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# Malawi

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## Principles and general objectives of education

The educational policy aims at developing an efficient and high-quality system of education appropriate both to the available resources and to the political, social and economic aspirations of the nation. The general objective is to equip students with the skills and desire for self-employment and entrepreneurship, rather than conventional wage employment.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, drafted soon after the political transition to multiparty democracy and approved by the Parliament, the State shall actively promote the welfare and development of the people by progressively adopting and implementing policies and legislation aimed at achieving the following goals in the education sector: eliminate illiteracy; make primary education compulsory and free to all citizens; offer greater access to higher learning and continuing education; and promote national goals such as unity and elimination of political, religious, racial and ethnic intolerance. (Article 13).

Based on the National Education Sector Plan 2008-2017, the vision for the education sector is to be a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and voiceless. Education enhances group solidarity, national consciousness and tolerance of diversity. In essence, the sector wishes to ensure better access and equity, relevance and quality, and good governance and management in all institutions from basic education to higher education.

In terms of the *Vision 2020* (June 1998), by the year 2020 Malawi as a God-fearing nation will be secure, democratically mature, environmentally sustainable, self reliant with equal opportunities for and active participation by all, having social services, vibrant cultural and religious values and being a technologically driven middle-income country. Malawians cannot achieve the proposed Vision unless they successfully achieve the following: good governance, sustainable economic growth and development, vibrant culture, well developed economic infrastructure, food security and nutrition, science and technology-led development, social sector development, fair and equitable distribution of income and wealth, and sustainable environmental management.

According to the Vision, the strategic challenges for education are: improving access, quality and equity in primary, secondary and tertiary education; increasing uptake of science and commercial subjects; increasing skilled people in technical and vocational education and training; improving special education; improving access to and the quality of tertiary education; improving performance of support institutions in the education system; and developing effective and efficient management in education system.



## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Article 25 of the **Constitution** of 1994 states that “All persons are entitled to education. Primary education shall consist of at least five years of education. Private schools and other private institutions of higher learning shall be permissible, provided that: a) such schools or institutions are registered with a State department in accordance with the law, and b) the standards maintained by such schools or institutions are not inferior to official standards in State schools.”

Education in Malawi is governed by the **Education Act** of 1962.

In October 1998 the Cabinet approved the National Decentralization Policy which provided for the election of local assemblies in districts and major urban centres, and the devolution of certain central government functions to them. The Decentralization Policy seeks to promote democracy, good governance and public participation in local development and to eliminate duplication between district administration and local government. The adoption of the policy was followed in December 1999 by the enactment of the **Local Government Act**. This Act seeks to further promote democratic principles, accountability, transparency and participation of people in decision-making and development processes. The Act defines the constitution and functions of the Local Assemblies. Each assembly has a corporate body called the District Assembly (DA). In November 1999, the District Commissioner’s office was abolished, the staff transferred to the local assemblies and an interim staff appointed to head the new local government administration.

The **Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education Training Act** of 1999 is intended to promote technical education training. The broad objectives of the legislation are to: a) promote an integrated, demand-driven, competency-based modular technical education and training; b) monitor gaps between supply and demand for skills; c) support the adoption and application of appropriate technologies; d) promote managerial and business skills, and a spirit of entrepreneurial culture for wage and self employment; e) facilitate sound and sustainable financing and funding mechanisms for technical education and training; and f) facilitate and bring together the expertise and moderate the different interests of stakeholders of technical education and training.

The **University of Malawi Act** of 1974, amended in 1998, provides for the establishment of the University of Malawi and for the conduct and management thereof; for the establishment and incorporation of the Council of the University of Malawi as a body corporate and as the governing body of the University; for the establishment of a Senate thereof; and for the repeal of the University of Malawi (Provisional Council) Act.

## Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education, Science and Technology** (previously the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture) is the agency that has administrative, financial and academic control of primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as the training of primary school teachers.



The Ministry of Education is structured into several departments, namely: educational planning; basic education; special education; secondary education, teacher education and development, higher education; science and technology education; education methods and advisory services; technical education and vocational training; education management development unit; supplies unit; and finance and administration.

The **Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education Training Authority** (TEVETA) was established under the related Act of 1999. TEVETA is empowered to operate as an independent autonomous body responsible for technical education training in the country. Some of TEVETA's key functions are to: facilitate provision of technical and training opportunities and facilities for such training; facilitate the establishment of a technical education and training system which includes basic and specialized training to meet the needs of formal and informal sectors; ensure that the training system is based on demand, is cost-effective and gradually decentralized to all the regions of the country to ensure maximum utilization of resources and relevance of technical education and training programmes; foster and promote entrepreneurial values and skills as an integral part of all technical education and training programmes; promote access to technical education and training for disadvantaged groups; secure adequate and sustainable financing for technical education and training and approve curricula of registered institutions providing technical education and training. TEVETA falls under the Department of Technical and Vocational Training in the Ministry of Education.

