



Inside Story

Vol. I, No. 1

An IEQ Research Brief

October 2000

Discussion Questions

How can sufficient teaching staff be found for rural areas like Mangochi, where few teachers are available?

How can administrators help teachers adjust to provide instruction at the different levels where they are needed – but for which they have not been prepared?

Why don't teachers who are posted away confer first with the Headteacher, as official policy requires?

IEQ Research Examines Underlying Reasons for Teacher Mobility in Two Malawi Districts

In Balaka and Mangochi, where did half of the teachers go?

In October 1999, as the school year for Malawi children drew to a close, approximately half of the 188 teachers who participated in the IEQ II Project Survey in the Balaka and Mangochi districts were no longer in the classrooms to which they had been assigned when school opened the previous February.

Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) researchers from the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Save the Children/Malawi Field Office examined this phenomenon as part of the long-term IEQ study of pupils, teachers, schools, and communities in Malawi.

Where did the teachers go?

52%	<i>changed classes</i>
19%	<i>posted away</i>
12%	<i>went on training</i>
5%	<i>were sick</i>
4%	<i>were absent during the survey</i>
3%	<i>were on maternity leave</i>
3%	<i>died</i>
2%	<i>miscellaneous</i>

More than half of the teachers who left their February classes were reassigned, most often to teach a higher-level standard, but also to fill vacancies created by teachers posted away. Commonly, Head teachers had no choice but to reassign teachers to best utilize the remaining teachers' capabilities. Such match ups can be difficult.

The IEQ research revealed that the general teacher shortage, which is especially acute in rural areas, leads to a "chain reaction" to any departure or arrival of staff. Head teachers must make adjustments to maximize the ever-fluctuating pedagogic expertise

Many Factors Stimulate Teacher Mobility in Malawi (*continued*)

Chain reactions from sickness were multifaceted, the IEQ researchers found, as ill teachers within schools were replaced, others left because there was “too much sickness at the school,” and still others reported leaving to be closer to health care facilities they or family members needed. Training needs, too, have a strong impact on mobility. With its shortage, Malawi has recruited 22,000 untrained teacher who are undergoing the Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) s. Training of MIITEP is done during the school terms 12 percent of the teachers who departed the Balaka and Mangochi districts had left to pursue professional development, at various Teacher training colleges. It is not uncommon for teachers to have to take on extra classes at other levels, as Head teachers scramble to find teacher coverage. The demands are huge, as shown by this Headteacher comment: “Next time you come here you will not find me. I am tired of being a Headteacher. I want to be a common teacher so that I, too, can come and go as I please.”

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Within the academic year, teacher posting should be minimal – **only in exceptional cases** such as teacher incompetence and severe illness.
2. To minimize unnecessary teacher movement and circumvention of teacher posting policies, **cooperation is needed across all levels of staff**, from the District Education Office and the Primary Education Advisor to the Headteacher and the teacher.
3. The District Education Office should **keep a well-defined channel of communications** between all four levels of staff cited in point 2.
4. The roles of Head teachers on posting should be **well articulated and disseminated**. Similarly, the administrative **roles of the Primary Education Advisors should be spelled out** and followed, to avoid conflicts on administrative issues.
5. The Headteacher should follow procedures with respect to teacher absenteeism; **discipline cases must be addressed**.
6. The District Education Offices and Primary Education Advisors should develop mechanisms for teachers to **keep school records on posting and class re-allocation**.
7. The DEO's, PEAS, Headteacher, and community should **work together in order to attain quality education** in Malawi.

“Inside Story” is part of the IEQ Research Study series, sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The complete report on Malawi teacher mobility can be obtained from Docks Jere at the Malawi Institute of Education (265-536242) or Lester Namanthaka at Save the Children/Malawi Field Office (265-584680). The report also is available on the Internet at <http://www.ieq.org>.

Contract Number: HNE-I-00-97-0029-00

