

DISCUSSION PAPERS ON POLICY ISSUES

MALAWI BASIC EDUCATION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POSITION PAPERS

BY

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This paper summarizes several policy issues those were discussed during the years 2003 – 2005 periods while Dr. Upali Sedere was serving as Senior Policy Adviser and COP of USAID financed Equip-2 program with Education Development Center, Newton, Ma. All Data were from the Malawi School Census carried out by the Ministry of Education with Equip-2 support.

Education Sector Plan
Draft Working Papers

BASCI EDUCATION
POLICY POSITION PAPER

Context of Basic Education Policy Recommendations

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Context Of Basic Education Policy Recommendations:

Being a signatory to the global EFA strategy Malawi is committed to provide Basic Education to all and pronounced it's Free Primary Education Policy in 1994. EFA basic education includes early childhood care for 0 - 4 year old, pre-school for 4 – 5 year old, primary school age children, out of school youth and adults. However in Malawi's context the early childhood care, pre-school, out of school youth and adults are not in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of education. The responsibility of providing basic education to out of school youth, illiterate adults, early childhood care and pre-school education are placed outside the MOE's with several other ministries. Therefore, the MOE's direct responsibility is for the 6 – 14 year age group. However, to implement the EFA plan of action, an inter-ministerial committee is set up.

Table 1: Basic Information of the Primary Education Sub-

Variable	Primary		
	Urban	Rural	Total
Schools	171	4932	5103
Students	270,430	2,896,356	3,166,785
Teachers	8,147	37,805	43,952
Classrooms	2,028	34,904	37,022
T/P Ratio	1:44	1:77	1:72
C/P Ratio	1:138	1:105	1:107
Expected Ratio	1:60	1:60	1:60

There are several policy concerns in the primary education sub-sector those needs to be addressed and appropriate policy is formulated and approved to improve primary sub-sector performance and to support the implementation of the education sector plan recommendations. The policy concerns are:

1. Limit Standard One Admission to Age 5 - 8
2. Approval of NFE to provide access to overage students
3. Approval of Feeder Schools/Junior Primary Schools
4. Approval of School Development Fund and a School Development Council
5. Hiring of Community Teachers
6. Legalizing the marking of regular daily attendance

Policy Issue: One

Limit Standard One Admission to Age 5 - 8 and enroll the under age children to the preparatory class and over 9 year old to the Non-Formal Education Centers.

Policy Recommendation																																							
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Limit Standard One admission to Age 6 – 8 years and2. Preparatory Class Admission to Age 5 – 6 years3. Establish Non-Formal Education Centers for children over 9 years or more																																							
Observation																																							
<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Admission to Standard 1 is at the age of 6 years and when PCAR is implemented admission will be made to preparatory class at age 5. However the current practice is to admit all children who seek admission to Standard one disregarding the age. As a result even 12 years olds are admitted to Standard One.o As per EMIS 2004 data out of the 680,342 students admitted to Standard 1 in year 2004:<table><tbody><tr><td>Age 5 :</td><td>51,665</td><td>08%</td><td rowspan="4">}</td><td rowspan="4">82%</td></tr><tr><td>Age 6 :</td><td>275,355</td><td>41%</td></tr><tr><td>Age 7 :</td><td>156,353</td><td>23%</td></tr><tr><td>Age 8 :</td><td>88,253</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>}</td><td>74%</td></tr><tr><td>Age 9 :</td><td>46,804</td><td>05%</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Age 10:</td><td>29,442</td><td>03%</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Age 11:</td><td>14,462</td><td>02%</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Age 12:</td><td>18,008</td><td>02%</td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>o 08% were underage, 41% at age, 51% overage.o If the 08% underage children are enrolled at Preparatory Classo Age 6, 7 & 8 totaling to 74% are admitted to Standard Oneo Deny admission of 18% over 9 year old children to formal primary schools and facilitate them with NFE.	Age 5 :	51,665	08%	}	82%	Age 6 :	275,355	41%	Age 7 :	156,353	23%	Age 8 :	88,253	10%				}	74%	Age 9 :	46,804	05%			Age 10:	29,442	03%			Age 11:	14,462	02%			Age 12:	18,008	02%		
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Arguments Supporting New Policy:																																							
<p>The learning environment in Standard One is not conducive to learning. 18% in Standard one admission are over age children. 25% of students in standard one repeat the grade. (EMIS 2004 Table 24). Only 41% are of age 6. If age 6 -8 are tolerated at admission then 74% of the students in Standard one will be in a age range that is more suitable for that standard. It is difficult for a teacher to teach a group of children in such a large age range effectively. This is a</p>																																							