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** is responsible for early childhood development, which includes pre-primary education, and also for adult literacy and adult education through the **National Centre for Literacy and Adult Education**. The **Ministry of Youth Development and Sports** is responsible for aspects of non-formal education for out-of-school youths.

The country is administratively divided into six **Education Divisions** and thirty-four **Education Districts** headed by the Division Education Manager (DEM) and the District Education Officer (DEO), respectively. In the context of semi-institutionalized decentralization, the divisional and district levels are largely responsible for primary education; issues pertaining to secondary and tertiary education still tend to be handled at the central level. However, the trend is strongly moving towards strengthening the divisions and districts to define and execute their plans with as minimal central office interference as possible.

At the school level, the head teacher is the link between the school and the District Education Officer. At the community level, the School Committee and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) assist the head teacher in issues of school governance, organization and development.

The responsibility of providing education is shared among the central government, local governments, voluntary agencies and the local communities in which the schools are situated. Primary schools are organized through a zonal system with each zone served by a Teachers' Development Centre (TDC). A similar system, e.g. Cluster System, has been developed for the secondary education subsector. The central government exercises overall powers in coordinating and planning at the



national level. Voluntary (mostly missionary) agencies and local communities contribute by constructing, equipping and furnishing schools. Direct education costs for parents are the payment of school fees and the purchase of school uniforms, apart from the primary level which is free and where the uniform is not compulsory.

The Ministry of Education is assisted in the provision, improvement and assessment of education by a number of parastatal organizations such as the University of Malawi, the Malawi College of Accountancy, the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB), which are autonomous institutions, funded almost entirely by the Government. The training of secondary school teachers is carried out by both the Ministry of Education (diploma-level teachers) and the University (graduate teachers).

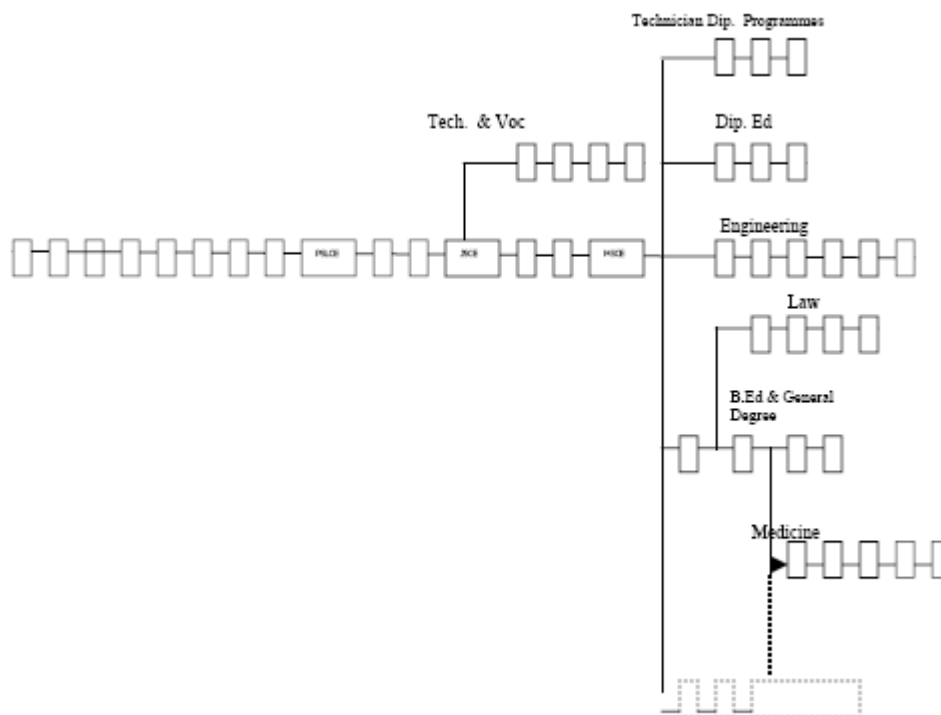
The **Malawi Institute of Education** (MIE) was established to perform the following functions: i) undertake, encourage and coordinate curriculum development, evaluation and research activities; ii) assist with the training of teachers; iii) provide professional services for all professional personnel in promoting the quality of education; iv) arrange for the publication and production of teaching and learning materials. It is a centre for curriculum development and in-service teacher training. It also undertakes research into teaching and learning activities in primary schools and evaluate educational materials.

