



Malawi/IEQ

A Partnership between Malawi Institute of Education and Save the Children Federation USA/Malawi Field Office

A REPORT ON

**THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON
QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH
RESEARCH, INFORMATION AND
ACTION**

**Held at Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi
7th – 9th February 2000**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Malawi/IEQ II Project would like to thank USAID /Malawi mission for financial support. In a special way we would like also to thank the Director of IEQ II Project in Washington, D.C., Dr Jane Schubert and the National Project Director, Mr. N T Kaperepera for their untiring technical support. Also, we would like to thank the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, the donor community and stakeholders for their participation and moral support.

The Project also wishes to recognize the major contribution of the Seminar Steering Committee and Conference Moderator, Mr. H S Mchazime, for guiding the Seminar deliberations.

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BACKGROUND

Improving Educational Quality (IEQ)

IEQ is USAID / Washington Global Bureau activity in which USAID Malawi is participating for the first time in Malawi. The IEQ Project itself is in its second five-year cycle. It is funded by USAID and implemented through a consortium led by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). The objective of this activity is to build and strengthen institutional capacity to design, manage and utilize action research to inform local and decision-makers and administrators about quality of education in schools. The focus is on building Malawian institutional capacity to design and manage research that illuminates the realities of educational quality at the student and classroom levels. It is also to analyze the implications of findings in terms of operational changes needed within classrooms and to contribute to policy reform and dialogue among practitioners and stakeholders.

IEQ II /Malawi Project

The Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) formed an association with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in January, 1999 with a purpose of implementing an educational research programme under the Improving Educational Quality II project. (IEQ)

IEQ II/Malawi Project is a partnership between Malawi Institute of Education and Save the Children Federation USA/Malawi Field Office. The project works in collaboration with national institutions on research agenda aimed at improving the quality of education in the country. The project offices are located at the Malawi Institute of Education in Domasi.

IEQ II /Malawi assists Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MOE) in promoting quality primary education through research at the classroom, school and community levels including, assessment of student learning; classroom observation; analysis of school and find out factors related to participation, learning and school effectiveness

CONTENTS	PAGE
INTRODUCTION : : : : : :	1
Theme of the National Seminar : : : : :	1
Objectives : : : : : :	1
 KEYNOTE ADDRESSES : : : : :	 2
PRESENTATIONS : : : : : :	3
Save the Children (US) : : : : :	3
Centre for Educational Research and Training : : : : :	3
Malawi School Support Systems Programme (MSSSP) : : : : :	4
Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MOESC) : : : : :	4
IEQ/Malawi : : : : : :	4
TALULAR : : : : : :	5
Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) : : : : :	5
 ISSUES RAISED : : : : : :	 6
Low Teacher Qualification : : : : :	6
High Pupil /Teacher Ratio : : : : :	6
High Teacher Absenteeism : : : : :	6
High Pupil Absenteeism : : : : :	6
Poor Communication in Education : : : : :	7
Illegal Pupil Repetition : : : : :	7
High Teacher Mobility : : : : :	7
Inadequate School Supervision : : : : :	7
Poor School Management : : : : :	7
Poor Use of Supplementary Books : : : : :	8
 PLANS : : : : : :	 9
Immediate Plans : : : : :	9
Long Term Plans : : : : :	9
 CONCLUSION : : : : : :	 10
 APPENDICES : : : : : :	 11
National Seminar Programme : : : : :	11
List of Guests at the Official Opening : : : : :	13
List of Participants : : : : :	14

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The IEQ/Malawi II Project conducted Baseline and Follow up surveys in February and October 1999 respectively in 65 primary schools of Mangochi and Balaka districts. The objective of the surveys was to establish factors that affect educational quality in primary schools. After the data was collected, IEQ/Malawi Project staff with technical assistance from Washington, D.C analyzed it.

In February 2000, the IEQ/Malawi Project organized a national seminar at Nkopola Lodge in Mangochi district. The main purpose of this seminar was twofold. First, it was to disseminate the findings from the February and October 1999 surveys to policy makers, donor community and stakeholders. Second, it was to share experiences with other institutions that are involved in improving educational quality in this country.

The National Seminar was officially opened by the former Minister of Education, Hon Dr Ken Lipenga, M.P. at the Malawi Institute of Education in Zomba district. In his opening remarks, the Hon Minister of Education welcomed the initiative that was taken by the IEQ/Malawi Project in bringing together policy makers, donor community and stakeholders to discuss the issue of educational quality in the country. He assured the delegates to the seminar that his office would be looking forward to receiving feedback on all the deliberations.

