to education reform in Malawi. District Four in East Harlem, New York, is in the midst of an educational revolution, the experiences of which if shared with key Malawians might prove, at the very least to be thought provoking. There are numerous more, like the Accelerated Schools Project, Project Atlas, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and Foxfire, to name but a few. Consideration should be given as to how this knowledge can best be shared with Malawi. Bringing representatives of these initiative to Malawi would offer many more Malawians exposure. Linking the CSR to these and other reform movements in the US via e-mail is another means of opening up communication and dialogue. Sending a few key persons to the US for a tour would be yet another way to share these experiences.

Mapping out of what's happening on the ground. An effort should be launched that will i) identify and characterize various reform activities currently taking place at the local level, and ii) assess local level capacity and interest in participating in the kind of reform described in this report. The community school movement currently underway should, for example, be examined in this regard. With regard to item #ii, a series of workshops could be held with local-level stakeholders to begin sharing some of the ideas presented in this report.

VII. Personal comment. Joe shared with me a number of comments which came from the mission following his presentation. One was that Malawi should walk before it runs, implying that all of Joe's fancy (and glitzy) talk of reform is simply out of place in a country where, as the person who made the comment noted, "they are simply trying to get kids into schools." My personal response to this is that unless getting kids into school is something that is pursued within a larger framework of understanding (i.e. the reform paradigm offered here), it will likely go awry. Witness, ironically, the effort *to get more kids into school*. As a result of this "success," (brought on by a lack of systemic vision vis a vis reform) the country is now strapped with a horrific quality problem exacerbated by the fact that scarce resources, which would ordinarily have been stretched further by the influx of new students, are now even scarcer with moneys from school fees no longer coming in. Malawi now faces the very real possibility of retro-reform. *Malawi has no choice but to run*. Because it is a poor country, *it becomes all the more important for it to run!* Worrying about changes at the margin is not what Malawi needs; what it needs is to reform the way it does reform.

Appendix A

Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Namibian Education Policy Dialogue Tool

Background: The document, *Towards an Education For All*, puts forth that **access, equity, quality, and democracy**, are the four cornerstones upon which the transformation of the post-independence Namibian education system would evolve. Offering that each of these ideals requires the other, the document maintains that there can be no tradeoffs between them. In principle, this is laudable. As a distant beacon guiding the transformation process, *these ideals should not be compromised*. However, in the face of pressing fiscal and political constraints the notion that there can be no tradeoffs between access, equity, quality, and democracy is, from a practical perspective, largely untenable. *Towards an Education For All* itself concurs. Noting that government spending on education, which at the time the document was written accounted for 20% of the national budget, was among one of the "highest in Africa," *Towards an Education For All* observes that in the face of limited resources even *this* level of spending "cannot be sustained." Today, however, recurrent spending on education consumes over 30% of the national recurrent budget and if held unchecked, will by the year 2010 account for nearly 63% of all national recurrent spending⁹. The question then becomes one of how to make these tradeoffs in a manner that maximizes overall public utility *vis a vis* access, equity, quality, and democracy.

The answer to this lies largely in the fourth ideal, democracy. *Towards an Education For All* states that "education for democracy stems from democratic education" and offers, that what it means by democratic education is, in part, "broad participation in the decision-making process," stating further that "citizens must assume more responsibility." Indeed, by getting people to deliberate democratically over the issues confronting education and the options open to them for dealing with those issues in a pedagogically sound and fiscally responsible manner, one not only foments wide-spread responsibility toward educational development, but sets in motion a process by which people can begin to come up with *their own answers* (i.e. make tradeoffs they're comfortable with) and in so doing maximize overall utility *vis a vis* access, equity, quality, and democracy.

In noting that "education is the foundation of democracy," *Towards an Education For All* tacitly observes as well that the democratic debate around educational transformation should be informed. In particular, people must, if they are in a rational manner to take charge of the educational development process, have a sound understanding of i) how the system works, ii) what the issues are, iii) what the implications of various policy options are, and iv) the nature of the tradeoffs that have to be made.