The **Malawi National Examination Board** (MANEB) has responsibility over the following public examinations: Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE), Junior Certificate of Education (JCE), Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE) and Primary Teacher Certificate of Education (PTCE). The Board also develops examination syllabi for all the school subjects. Through its Research and Testing Department, it undertakes the development of testing programmes; the evaluation and testing of job applicants; training in measurement and evaluation techniques; and provision of research services in education and educational measurement. The MANEB has a core staff which works closely with personnel from other institutions and it has some capacity for printing materials.

The **National Library Service** is charged with the responsibility of promoting, establishing, equipping, maintaining and developing libraries in Malawi. It currently provides: a) free library services in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu, the municipality of Zomba and Karonga town Council; b) small library units in community centres, rural development centres, adult literacy centres, schools, agriculture development divisions and other population centres; d) school service sections which supplies relevant textbooks to secondary schools.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Malawi: structure of the education system



### Pre-school education

Pre-school education is provided by daycare centres and pre-school playgroups (children aged 3-5½). Attendance is not compulsory; pre-school playgroups are mainly available in the urban area. The Ministry of Education considers early childhood care and education (age group 0-5 years) as part of basic education.

### Primary education

Primary education covers the age group 6-13 years and lasts eight years organized into three cycles: infant (Standards 1-2), junior (Standards 3-5) and senior (Standards 6-8). The primary education programme culminates in the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE). This examination is also used as a selection tool to allocate the limited number of places in secondary schools. Primary education is free but not yet compulsory, and is considered as part of basic education.

### Secondary education

Secondary education lasts four years, divided into two stages of two years' duration each. The first stage (Forms 1 and 2), or junior cycle, prepares students for Junior Certificate Examination (JCE). The second stage (Forms 3 and 4), or senior cycle, culminates in the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE). Technical and



vocational education and training is provided in technical colleges, community-based training centres, private commercial training providers, and the apprenticeship training system, combining on-the-job training with instruction in the colleges. The colleges offer two parallel programmes, a two-year craft programme leading to a Grade 2 Trade Test Certificate and a four-year TEVETA apprenticeship programme leading to a Grade 1 Trade Test and a Malawi Crafts Certificate.

## Higher education

Post-secondary education courses vary in length, depending on the type of training programme. Before the introduction of the free primary education policy, teacher training programmes normally lasted two years, lowered to one year due to the increased enrolments. Since 2007 a new teacher training programme (the 1+1 teacher training programme, i.e. one year of residential training plus one year of school-based distance training) has been introduced, replacing the previous Malawi In-service Integrated Teacher Education Programme in order to address teacher supply and teacher quality. Admission to university is based on individual performance in MSCE and university entrance examinations. Programmes leading to a certificate usually last one year; diploma programmes normally take three years to complete. The duration of bachelor's degree programmes is normally four years (five years in the case of medicine and engineering). Programmes leading to a postgraduate diploma last two years.

The months of July to December are pick months for the rural Malawians for preparing gardens in readiness for planting as soon as rains begin to fall anytime late October or early November. This factor was believed to affect pupils' enrolment during the first term of the school year, which before 1994 started in September. Following the 1994 Free Primary Education Decree, the school year begins in January and ends in early November. In November 2009, the government announced that the school year would start again in September at the primary and secondary education levels. The 2010 school year is divided into three terms: September-December, January-March/April, and April-July (for Standards 1-7 pupils). During the third term, Standard 8 pupils usually prepare for the PSLCE. At the primary level, it is estimated that the school year consists of 36 to 39 weeks for Standards 1-7 pupils, while in Standard 8 teachers are expected to cover the curriculum in about 24 weeks.

## The educational process

The Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform was launched in 2001, and commenced on a series of consultations, research and other activities that led to the elaboration of the National Curriculum and Assessment Framework for primary schools at the end of February 2003.

The Framework has been proposed following an extensive survey of views and aspirations as expressed by a variety of stakeholders, including pupils, teachers, head teachers, school committees, and village communities. Data from all consultations, literature reviews and school inspectors' visits were used to identify the needs which had been systematized under the different themes to be used in the conceptualization process. The final consultative conceptualization process involved



nearly 90 professional educationalists trained in curriculum analysis and design as well as in assessment techniques and procedures.

