



Primary School Teacher Efficacy: Mangochi and Balaka Districts - IEQ Malawi

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The issues of formal education at any level in Malawi have been of paramount importance since the colonial era. However, many learners were excluded from educational opportunities, especially at primary (basic) level, because of factors such as: over-age; school fees; and uniform policies. The removal of these factors through the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994 suddenly and dramatically increased the school enrollment by 70%— from 1.9 million to 3.2 million children.

This article highlights some of the critical challenges encountered by the Malawi Government as a result of the increase of school enrollment and the role of the IEQ/Malawi Project (a partnership between the Malawi Institute of Education and Save the Children) to support the Government's attempts to improve the quality of education in Malawi. As in other countries where FPE has been introduced, the expansion of the infrastructure (e.g. school facilities, trained teachers, educational materials) is less rapid than the expansion of the school population. For example, the teacher/pupil ratio may be as high as 1:120 and the textbook/pupil ratio in some classrooms may be 1:4. In addition, parents' expectations for their children's education soared. The enthusiasm to teach and learn was marred by frustrations and disappointment. This situation adversely affected the quality of primary education in Malawi.

The Government has embarked on several strategies to address these problems such as widespread hiring of teachers, establishment of a Teacher Development Unit, and construction of new classrooms. In February 1999 the Malawi Institution of Education established a partnership with Save the Children Federation (US), Mangochi Office to form IEQ/Malawi which is currently undertaking a study of primary schools in Mangochi and Balaka Districts of Malawi (reported in Issue #2 Quality Link). A major goal is to strengthen the capacity of Malawian educators and researchers to systematically explore the implementation of a program to improve teaching in primary schools. The findings from the teaching responsibilities and links these factors to classroom behavior.

Baseline data were collected in February 1999 and followup data were collected in October 1999, following an intervention developed and implemented by Save the Children. Questions provided by stakeholders include: What are the characteristics of the teachers who are affected by levels of knowledge, training? Is the intervention an opportunity for learning and changing behavior? Are there differences in



instructional approaches between teachers whose first language is other than Chichewa? Data gathered from the teachers (in addition to basic descriptive information) include: instructional materials used and those which exist within the system; type and levels of community support; distance between school and residence; reports on types of administrative and instructional support; relationship with the community; relationship with parents; and human and material resources available. Because all attempts to reform any aspect of education must ultimately reach the pupils, a variety of information linked to pupil performance is also collected.

Examples of findings from the baseline data are that:

1. About 9 of our 10 teachers who were observed had schemes of work. For $\frac{3}{4}$ of the teachers, the schemes of work were rated as good or outstanding. Slightly fewer teachers had lesson plans for the specific lessons that were observed and for about 8 out of 10 teachers there was a slippage in the availability and maintenance of record keeping.
2. During Math lessons: more than 8 out of 10 teachers follow the language policy and use language pupils can understand; about 3 out of 10 teachers use the mother tongue to help learners grasp the point being made; textbooks were not used in about one-half of the lessons; about one-half of the lessons use locally available teaching and learning aids.
3. During English lessons: about 7 out of 10 teachers follow the language policy; less than 2 out of 10 teachers use the mother tongue to help the learner grasp a point being made.
4. One of four teachers indicated they were never observed while teaching.
5. About one-half of the teachers reported that their primary support came from the Headteacher.

6. Almost no teachers indicated attendance at any in-service sessions between 1996 and 1998.

IEQ/Malawi will host a National Seminar in February 2000 to report the findings of the baseline and followup data collection. Additional followup data will be collected in October 2000.