1.1 Theme of the National Seminar

The theme of the National Seminar was "*Quality Education through Research, Information and Action*". This theme reflected the main objective of the surveys, which was to find out the factors that affect the educational quality at classroom level in primary schools.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the National Seminar were to:

- demonstrate the role of research in improving educational quality
- serve as a forum for discussing how the findings can guide policy and action

2.0 KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

After the official opening of the seminar, two keynote addresses were made by the Director of Improving Educational Quality Project II, Dr Jane Schubert and the Director of Educational Planning who is also chairman of Policy Investment Framework (PIF) in Malawi, Dr J Kuthemba Mwale.

In her address, Dr Jane Schubert stressed that all the delegates had come to the seminar because of their commitment and willingness to discuss issues which could improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. She said that each delegate had an important role to play in promoting the quality of education. She therefore urged all the delegates to focus all their discussion on the child who is the recipient and benefactor of whatever goes on in the classroom. She encouraged the delegates to think about the learners when introducing and implementing education reforms because these learners are the mirror through which nations can choose appropriate policies, develop programmes and create tools for measuring success. Finally, Dr Schubert shared with delegates how the IEQ process is guided by the **3Ps**, which are,

- ❑ **p**upils that the project focuses on,
- ❑ **p**artners who the project work with in different countries, and
- ❑ **p**riorities in education for individual nations

In his address Dr Kuthemba Mwale posed the following questions:

1. Why raise an alarm for quality education **today**?
2. Why respond to **emergencies only**?
3. Why is change in educational systems always **forced**?
4. Why does education **lay the blame on others in times of crisis**?
5. Why did we have to **wait for IEQ** to come to identify and highlight the problems in connection with quality education?

The following were some of the answers/reasons to the above-mentioned issues:

- ❑ **Educational system is conservative and glorifies the past**
- ❑ **Educational system does not want to tell the truth about the situation in our schools**
- ❑ **Development in education is very slow, as a result it fails to fit comfortably in a dynamic environment where expectations are ever changing.**

Finally, Dr Kuthemba Mwale reminded the delegates that sometimes research does not address policy issues and that people who are involved in just a section of the entire system handle the results of the research. Therefore, he invited all the delegates to share a created vision that focuses on improving quality of education for children in this country.

3.2 PRESENTATIONS

Day 2 Tuesday 8 February, 2000

There were five presentations on 8th February 2000. These were made by Save the Children Federation, Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT), Malawi School Support Systems Programme (MSSSP), Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MOESC) and MIE/IEQ

3.2 Save the Children (US)

Save the Children Federation presented a paper entitled "*Survey findings on teachers, schools and the communities*".

From this presentation delegates learnt that:

- ❑ 50% of the target teachers from the baseline were moved from one class to another and from one school to another within a school session.
- ❑ There was a very wide age range among teachers from 21 years to 62 years especially for female teachers.
- ❑ 32.5% of teachers teaching in rural areas are women
- ❑ 75% of the teachers are Junior Certificate holders.
- ❑ 64% of the pupils are Chiyao speakers whereas 67% of the teachers could not speak Chiyao
- ❑ there is a high teacher/pupil ratio (1:82)
- ❑ There is high pupil and teacher absenteeism: 32% for teachers and 25% for pupils
- ❑ core subjects such as Chichewa(14%) Mathematics(10%) and English(3%) had no Teachers' Guides
- ❑ poor teacher preparation and lesson delivery
- ❑ lack of in-service training for teachers.(26%)
- ❑ 98% of schools visited have school committees and PTAs but these needed further training and supervision.

The presentation challenged the delegates to come up with appropriate suggestions for improving the teachers and community's performance in their respective roles within the school system.

3.2 Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT)

CERT presented a paper on *Teacher Quality in Malawi Primary Schools: Evidence from Research Studies*. The paper focussed on the problems that impinge on teaching and learning. The following were some of the problems that were highlighted:

- ❑ High proportion of untrained teachers.
- ❑ Teachers working in very difficult conditions.
- ❑ Minimal teaching and learning resources.
- ❑ Teaching and learning process that is not participatory.
- ❑ Lack of professionalism e.g. poor lesson planning and lesson delivery.
- ❑ High absenteeism.
- ❑ Very low administrative capacity of the headteachers.
- ❑ Despite the introduction of free primary education, school management has not changed to accommodate the extra influx of children.
- ❑ Lack of teacher incentives e.g. late salaries, poor housing.