The Framework originally envisaged a primary education cycle organized into three phases: the infant phase, covering a preparatory class followed by Standards 1 and 2; the junior phase (Standards 3 and 4); and the senior phase, covering Standards 5-7. The preparatory class was suggested because of the absence of widespread pre-schooling and with the purpose of preparing young children to school, developing social skills, and continuing the development of communication, literacy and numeracy skills initiated at home.

According to the Framework, the emphasis throughout the primary cycle should be on functional literacy and numeracy. Both should be viewed as vehicle for study across the curriculum and as a preparation for life and work after school. The curriculum content has been organized into learning areas instead of teaching subjects. HIV and AIDS education should be included in the curriculum as a cross-curricular issue. In terms of the medium of instruction, a common local language should be used throughout the infant phase, with English and Chichewa being progressively introduced in preparation for the subsequent phases. English should be gradually introduced starting from the junior phase, with the common local language used as a support, and should become the sole medium of instruction in the senior phase.

In January 2007 the Ministry embarked on a reform process of the primary education curriculum starting with Standard 1. Subjects like life skills education, social studies, and general studies were introduced. Topics such as the United Nations Charter, promotion of human rights and respect of fundamental freedoms have also been included. (MOEST, 2008).

A revised secondary education curriculum was introduced to Forms 1 and 2 in the year 2000, and to Forms 3 and 4 in 2002. This revision reduced the excessive number of subjects to seven core subjects and approximately 14 possible elective subjects. (World Bank, 2004).

According to the Malawi National Examinations Board, national goals of education in Malawi identify five categories of knowledge and skills, i.e. citizenship, ethical and socio-cultural, economic development, occupational and practical skills. Citizenship skills are meant to create awareness for unity, obedience, loyalty and discipline; development of spirit of tolerance, provide knowledge and understanding of the machinery of the government, etc. These skills are meant to prepare one for leadership roles in one's community.

Ethical and socio-cultural skills serve the purpose of making one aware of acceptable norms of behaviour and cultural practices of one's community. There are also economic development skills that an individual must acquire. The individual is made aware of sources of their economy and how it can be improved or protected. There are specific and effective methods and practices which individuals are supposed to be aware of if economic development is to take place. In addition to this an individual is expected to advance in life. Personal advancement can enhance individuals' contribution to national development in one way or another. It is through





exposure to occupational skills that one can be prepared for one's personal advancement.

Health has a critical role to play in national development. Therefore, learners must be equipped with skills for promoting good health. In the curriculum, such skills are classified as practical skills. They are about physical exercises, sports and recreation, hygiene, nutrition and sanitation.

### Pre-primary education

Early childhood development (ECD) is one of the recent developments in the education sector and its origin can be traced to the late 1960s, when Christian churches and church-related organizations opened a few pre-school playgroups in the urban centres of the country. These initiatives were a response to the needs a few full-time employed women in the urban areas, who lacked officially-designed and designated places for the care and recreation of their children while they were at work.

The government then recognized the need for pre-school playgroups and through the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, started supporting the early childhood care activities in the early 1970s. In 1970, the government facilitated the formation of the Association for Pre-school Playgroups of Malawi (APPM), a non-governmental organization, with a mandate to coordinate the activities of pre-school playgroups and day care centres with the assistance of District Social Welfare Officers.

According to the APPM Policy Document, the pre-school programme in Malawi aims at promoting the social, intellectual, emotional and physical development of children aged 3-5½. The programme focuses on 'education through play' and proper care of children in a healthy and friendly environment. Increasing urbanization, the rise in number of families with both parents having full employment and the increase in public awareness of the importance of education have expanded the demand for pre-school playgroups.

In 1994, following the government commitment to expand basic education, the Ministry of Women, Children, Community Services and Social Welfare (now the Ministry of Women and Child Development) prepared a policy document on early childhood care and development activities (ECCDA). This document stated that the aim of ECCDA in Malawi shall be to provide high quality and improved coverage of early childhood education programmes by:

- ensuring the survival, protection, development, participation and dignity of the young child;
- ensuring that every child has access to basic and appropriate development and learning practices and standards of early childhood development education which include cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual development without discrimination;
- providing guidelines from which action programmes and services can be developed to facilitate meaningful provision of early childhood development education facilities and services.