That the debate must be informed, in turn, suggests that it must also be widespread and on-going. Different stakeholder groups maintain various perspectives of education; perspectives which if not revealed through broad-based debate, render one another's overall understanding of the system insufficient, and as such, relatively uninformed. And,

⁹This figure was generated using Namod. It denotes overall recurrent expenditure assuming that those factors which characterized the system as it behaved in 1994 remained unchanged through to the year 2010.

because we are all learners (or at least should be), our views, ideas, and technical knowledge regarding education change over time, thus making dialogue something which should be on-going if it is, in fact, to be informed.

It is therefore offered here, that in the face of mounting political pressures and fiscal constraints, tradeoffs have to be made, and that by empowering people to participate substantively and responsibly in the definition, development, implementation, and redefinition of their own educational ideals, democratic education can be realized and with that, the means by which access, equity, quality, and democracy can be maximized in the face of those constraints is achieved.

Principled Framework. The Namod Implementation Strategy outlined here flows from a principled framework which is the product over ten years of on-the-ground institutional experience in the field of policy support systems development¹⁰, and a recently conducted review of the literature aimed at substantiating that experience with both theory and practical knowledge gained from a host of other fields of inquiry¹¹. Essentially, this principled framework aimed at guiding and contextualizing any range of activities directed toward sector-wide policy reform is constructed primarily upon three considerations: i) the fundamental features of a **reformed system**, ii) the fundamental features of the **reform process**, and iii) the technical aspects of **education reform**.

In a reformed system, the role of the government is neither to provide the "answer" nor to do the work of reform. Rather, it is to guide and support people coming up with and acting on their *own* "answers." Put another way, the government's job is to provide the boat and help steer it; the people must do all the rowing¹². Implicit here are a complex of structures aimed at i) empowering the people to take charge of their own educational development needs, and ii) institutionalizing the democratic processes necessary for reform to be the self-renewing process it must be if it is to accommodate time's changing perspectives and understandings of what education is all about and how best it should go about doing it. The ideal reformed system, then, is one that is itself a learning entity.

¹⁰RTI's Policy Support Systems Program is premised largely on the realization that sustained sector-wide policy reform emanates from an informed policy dialogue out of which comes "endogenous" answers to the host of issues and problems a particular sector faces. For more information on the policy support paradigm and how it has been used in past situation, see *Policy Dialogue and Reform in the Education Sector*. Crouch, L., Vegas, E., and Johnson, R. Advocacy Series, Education and Development #3. Washington, DC. USAID/LAC/ODR/EHRD. 1993., and *Policy Dialogue and Policy Reform: Reflections of the South African Experience*. Healey, F. Center for International Development Staff Working Paper. Research Triangle Park. Research Triangle Institute. 1994.

¹¹Included among these fields of inquiry are development, planning, policy analysis, change, management and organizational development, decentralization and participation, implementation, political philosophy, and market economics.

¹²This metaphor was borrowed from Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government*.

That this "organizational learning" be catalyzed by incentive mechanisms that trigger healthy competition based largely on strong horizontal accountability linkages is another fundamental aspect of what this reformed system looks like.

As for the reform process, experience has proven over and over again that it must be demand-driven: people must want reform if it has any chance of taking place. Ancillary to their *wanting* reform is the fact that people must *own* it as well. To this end, they must play a substantial role in defining it and making it happen. Put another way, the "answers" must be endogenous, relative both to inter-national dialogue (i.e. donor-host country) and intra-national dialogue (i.e. national-local). That answers must indeed be endogenous implies that *learning* must be the ultimate objective of any reform process. Gone are the days when experts thrust "answer" upon others. In their place are actors that can facilitate the learning necessary to unleash endogenous answers. Reform, however, bucks systems' natural tendency to resist change. Powerful and numerous are the forces that wish to maintain the status quo. This being the case, it is important to understand the political economy within which reform will take place, and to design and deploy reform strategies that reflect consideration in this regard.