Finally the paper suggested that a comprehensive package of policies, such as appropriate working conditions, strengthening teacher feedback and professional support, was needed in the education system in order to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

3.3 Malawi School Support System Programme (MSSSP)

MSSSP presented a paper on *What Has Been Learnt About Teacher Support*. The presenter reported that the programme has found out that:

- ❑ Teacher development centres (TDC) that have been constructed in the country are being utilized for various activities. However, it was still felt that the centres are under utilized for activities such as zonal planning meetings.
- ❑ Many PEAs and senior school staff members acknowledge that the MSSSP programme provides them with professional benefits of improved skill and knowledge.
- ❑ Material support, e.g. fuel for motor cycles is being provided to some district education offices to enhance zonal supervision.
- ❑ The programme is providing developmental activities such as the organization of school-based supervision of MIITEP teachers, seminars and workshops.
- ❑ There is positive impact on school management practices.
- ❑ Classroom practices have been improved.

The paper concluded that the programme is utilizing these findings in order to strategize new programmes and inform implementers and policy makers.

3.4 Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MOESC)

MOESC's presented a paper on *Education for All by the year 2000 (EFA)*. The paper assessed Malawi's implementation of the 1990 Jomtien Global Declaration of Education for All by the year 2000. The areas of assessment included:

- ❑ Expansion of early childhood care and development activities.
- ❑ Universal access to and completion of primary education.
- ❑ Improvement in learning achievement – percentage of pupils who reach at least standards 4 and 6 of primary schooling and who master a set of nationally defined basic learning competencies.
- ❑ Reduction of adult illiteracy rate, especially the disparity between male and female illiteracy rates.
- ❑ Expansion of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults.
- ❑ Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living, made available through all education channels.

The paper also discussed the policy implications on the mentioned areas. It also gave a general assessment of the progress made so far. The progress includes:

- ❑ increased access to Pre-School Education from 1% in 1994 to 24.6% in 1999
- ❑ improvement of pupil /teacher ratio from 68.1% in 1994 to 61.1% in 1997
- ❑ over 60 % of standard 4 pupils have mastered a set of basic learning competencies such as numeracy and life skills

In conclusion, the paper stated that although Malawi strives to achieve education for all, enrolment in all levels has remained relatively low. In addition, financial support has been substantially low. However, it was stated that government still advocates education for all.

3.5 IEQ/Malawi

IEQ/Malawi presented a paper on "*Findings on pupil performance in English, Chichewa and Mathematics*" based on the February and October 1999 surveys.

Delegates were informed that the following areas were measured during the surveys:

- ❑ Mathematics attainment by boys and girls in one academic year;
- ❑ Differences in performance between Chichewa and Chiyao speaking children in Mathematics;
- ❑ Levels of mastery on mathematics skills by the end of standards 2, 3 and 4;
- ❑ Proportions of pupils in standards 2, 3 and 4 who can write their names;
- ❑ Proportion of pupils in standards 2, 3 and 4 who can read in Chichewa and English;
- ❑ How Chichewa speaking children differ from Chiyao speaking children in their performance in English and Chichewa;
- ❑ Chichewa and English mastery in relation to home language.

The research findings show that the performance of pupils in the classes examined improved steadily in Mathematics, English and Chichewa. However, the mastery of English and Chichewa by Chiyao speaking children had more gain than that of Chichewa speaking children in all the classes.

Day 3, Wednesday 9 February 2000

TALULAR and the Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) made two presentations.

3.6 TALULAR

The presenter started with the definition of the acronym TALULAR that stands for **T**eaching **A**nd **L**earning **U**sing **L**ocally **A**vailable **R**esources. According to the presenter the main argument for the need to use locally available teaching and learning materials in our schools is that educational quality cannot only be enhanced using commercially produced teaching and learning resources provided by the government or donors.

The presenter emphasized that making of teaching and learning resources demands stakeholders vision, resourcefulness and innovativeness. Finally, the presenter concluded that the endless challenge for the stakeholders is to get materials from the environment, which help to improve teaching and learning processes in the classroom in order to achieve educational quality.

3.7 Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM)

Creative Centre for Community Mobilization presented a paper on *Social Mobilization For Educational Quality (SMC-EQ) Pilot Project Research Findings (November 1998 To April 1999)*. This research was conducted in Balaka, Mangochi and Salima districts. The purpose of the research was to identify key elements and constraints of quality in basic education, as perceived by the communities and schools. The survey found the following:

- ❑ Poor relationship between the communities and schools;
- ❑ Community's negative reaction to circumstances such as delays in government and donor funding;
- ❑ Ineffective teaching and learning in schools due to overcrowding in the classrooms
- ❑ Insufficient teaching/learning resources and lack of safe drinking water;

- ❑ Teacher frustration due to lack of professional incentives;
- ❑ Unclear Ministry of Education policies on issues such as decent dressing.