An ECD Policy document was launched by government in 2004 (revised in 2006) in order to address, in a holistic manner, issues affecting young children in Malawi against a backdrop of numerous children who are malnourished and are affected by the impact of HIV and AIDS. Some programmes have been in operation since the early 1990s. For example, the Community-Based Child Care (CBCC) programme which targets children with early learning, nutrition and psychosocial care and support operational mostly in rural areas has been in operation since 1989. This programme has now evolved and is also used as a safety net programme responding to the growing numbers of children orphaned due to HIV and AIDS.

A national ECD network was set up in July 1998 and comprises all ECD stakeholders. This has been instrumental in advancing a common ECD agenda at national level. The network is a strong advocate for ECD issues at national level including child rights, governance issues as well as in the fulfilment of internationally acceptable standards in the implementation of ECD programmes.

MOEST reports that in 2006 there were 4,005 CBCC centres and 1,940 pre-school centres providing ECD services. A total of 6,240 early learning centres have been opened and are operating across the country. A total of 615,478 children, orphans and other vulnerable children aged 1 to 6 years targeted through either pre-schools or the CBCC programme have been reached representing a national coverage of 26.8% of children below 6 years of age. A total of 14,127 caregivers were registered within communities with 5,335 targeted through a two-week basic training in ECD. The concentration trend is now changing, and the majority of CBCC are concentrated in rural and peri-urban areas with the aim of providing psychosocial support and care to orphans and vulnerable children.

A wide range of materials have been developed and are now in use to support delivery of early learning at centre level. These include: the ECD Basic Training Manual; the National ECD syllabus; the community-based childcare centre caregivers guide; a community-based childcare centres profile (based on a survey conducted in 2007); a CBCC Parents and Caregivers Manual; and an ECD Operational Guideline. (MOEST, 2008).

## Primary education

The fundamental objective of primary education is to instill basic literacy and numeracy and life skills to all school age children. As a strategy towards attainment of universal primary education, government abolished school fees and school uniform costs. Instructional materials are provided free. Schools have been established within reasonable walking distance for every community.

For a number of years Chichewa was used as a national language and a medium of instruction in the lower primary school. The use of Chichewa created lots of problems in areas where this language was not the mother tongue. The government's new language policy is to encourage the use of vernacular languages as media of instruction in Standards 1-4. However, English and Chichewa continue to be taught as subjects, and from Standard 5 onwards, English is the medium of instruction. Similarly, from 1992, religious education covers the three major religions: Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions.

The primary curriculum matrix at the end of the 1990s is presented in the table below:

### Primary curriculum matrix

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each standard							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Chichewa language	9	9	8	8	5	5	5	5
Creative arts	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4
English language	5	5	7	7	8	8	8	8
General studies	4	4	4	4	–	–	–	–
Mathematics	6	6	7	7	7	7	7	7
Music	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Physical education	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Religious education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Social studies	–	–	–	–	5	5	5	5
Agriculture	–	–	–	–	5	5	5	5
Home economics	–	–	–	–	4	4	4	4
Needle craft	–	–	–	2	2	4	4	4
Science/health	–	–	–	–	5	5	5	5

*Source:* Kunje & Chimombo, 1999. The average duration of teaching periods is 30 minutes in Std. I and II and 35 minutes in Std. III–V III.

The primary curriculum has been reviewed through the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) which led to the National Curriculum and Assessment Framework for primary schools made available at the end of February 2003. In the infant phase, the learning areas are: literacy (including local languages, English and Chichewa; 40% of instructional time); numeracy (including mathematics, 35% of time); social and natural sciences (including health education, religious and moral education, gender issues, HIV and AIDS, and environmental issues; 15% of time); and expressive arts (including physical education, music and creative arts; 10% of time).

In the junior phase, the learning areas are: literacy and language (including English and Chichewa; 30% of instructional time); numeracy (including mathematics, 30% of time); social sciences (including health education, religious and moral education, gender issues, HIV and AIDS, and environmental issues; 10% of time); science, technology and agriculture (20% of time); and expressive arts (including physical education, music and creative arts; 10% of time).

In the junior phase, the learning areas are: literacy and language (including English and Chichewa; 30% of instructional time); numeracy (including mathematics, 30% of time); social sciences (including health education, religious and moral education, gender issues, HIV and AIDS, and environmental issues; 10% of time); science, technology and agriculture (20% of time); and expressive arts (including physical education, music and creative arts; 10% of time).

In the senior phase, the learning areas are: literacy and languages (including English and Chichewa; 30% of instructional time); numeracy (including mathematics, 30% of time); social sciences (including health education, religious and moral



education, gender issues, HIV and AIDS, environmental issues, history, geography and current affairs; 10% of time); science, technology and agriculture (20% of time); and expressive arts (including physical education, music and creative arts; 10% of time).