What is now known about the technical aspects of education (i.e. how children learn) is the third leg upon which this principled framework is constructed. Just enough is offered here to make the points necessary for this section of the report. It is known now that children are imbued with multiple intelligences and as such they learn in different ways. Also known is the fact that learning is best facilitated when the it is contextualized *vis a vis* the learners' particular locales and life experiences. This understanding of the technical aspects of education have logical implications for what a reformed system looks like and how best to go about doing it -- implications which are largely commensurate with the features sketched out above.

Working together as a whole, these three knowledge domains form the basis of an approach to sector-wide education reform¹³ that to date has served as the principled framework informing the development of Namod and its intended use as a policy reform tool. That these framework is entirely commensurate with the ideals embodied in *Towards an Education For All* bodes well for the prospects of the Namod Implementation Strategy unfolding in the manner described in this report.

Namod. It is within the above described contexts that the Namibian Education Policy Options Tool, *Namod*, was developed. In particular, Namod was designed to inform and facilitate a broad-based policy dialogue over what, in the face of mounting political pressures and unyielding fiscal constraints, can be done to put the Namibian education system on a path that will help make the vision laid out in *Towards an Education For All* a reality that is at once pedagogically robust, fiscally responsible, and politically doable.

With Namod essentially completed, the question now beckons, "How is this tool to be

¹³This approach currently called *Education Reform Support*, is being documented by RTI under the auspices of USAID's ABEL Project and will be ready for publication by May, 1996. For more information on the approach contact the author of this report.

deployed such that it can best do what it was designed to do?" The Namod Implementation Strategy outlined in the bulk of this report attempts to answer this question. It is comprised of four phases -- **initiation, sensitization, workshopping, and consolidation** -- each will be discussed in due course.

That the Namod Implementation Strategy described here is comprised of four discrete but overlapping phases does not mean to suggest that with the completion of the last phase, the policy dialogue work to be done with and about the Namibian education sector should come to an end. Quite the contrary, this report takes the view that with the completion of the Namod Implementation Strategy, the policy dialogue work to be done here will have only just begun. Just how things will unfold with regard to the four phases of the Namod Implementation Strategy is difficult enough to predict, let alone attempting to envision what might happen thereafter. Accordingly, only brief mention is made of what might logically follow on this heels of the Namod Implementation Strategy and this is offered only because if this is to happen, measures will have to be taken during the Namod Implementation Strategy to ensure a smooth transition to that which must logically follow.

The Namod Implementation Strategy.

Initiation Phase. With Namod in hand, the initial task of the Namod Implementation Strategy becomes one of introducing the model and its intended use as a policy dialogue tool to key stakeholders within and about the sector. Critical here is the need for a fairly clear understanding of the political economy surrounding Namibian education¹⁴, and the subsequent preparation of stakeholder-specific presentations which i) highlight the value the tool might have for them *given their specific situations within the sector*, and ii) demonstrates from a technical perspective how the tool actually works.

The purpose, of this phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy, quite frankly, is to get people to buy into the tool and to allow them to make meaning of the value it might have for them both as a device that can shed further light on their understanding of how the system works and what the implications of various policy actions might be especially as it pertains their particular educational situations, and as a tool that can inform and facilitate a broad-based dialogue over what can and should be done to improve the overall performance of the education system.

This phase has already begun with initiation presentations already conducted before the Ministry of Education and Culture's (MEC) Education Management Team (comprised of the Principal Secretary, Director of Planning, Director of Formal Education, Director of Adult Education, and the Director of Finance); the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology; the Deputy Minister (MEC); the Regional Education Directors of Ondangwa

¹⁴To this end, two weeks were spent mapping out the political economy of the education sector. In this regard, discussions were held with a number of persons within and/or attached to the MEC. That the political economy is a dynamic suggests that this kind of mapping exercise should be a constant feature of the process being described in this report.