The paper suggested that a joint effort with other research institutions, schools, policy makers and the communities themselves was required in order to overcome these constraints and improve educational quality.

4.0 ISSUES RAISED

At the end of the symposium, the participants raised the following issues and suggestions to improve quality of education in the country:

4.1 Low Teacher Qualification

- Consider entry behaviour in the profession
- Revert to two-year teacher training with academic subjects.
- Improve inset programmes
- Provide longer training (than MIITEP residential) in all subjects (all subjects are the core)
- Include academic subjects in INSET programmes
- Introduce academic appraisal of teachers who are teaching in infant, junior and senior classes.
- Encourage teachers to generate and document helpful ways of teaching specific topics and concepts in different subjects. This would result into a compendium of teaching hints (from practitioners)
- Upgrade TTCs to offer Diploma courses to primary school teachers

4.2 High Pupil/Teacher Ratio

- Train more teachers
- Recruit more teachers
- Train teachers to 'team-teach' properly
- Identify 'mentor' pupils from higher classes
- Use community members for 'child-minder' tasks
- Encourage the participation of the private sector in teacher training **with strong emphasis on quality**
- Find ways of retaining the already trained teachers into the system
- Emphasize techniques for handling large classes
- Build good houses for teachers in rural areas where most teachers are reluctant to go to.

4.3 High Teacher Absenteeism

- Empower the heads to take some action on teachers who absent themselves
- Consider ways of motivating teachers (non-monetary)
- MPSR to be reinforced
- Look at the **root causes** of absenteeism and try to **remove them**
- Encourage TTCs to refine teachers work ethics
- Strengthen grassroots structures e.g. PTA, School Committees through training and sensitization programmes.
- Empower DEOs to discipline teachers immediately at the spot

4.4 High Pupil Absenteeism

- Strengthen PTAs and let them be a concern for all DEOs
- Determine the reasons and treat those problems
- Encourage school committees to work together with parents
- Improve relationship between classroom management skills and absenteeism
- Help teachers to improve class management skills and teaching skills
- Consider school feeding programmes
- Site schools in areas where there are none (school mapping)
- Make schools more friendly/attractive environments
- Encourage teachers to be concerned about absenteeism (at the moment many see it as reducing the size of over-large classes)

4.5 Poor Communication in Education

- ❑ Ensure that all stakeholders are informed of the text and the rationale: parents/teachers/community/DEO/PEA/TTCs etc
- ❑ Consider using the radio, TV, press conferences so as to reach many people
- ❑ Monitor the implementation of policies issued by those expected to implement them
- ❑ Use community leaders, religious and political leaders as well in communicating to the masses on matters affecting education
- ❑ Decentralize the office of public relations in the Ministry of Education
- ❑ Establish proper channels of communication among the various levels

4.6 Illegal Pupil Repetition

- ❑ Learn what the benefits seem to be that allow requests for repetition
- ❑ Make it legal to repeat
- ❑ Create the basic atmosphere for automatic promotion of pupils before considering implementing the policy
- ❑ Make consultations with the teachers before passing any policy.
- ❑ Revisit the policy on automatic promotion of pupils considering the wide disparities that exist in classroom practice by our teachers
- ❑ Revisit the assessment methods which reflect on teaching methodologies as well
- ❑ Improve teaching and learning. This in turn will make it possible for the policy to work

4.7 High Teacher Mobility

- ❑ Consider not moving teachers away from their schools within a school session
- ❑ Follow proper channel for transferring teachers
- ❑ Establish minimum service duration for a teacher before transfer
- ❑ Give incentives (e.g. bike or mattress) to teachers who go to rural areas
- ❑ Provide good teaching/learning environment i.e. good classrooms, good teachers' houses
- ❑ MOE headquarters not to interfere in teachers postings at district level
- ❑ Transfer criteria should be objective
- ❑ Improve terms and conditions of employment

4.8 Inadequate School Supervision

- ❑ PEAs' responsibilities should be prioritized by MOE
- ❑ Consider training headteachers
- ❑ MSSSP should speed up/pilot supervision by zone to involve more people
- ❑ Distribute MSSSP supervision materials to **all** other projects involved in education so that they know what is happening
- ❑ TDU should provide enough fuel for PEAs for motor bikes
- ❑ Provide adequate funds for maintenance of motor bikes for PEAs
- ❑ Upgrade PEAs academically