The new curriculum has incorporated continuous assessment of pupils to determine levels of achievement as part of teaching and learning approaches, and is designed to be implemented by teachers using active-learning methodologies.

When free primary education (FPE) was introduced, there were 27,748 teachers representing a teacher-pupil ratio of about 1:100. The Ministry of Education then recruited 22,000 additional teachers. Apart from a short two-week orientation course, these did not receive any formal training. The recruitment of the untrained teachers lowered the teacher-pupil ratio to approximately 1:68 in 1993/94. By 2000 there was an average of 65 pupils per teacher in rural schools against 46 pupils per teacher in urban schools.

The 1997 figure represented a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 135.6% and a net enrolment ratio (NER) of about 95%. Before 1994, the NER was only 68%. This is a considerable improvement in access to primary education, although the introduction of the FPE brought its own challenges. The increase in enrolment had made the shortage of classrooms, teachers and teaching and learning materials even more acute. The quality of the system suffered seriously particularly in the first year of FPE. Repetition and dropout rates increased significantly from 1993/94 to 1994/95, the first year of FPE.

For a number of years, the primary school system in Malawi has suffered from a high level of internal inefficiency characterized by high repetition and dropout rates. The highest rate of repetition is in Standards 1, 2 and 8. Higher rates in the lower Standards are often associated with very large classes and teachers unprepared to cope with them, inadequate individual attention to students and lack of learning materials. These factors result in children failing to be promoted to the next grade. Lack of money for school fees before the introduction of free primary education also used to cause a child to re-enter the system after a period of time. In Standard 8 pupils often repeat in an attempt to improve their Primary School Leaving Certificate scores so as to gain access to secondary school.

The difference between sexes in dropout rates is quite significant in the senior primary classes. There are various reasons why girls drop out, with pregnancy and early marriage being the most important factors. Girls will often reach puberty before completing primary school. For fear of an unwanted pregnancy, some parents withdraw their daughters from school when they reach puberty. Some traditional practices such as initiation ceremonies also contribute to the dropping out of girls. Girls in most circumstances are required to help with housework and child care. This interference with school work and study time causes poor academic performance which often results in repetition and dropping out.

Dropout rates are higher in Standard 1 than in subsequent Standards, a pattern that is visible from the early 1990s to 2000. Standard 1 dropout rate increased sharply



in 1995/96 following the implementation of FPE to 30% and gradually declined in subsequent years reaching 20% in 2000.

In 2007, the primary school completion rate was around 46% for boys and 37% for girls. This is largely due to high dropout and repetition rates which were at 14.2% and 16.4% respectively. The survival rate to Standard 5 was 51.8%, whilst the survival rate to Standard 8 was 30.2% (26.1% for girls and 34.9% for boys). Between 2004 and 2006 the pupil/classroom ratios were, on average, around 107 pupils to an existing classroom. In 2007 the ratio went down to 104 pupils to a classroom, although urban areas have a higher ratio of 1:138 and beyond. In 2007, the teacher-pupil ratio was 1:78, but the qualified teacher-pupil ratio was 1:88. In 2006, the pass rate at the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) was 74.4%. Comparatively, boys are still doing better than girls in the PSLC examinations. (MOEST, 2008).

MOEST reports that in 2007 the total enrolment was 3,306,926 pupils (3,600,771 in 2008). According to the National Statistical Office, in 2008 there were 5,461 primary schools and the total number of teachers was 46,333, of whom 18,026 were female. In the same year, out of the total enrolment in primary school there were 172,499 boys and 164,445 girls with a single parent dead, and 74,614 boys and 70,085 girls with both parents dead.

## Secondary education

Secondary education lasts four years, divided into two stages of two years' duration each. The first stage (Forms 1 and 2), or junior cycle, prepares students for Junior Certificate Examination (JCE). The second stage (Forms 3 and 4), or senior cycle, culminates in the Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE). Technical and vocational education and training is provided in technical colleges, community-based training centres, private commercial training providers, and the apprenticeship training system, combining on-the-job training with instruction in the colleges. The colleges offer two parallel programmes, a two-year craft programme leading to a Grade 2 Trade Test Certificate and a four-year TEVETA apprenticeship programme leading to a Grade 1 Trade Test and a Malawi Crafts Certificate.