East, Ondangwa West, and Windhoek; National Institute of Educational Development; sundry other stakeholders within the MEC; and the Namibian National Teachers Union (NANTU). This initiation phase must continue over the next several weeks such that as many key stakeholder groups as possible are exposed to the model and its intended use as a policy dialogue tool. Among those stakeholder groups who have not as yet been introduced to the process are the remaining four regional education offices, regional education fora, leaders of the 13 political regions, NGO's, various community organizations, captains of industry, church groups, women's groups, donor agencies and donor project teams, student unions, and other teacher unions. In addition, this phase should be extended to key stakeholders within the tertiary education sector, as well as to persons within the Ministry of Finance who impact on education. Ideally, the initiation phase of this implementation strategy should be pretty much completed by mid-to-late October. It should be noted here that the initiation phase has thus far proven to be quite successful, with great demand having been created for much of the work being described in this report.

Sensitization Phase. The purpose of the sensitization phase is to facilitate people's learning with regard to i) the various problems which innervate the system, ii) the dynamics which govern how the system works, and iii) the kind of things which could be done to effectively and responsibly deal with those problems. In particular, this phase of the implementation strategy should serve to heighten people's awareness to the fact that numerous problems exist within the system, and that unless these problems are addressed soon, the situation will likely worsen to near-catastrophic proportions. Stakeholders should know, for example, how inefficient the system is *vis a vis* repetition and drop out and what those inefficiencies are costing them. They should know what it costs to produce school graduates accounting for both drop out and repetition. In addition, stakeholders should know how resources are distributed and spent across the regions. It is also important for them to know that if the system were to continue to behave as it did in 1994, while accounting for population growth, education recurrent costs will account for nearly 63% of total government recurrent spending by the year 2011. These are but a few of the many issues that should be highlighted in this phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy.

Sensitization should also serve to inform people about how the system works, how it behaves, and how component aspects of the system interact with each other. Specifically, stakeholders should come to realize that an education system is in fact a *system*, one which is comprised of interrelated parts, which when affected one way or another, impact on other parts of the system. For example, as politically salient as raising the qualification level of all unqualified teachers to level C might be, it has profound consequences for the recurrent budget. Decision-makers should know just how sensitive the budget is to various hypothetical improvements in teachers' qualifications. Likewise, as expedient as automatic promotion in Grades 1-3 might sound, it has a serious impact on secondary school enrolment. That everyone should know how secondary enrolment behaves according to changes made in the internal efficiencies of primary education is recommended here as well. Here, the point is that unless people understand the complex interactions of the system, they simply won't be able to engage in a rational dialogue aimed at rectifying the system's problems.

Finally, the sensitization phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy should also serve to show people that if tradeoffs are made in conjunction with innovative policy initiatives, the system can in fact operate for the benefit of all Namibians *within the spectrum of fiscal constraints set before it*. Stakeholders should come to realize, for example, that if they want qualified teachers, they might have to increase pupil-teacher ratios to 40/1. But they should also know that there are a number of instructional technologies that can be effectively used to accommodate a class size of 40. In short, in many tradeoff instances, they can have their cake and eat it too¹⁵.

With this said, it is suggested that some sensitization materials (i.e. a document and an accompanying presentation) be prepared to inform stakeholders along the lines described above. Care should be taken to highlight those issues and problem areas that are most pronounced. Again, the purpose of this phase of the implementation plan is to sensitize people, not overwhelm them. Though they should be seen as complementary, both the document and the presentation should also be able to stand on their own.

With these sensitization materials in hand, a series of sensitization meetings should be planned and conducted. In addition to the aforementioned purpose of these meetings, a number of other purposes peripherally pertain. Stakeholder groups should, for example, realize that the analyses behind the sensitization materials were carried out using the policy support tool Namod, and that this capacity will be made available to them for the purpose of carrying out their own analyses. In addition, people should, as a result of these meetings, be reminded that this entire set of activities is designed to empower them to participate meaningfully and substantively in a democratic deliberation aimed at generating local solutions to local problems.