4.9 Poor School Management

- ❑ Provide training to teachers in administrative skills
- ❑ Encourage community responsibility
- ❑ Strengthen parents/community involvement in school decision-making
- ❑ Provide relevant training for all relevant stakeholders groups/representatives
- ❑ Introduce diploma/degree in primary education for heads, PEAs, DEOs
- ❑ Provide school management training in TTCs
- ❑ Identify appropriate criteria for choosing head teachers

- ❑ Involve other stakeholders and partners e.g. Community Development staff in school management

4.10 Poor Use of Supplementary Books

- ❑ Consider TALULAR alternatives
- ❑ Encourage teachers to train children to write and compile their own class readers
- ❑ Train teachers and pupils to use supplementary readers properly
- ❑ Orient teachers on the use of supplementary books
- ❑ Create a reading and writing culture among teachers

5.0 FUTURE PLANS

As a way forward, IEQ/Malawi Project has the following immediate and long-term plans to carry out:

5.1 Immediate Plans

- ❑ Provide computer skills training in SPSS as one way of strengthening the in-country capacity of its professional staff
- ❑ Conduct further analysis of data based on the issues that were raised at the seminar
- ❑ Make small scale follow-ups based on the October 1999 findings, especially those that are related to:
 - Pupil absenteeism/replacement
 - Pupil dropout
 - High Teacher Mobility
- ❑ Prepare for the September 2000 major follow-up survey by developing and pilot testing the Standard 5 instruments
- ❑ Provide training in qualitative research and report writing to the core team of researchers.

5.2 Long-term Plans

- ❑ Make a major follow-up survey in September 2000
- ❑ Carry out research in continuous assessment in primary schools
- ❑ Conduct research in factors that affect teacher quality
- ❑ Organize another national seminar in May or June 2001

6.0 CONCLUSION

The National Seminar brought together policy makers, donor community and stakeholders to discuss the research findings and suggest appropriate actions to be taken. This created a useful forum where knowledge about real teaching and learning that occur in the classroom was shared .A lot of useful recommendations that are aimed at improving the educational quality in this country were generated by the delegates. In a nutshell, the national seminar demonstrated one of the IEQ's approaches, which is to "use the knowledge to inform policy dialogue and improve local practice".



Malawi/ IEQ II Project

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IEQ-MALAWI: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE MALAWI INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND SAVE THE CHILDREN/US

NATIONAL SEMINAR: 7TH – 9TH FEBRUARY, YEAR 2000

THEME: “Quality Education through Research, Information and Action”

PROGRAMME

MONDAY 7th FEBRUARY, 2000

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 09:00 - 09:45 | Registration, Tour, Receive Seminar Documents and Tea |
| 09:45 - 10:00 | Invited Guests and Delegates get seated in the Hall
Overview of the National Seminar |
| 10:00 - 11:00 | Official Opening: The Hon. Minister of Education,
Sports and Culture, Dr Ken Lipenga, M.P. |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Refreshments |
| 11:30 - 12:00 | Research as a Tool for Educational Improvement: IEQ Process by
Jane Schubert, IEQ Project Director |
| 12:00 - 14:00 | Lunch Break |
| 14:00 hours | Travel to Nkopola Lodge, Mangochi |
| 19:00 hrs | Seminar Reception at Nkopola Lodge |

TUESDAY 8th FEBRUARY, 2000

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 08:00 - 09:00 | Presentation by Save/IEQ on <i>What has been learnt
about Teachers and the Community</i> by Lester Namathaka and
Francis Mabeti |
| 09:00 - 09:30 | CERT: <i>Teacher Quality Study</i> by J Chimombo |
| 09:30 - 10:00 | MSSSP: <i>What has been learnt about Teacher Support</i> by
B M Kanjala |
| 12:00 - 13:00 | Lunch Break |
| 13:00 - 14:00 | MIE/IEQ: <i>What has been learnt about Pupil Learning</i> by |

E S Kaphesi

- 14:00 - 15:00 Small Group Discussions on Pupils' Learning Outcomes
15:00 - 15:30 Refreshment
15:30 - 17:00 Plenary Session (Group reporting)
17:00 hours Steering Committee Meeting

WEDNESDAY 9TH FEBRUARY, 2000

- 08:30 - 09:00 Re-cap seminar accomplishment
09:00 - 09:30 TALULAR (*Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources*) by Andy Byres
09:30 - 10:15 CRECCOM (SMC-EQ) by Simon Mawindo
10:15 - 10:30 Refreshments
10:30 - 11:30 Large Group Activity
11:30 - 12:30 Plenary Session (Research Questions, Plan of Acting and Evaluation)
12:30 - 13:00 Closing Remarks by the Director for Basic Education
13:30 - 14:00 Lunch and Departure

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