In Forms 1 and 2, the curriculum includes the following subjects: a) core subjects: Chichewa, English, mathematics, physical science, biology, general science, agriculture, history, geography and physical education; b) optional subjects: technical drawing/home economics, woodwork, metalwork, art, Bible knowledge, French and Latin. In Forms 3 and 4, the curriculum includes the following subjects: a) core subjects: Chichewa, English, mathematics, physical science and biology or general science, history or geography and agriculture; b) optional subjects: technical drawing and metalwork, technical drawing and woodwork, home economics, needlework and dressmaking, French, Latin, Bible knowledge, art, geography and history.

For a number of years primary education was considered as a terminal educational stage for the large majority of school leavers who were in most cases directly entering into the labour market. However, in recent years there has been an exceedingly high demand for secondary education since it is viewed as a gateway to higher paying jobs in the formal sector.



In spite of the available alternative avenues of post-primary education and training, e.g. the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) and private institutions, the demand for secondary education remains high. Thus, secondary education opportunities have shifted from being geared towards primarily serving economic development, to serving the social demand as well.

Until 1998, secondary education was offered through conventional secondary schools and Distance Education Centres (DECs). In 1999, a new policy directive converted all DECs into Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs), creating a unified system of secondary education. As a result of this initiative, the government has assumed more responsibility over the CDSSs than before, especially in terms of financing.

Under the new unified system, there are the following types of secondary schools: i) day and boarding schools, or conventional secondary schools (CSS): they are operated and funded directly by the government via Education Division Offices; ii) grant-aided schools: these are operated by religious organizations with a government contribution consisting of monthly grants to their day-to-day running costs and teachers salaries; tuition and boarding fees are much higher than in government schools; iii) Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS): these are mostly initiated and financed by the school committees but receive some government funding to cater for day-to-day running costs and teacher and support staff salaries; iv) private schools: these are schools owned by private individuals or non-governmental organizations which receive no grant at all from the government and charge tuition fees; v) designated schools: these are mostly for expatriates and are given nominal government grants; vi) night secondary schools and distance education: these mainly cater for employees and house-wives interested in improving their academic qualifications and young people who have failed to gain access to all the other secondary institutions for one reason or the other.

MOEST reports that in 2007 there were 96 CSS enrolling 42,734 students (41% of whom were girls), representing 20% of the secondary school population. There were 575 CDSS (308 approved and 267 not approved) with an enrolment of 99,172 students (41% of whom were girls), representing 47% of the students at the secondary level, or 67% of the students in government-run schools. There were 44 open schools, sometimes known as night schools, enrolling 6,939 learners. An additional 45 grant-aided schools enrolled 12,730 students (51% of whom were girls), which represented 6% of the secondary school enrolment. (MOEST, 2008).

In 2007 there were 10,258 secondary school teachers (of whom 1,958 or 19% were female) in the secondary school system. About 67% of these teachers were not qualified for secondary school teaching, adversely affecting the quality of education provided. In most CSS, the curriculum is delivered by qualified teachers, but in the CDSS, the great majority (76%) of the teachers are academically and professionally under-qualified. The conversion of distance education centres to CDSS in 1998 increased the need for secondary teachers, and some primary teachers have been reassigned to teach at CDSS. These teachers are considered untrained or unqualified to teach at secondary schools until they complete a secondary teacher training programme.



Despite an enrolment estimated at 283,128 students in 2001, access to secondary education is still very limited, representing a GER of about 18%. The school census survey of 2007 indicated that there were 1,049 secondary schools with 210,325 students enrolled (about 17.6% of the age cohort), with girls comprising 43% of the total secondary school enrolment. (MOEST, 2008). In 2006, the secondary school net attendance ratio was 12.9% for boys and 13.3% for girls. In 2008, the pass rate at the Junior Certificate Examination was 53.4% and at the Malawi School Certificate Examination it was 40%.

According to the National Statistical Office, in 2008 there were 233,573 students enrolled in secondary school and the total number of teachers was 11,397. Out of the total enrolment, there were 19,695 boys and 15,996 girls with a single parent dead, and 9,501 boys and 8,094 girls with both parents dead.

### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Measurement of achievement according to nationally defined learning competencies as an exercise independent of classroom continuous assessment and national examinations, is a recent development in Malawi. However, within the framework of the Education for All 2000 Assessment competencies in life skills, English and numeracy were assessed in Standards 4 and 6 (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Results showed that over 60% of Standard 4 pupils mastered a set of nationally defined basic learning competencies in numeracy and life skills, while only 37% master competencies in English. In Standard 6, only 0.6% of pupils reached the desirable mastery level in English literacy skills. The low performance in English at both Standard 4 and 6 levels is a clear indication that an appropriate assessment of literacy in the junior primary school should take into account the language of the locality, in order to be in line with the national policy of teaching the junior primary school pupils in their local language.