It is fairly important that this phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy not come too late on the heels of the initiation phase. Experience indicates that momentum is a critically important component of this kind of activity and that if momentum is lost, one runs the risk of inadvertently generating ill-will toward the process. One simply can't get people all geared up (during the initiation phase) and be perceived as not following through due to time delays. It is also important that this phase unfold with careful attention being paid to the political economic arena within which it is taking place. In this regard, care must be

¹⁵With regard to the section of the sensitization materials aimed at to heightening stakeholder awareness toward alternative measures that can be taken to deal effectively and responsibly with the problems facing the system, experience dictates that particular consideration should be taken to ensure that people do not misconstrue it as some sort of "answer" that the head office in collaboration with foreign consultants have cooked up and are trying to impose on them. That this part of the document and presentation be seen as *illustrative* of the kind of things that can be done is critically important. Were people to think that the innovations described in this part of the sensitization materials were being put forth as the means by which Namibian educational transformation would indeed proceed, it would in contradicting the democratic character of the process, and in so doing greatly jeopardize it.

taken to not move too fast. Within any bureaucracy, powerful forces exist which eschew any departure from the *status quo*. What constitutes too slow or too fast, however, is something that cannot be prescribed from a hotel room. Again, experience suggests that the best one can do is read the environment and proceed accordingly. To this end, efforts must be made to ensure that the political economic environment is periodically monitored with the aim of determining just how quickly this process should unfold.

With this said, however, it is offered that the sensitization workshops begin within 4-8 weeks after the completion of the initiation meetings. Where there looks to be too long a period between the initiation phase and the sensitization phase, it is possible that related analyses could be provided and/or that training in the use of the tool could be offered. The point is that one must be ever-conscious of not losing momentum.

Workshopping Phase. The workshopping phase of the implementation plan is, for the most part, what this entire activity is all about for it is here where, as a result of "broad participation in the decision-making process," democratic educational development is realized. In particular, it is at this juncture of the Namod Implementation Strategy where stakeholders become empowered to discuss issues germane to their own educational situations and to examine and assess the options and tradeoffs needed to deal with them. Critical to the success of this phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy are i) that the dialogue leading up to, and around which, these workshops will be organized be both broad-based (i.e. fully representative of all relevant interest groups within the region) and informed, and ii) that the political economic playing fields upon which these local level dialogue processes will unfold be as level as possible.

It is currently envisaged that discussions aimed at teasing out local positions regarding policy options and tradeoffs will take place "beyond" each education region (i.e. the 13 political regions) and that these deliberations will culminate in a series of sub-regional workshops aimed at forging local policy agendas. Teachers unions, church groups, community development groups, adult education networks, principals' organizations, civics, women's groups, and PTA's, are all likely to be found "beyond" the regional education offices. This being the case, efforts must be made to map out both the regional and sub-regional political economies and begin to identify actors (i.e. local level change agents) who can, by working with the locales, begin to extend the process described in this report beyond the education regions. These local level change agents represent a second tier of person power needed to drive this process, and as such, distinct measures should be taken not only to identify them, but to empower them to carry out their responsibilities in this regard.

Vital to the workshopping phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy is the need for these local education policy agendas to be the product of an informed dialogue. Namod was designed to help in this regard. So too will be the sensitization materials. But experience dictates that it will require more than these alone. Reasonable education plans come out of workshops where pedagogical innovation is adroitly interwoven with what is fiscally responsible, politically sound, and practically doable. Accordingly measures should be taken to interject pedagogical innovation into the workshopping process. In the past this has been done both directly and indirectly by specialists in the field of education

reform and development. Their direct involvement in the workshopping process is self-explanatory. Their indirect involvement refers to an arrangement whereby education reform specialists are brought into a national-level workshop to suggest against a backdrop of what ails the Namibian education system, a host of ideas and innovations that have proven to work elsewhere under similar circumstances. In attendance at this workshop are both tiers of change agents who can then take the knowledge gained therein and interject into discussions with various stakeholder groups who were unable to attend this workshop. This technique has been used quite successfully in the policy support work RTI has carried out in South Africa and Swaziland.

Important here as well is the need to keep the local political economic playing fields as even as possible. Again, experience dictates that wherever there is a political economy within which education plans are discussed, the children (a.k.a. the learners) are the weakest player in the arena. If the spoils of education reform are directed inordinately towards the demands of the unions, the textbook manufactures, and/or the politicians, reform will likely have fallen far short of its intended mark. It is maintained here that education reform must primarily be concerned with maximizing the amount of learning that takes place amongst all learners. To the extent, say, that higher teacher salaries can make that happen, fine. The point, however, is that education reform should primarily be about maximizing learning, not expenditure. That expenditures have to be made *in order to maximize learning*, so be it. Accordingly, efforts must be made to map out the relevant political economies and to craft and orchestrate the workshops such that the dialogue ensues therein is, to the extent possible, focussed on what is good for the learners.

Formal regional workshops will last anywhere from 2-3 days. Ideally, there should be two workshops per region (sub-region), so that stakeholders have the time to mull over the substance of the first workshop and to discuss it with the stakeholders before making the relatively concrete decisions expected to be made in the second and final workshop. Assuming that the sensitization phase brings the process to the end of 1995, the workshopping phase should ideally begin around mid-February and last to about mid-to-late April.

Consolidation Phase. *E Pluribus Unum*; out of many, one -- this is the impetus of the consolidation phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy. In hand at this point will be at least 7 regional education plans (hopefully 13 sub-regional plans), each one representative of local needs and preferences, and each one crafted cognizant of the reality constraints facing the sector as a whole as well as the need both to "equalize"¹⁶ the provision of educational resources across and within the regions and to make up for historical backlogs. Given these, the objective of the consolidation phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy is to forge a national education policy agenda out of the regional and sub-regional plans that come to a consolidation conference.

¹⁶That equity can take on numerous definitions requires that this issue be raised and discussed during the sensitization phase of the Namod Implementation Strategy.

One's perception of what this national plan might look like *vis a vis* the regional plans is vitally important. If, for example, one sees the consolidation phase is viewed as a means by which a single national education plan is forged and subsequently imposed on each region, the ethos driving the process outlined here will have been greatly compromised. Namibia is a pluralistic nation comprised of people with varying needs and aspirations. Accordingly, the national plan forged at this conference should rather be seen as a *mosaic* - a composite of a number of distinct, yet interrelated plans which is held together by the nation's interest in maximizing access, equity, quality, and democracy.

Implicit in this view of a national plan is an assumed role for the Head Office. That this role is somewhat, if not entirely, different from the one it currently plays makes the move from one to the other a critical aspect of the process sketched out in this report. To date, it has been perceived that the *modus operandi* of the Head Office reflects a "one-answer," or "one-size-fits-all," operational framework. In development parlance, one would call it top-down. As noted earlier, the Namod Implementation Strategy emanates from an operational framework which holds for the Head Office the responsibility of guiding and supporting the continuous generation of local answers. One size does not fit all. The trick for the State becomes one of ensuring that each regional plan stays within the confines of a broadly defined national framework while not playing so strong a role in this regard that it thwarts the realization of a true mosaic.

The purpose, then, of this consolidation conference is to craft the mosaic that will become the nation's road map for the realization of the vision laid out in *Towards an Education For All*. This conference will, like the Etosha Conference before it, last about a week and will be attended by all who have, up to this point, helped drive the process. In addition, it is suggested that key education specialists, strategic planners, political elites, and donor representatives be on board. Ideally, this conference should take place around June-July, 1996.

Additional Activities. Though mention has been made of the need to identify and train regional and local-level drivers of the process, it is so critical to the success of the Namod Implementation Strategy as envisioned here that particular attention is now given to the matter. Currently, the process described in this report is being driven by three people in the EMIS, a foreign adviser, and two consultants. It should be evident that even if these six persons were to devote all their energies to driving this process over the next 10 months, it wouldn't be enough in the way of person power. This being the case efforts must be made to identify persons and/or organizations willing to help drive this process, especially at the local level. In this regard, the net cast during the initiation and sensitization phases of the Namod Implementation Strategy should be thrown far and wide.