Results from standardized regional tests (Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality – SACMEQ) given to Standard six students in reading (in English) and mathematics, revealed that Malawi's performance in both subjects is very poor and reading performance has deteriorated in the period 1999 to 2004. In the 2004 tests, only 9% of students reached minimum level of mastery in English, and in mathematics 98% of students did not possess skills beyond basic numeracy. Malawi ranked lowest of all fourteen participant countries in reading, and second lowest in mathematics in 2004.

## Teaching staff

There were seven primary teacher training colleges (TTC) with total enrolment of about 3,634 students in 1993/94. The minimum entry qualification is Junior Certificate of Education (JCE). The training course, lasting one year, leads to T2 qualification for students with a full MSCE, and to T3 for those with a JCE.

In order to boost the number of trained teachers and to reduce the high pupil-teacher ratios, two special programmes were introduced: a one-year full-time pre-



service course for untrained teachers at the Domasi Teacher Training College in 1987; and a distance residential training programme called Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme launched in 1990.

The Malawi Institute of Education has also been engaged in providing in-service teacher education programmes for primary school heads and inspectors/supervisors. The government also launched the Primary Teacher Development Programme (PTDP) designed to: a) implement an annual programme to introduce the newly recruited untrained teachers into their job and provide them with the necessary survival skills; b) train all untrained primary teachers up to a level where they can receive a T2 or T3 certificate (Malawi Integrated In-service Educational Programme, MIITEP); c) put in place a strengthened system for supervision and in-service training for all primary teachers (Malawi School Support Systems Programme, MSSSP).

In order to meet the ever increasing high demand of qualified teachers, the MIITEP replaced the traditional conventional residential teacher training programme. The MIITEP has three components. Having been recruited and having gained experience in schools, MIITEP students undertake a three-month college-based course. This is followed by five terms practicing teaching and undertaking self-study back in school, during which time it is intended that the students receive support not only from TTC staff, but also from school staff and from Primary Education Advisers (PEAs). At the end, students return to college for a six week revision and examination period. The MIITEP programme increased the total enrolment in the six TTC from 2,700 in 1993/94 to 9,401 in 1999.

Secondary school teachers were being trained at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. The output, however, did not match the shortage of teachers. In 1993, the government opened a secondary teacher training college at Domasi, in Zomba, by converting the Domasi Primary Teacher Training College into a college of education for secondary school teachers. This College is aimed at supplementing the teacher output of the University of Malawi. Although the establishment of Mzuzu University in 1998 has helped to increase access to university education a lot still needs to be done to widen the bottleneck in the secondary/tertiary transition.

Until December 1998, the official minimum academic qualification for teaching in primary school was the Junior Certificate of Education. From January 1999, this has been revised upwards to the Malawi School Certificate of Education. The percentage of primary school teachers who are certified to teach according to national standards has stagnated at 81.4% after some shakes between 1990 and 1997. It grew by 0.3% between 1990 and 1994 and then decreased by 22.4% between 1994 and 1997. The sharp decline between 1994 and 1997 can be explained by the injection into the system of 20,000 untrained teachers as a remedy to the sharp rise in pupils' enrolment following the adoption of the policy of free primary education.

In 2008, primary school teachers were trained in four public teacher training colleges, i.e. Blantyre, Karonga, Kasungu and Lilongwe teacher training colleges. Some primary school teachers were trained in grant-aided and private colleges, i.e. St. Joseph (grant-aided), Development Aid from People to People (DAPP), and





Emmanuel teachers training colleges. Secondary school teachers were trained in three public institutions which included University of Malawi (Chancellor College), Mzuzu University and Domasi College of Education. Some private universities and colleges have recently been opened up which are also training secondary school teachers such as the University of Livingstonia, African Bible College and the Catholic University. The secondary school teacher training has two levels of qualification: a diploma and degree programme. Total output has remained at less than 3,000 for primary school teachers and about 400 for secondary school teachers annually.

Since 2007 a new teacher training programme (the 1+1 teacher training programme, i.e. one year of residential training plus one year of school-based distance training) has been introduced, replacing the previous Malawi In-service Integrated Teacher Education Programme in order to address teacher supply and teacher quality.

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## Web resources

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training:  
<http://www.malawi.gov.mw/Education/Home%20%20Education.htm> [In English.  
 Last checked: September 2010. Site not accessible.]



University of Malawi: <http://www.unima.mw/> [In English. Last checked: September 2010.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*