Once identified, these actors must be empowered to help drive the process. In particular, they not only have to know how to use Namod, but understand fully what it does and how it does it. They must also be skilled in the craft of conducting purposeful meetings and designing and facilitating policy dialogue sessions. In addition, they must be sensitized to the political economic aspects of this process and trained to operate effectively in this

regard. Finally, they must fully comprehend the paradigm¹⁷ which informs this process, for without this, their efforts will be directionless. That this paradigm dovetails with the principles and vision laid out in *Towards an Education For All* bodes well for the potential success the Namod Implementation Strategy will have in Namibia.

That people be well trained in the use and application of Namod is vital. Namod is, on the one hand, a very simply tool. Push a few buttons and endless projections flow forth. On the other hand, Namod is very complex, and in the hands of persons who simply do not know what it is all about, the entire process could stall as a result of the tool's misuse. Experience in these matters reveals that models like Namod can cause much confusion. They are neither answer machines nor planning machines; rather they are policy dialogue tools and as such are *designed to be used in certain ways*. Indeed, that all models have limitations is something that must come out of this training.

It should be clear by now that this entire process will have to be deftly orchestrated. Stakeholder groups have to be identified; they'll have to buy into the process and then be brought into the process. Meetings have to be held, workshops have to be designed and conducted, momentum has to be maintained and controlled, capacity has to be build, people have to be organized, analyses have to be done, and all of this will have to take place within a nested set of dynamic political economies that will demand constant monitoring, some elements of which may not entirely embrace where this process is heading. That this will require a significant amount of attention and oversight suggests that efforts be made to allow one person, or team, to carry out this task in near-uninterrupted fashion.

Support for this Implementation Strategy. The fundamental features of the Namod Implementation Strategy laid out in this report have been discussed with a number of stakeholders within the education sector over the period August 2 - August 13. It should be noted that everyone with whom these ideas were shared approved of them.

What Next? With the completion of the Consolidation Conference, it can be assumed that if all goes according to the strategy laid out in this report, Namibia will have a road map (or series of 7-13 road maps) that will help guide the sector toward the realization of the vision laid out in *Towards an Education For All*. If, as it is hoped, those road maps embody some of the fundamental principles which underlay the process out of which these road maps will come -- namely, the Namod Implementation Strategy described above -- then certain measures will have to be taken *before* the end of the Namod Implementation Strategy such that when it comes time to implement these plans *soon after* the Namod Implementation Strategy, those structures that need to be in place to help make implementation happen are, in fact, in place. The Namod Implementation Strategy emanates from a principled framework which sees the definition, development, and implementation of educational development the role of the people most directly affected by it, with the role of the State being that of helping to make this happen. In this regard,

¹⁷That paradigm being the one described earlier under the heading Principled Framework.

then, the State both steers the boat and empowers people to row it. The people, however, do all the rowing. This being the case, structures must be in place at the local level that will empower the locales to not only to develop their plans, but to implement them as well. For now, these structures will be referred to as Education Reform Support Centers (ERSC).

These ERSC's have already been alluded to when noting that local level change agents have to be identified and trained to help make the Namod Implementation Strategy happen at both the regional and sub-regional level. That ERSC's have to be in place to help implement what hopefully will come out of the Namod Implementation Strategy process suggest that those change agents enlisted to help make the Namod Implementation Strategy happen might also be called upon to play a supporting role in the implementation of local level education plans. That these ERSC's are even mentioned in this report flows from the perceived need to have them in place once plans are ready to be implemented. Accordingly, efforts will have to be made *during* the Namod Implementation Strategy to ensure that they are in fact there and that resources are ready to flow in their direction soon after the Namod Implementation Strategy endeavor is completed.