factor causing learning inefficiencies. Therefore it needs to be corrected.
The developmental psychologists clearly identify the stages in psychological development. The curriculum material is prepared for the 6 year old, not for the older children.
Over crowding in Standard one is a contributing factor for 25% student repetition in grade one. It is necessary to avoid over crowding by stopping the over age children entering the system to gain efficiency
The intention is not to leave them out. The Preparatory class and Feeder schools will admit the 5 year old and Non-Formal Education Centers will provide more age relevant education and pre-vocational studies to the over aged students.
The primary education system has 67% over age children and the system needs to be corrected to gain efficiency and eventually to cater to the correct age cohort. This is a step in that direction to stop over age children entering the system.
Arguments Against:
By doing that older age children's right to education will be denied. Which is not true, if MOE also approve the NFE programs for the older age students as proposed in the sector plan.

Policy Issue: Two

Introducing Non-Formal Education Programs for the Older Aged Children and Out of School Aged Children

Policy Recommendation	
Establish Non-Formal Education Centers for children over 9 years or more	
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As per EMIS 2004 data out of the 680,342 students admitted to Standard One 12% are old as 9 years or more the following is the distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 9 : 46,804 05% Age 10: 29,442 03% Age 11: 14,462 02% Age 12: 18,008 02% <p style="text-align: right;">} 12%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On the average 67% of the students in school are overage to that grade level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Only 05% of the students complete the 8 year education at the expected age. ○ On the average about 20% of the students repeat at every grade level ○ The following table give the number of children in school who are more than three years older than the expected age for that grade level: (EMIS-2004) <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Std 1 - Expected Age 6:</td> <td>Over 9years</td> <td>141,082</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std 2 - ..</td> <td>Age 7: Over 10Years</td> <td>154,057</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std 3 - ..</td> <td>Age 8 Over 11Years</td> <td>170,818</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std 4 - ..</td> <td>Age 9 Over 12 Years</td> <td>128,888</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Std 5 - ..</td> <td>Age 10 Over 13 Years</td> <td>97,660</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In a given year over 260,000 students, approximately 08% of the total enrollment dropout of school. 	Std 1 - Expected Age 6:	Over 9years	141,082	16%	Std 2 - ..	Age 7: Over 10Years	154,057	27%	Std 3 - ..	Age 8 Over 11Years	170,818	34%	Std 4 - ..	Age 9 Over 12 Years	128,888	35%	Std 5 - ..	Age 10 Over 13 Years	97,660	33%
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Arguments Supporting NFE Policy:

Over 250,000 children who drop out of the school system often leave without acquiring any basic skills and it is necessary that more life relevant education in a more flexible environment is offered to them to make them literate and useful citizens in the 21st century

It is globally proven that the Non-Formal Education is the best way to address the out of school children because of the flexibility of the program

Many of these out of school youth will soon join the labor market. Therefore, the NFE programs are better for these children because NFE program will offer pre-vocational skills to them in the 3 year program.

NFE center with NGO participation could also address general poverty related issues those will eventually improve school enrollment, attendance, learning and reduce dropout.

The primary education system has 67% over age children and the system needs to be corrected to gain efficiency and eventually to cater to the correct age cohort. This is a step in that direction to stop over age children entering the system.

Arguments Against:

The unit cost of NFE programs is higher. However, the cycle of NFE is only proposed to be a 3-year cycle. It's net impact is also on efficiency gains in the formal school system

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Policy Issue: Three

Establishment of Feeder Schools to facilitate Preparatory class and reduce over crowding in early grades in primary schools

Concept:

Feeder schools are schools where at the end of the last grade level in that school the students will be transferred to the nearest full Primary School to continue the primary schooling cycle. A feeder school could be with two or four classes -- Standard 1 & 2, or Standard 1 – 4, depending on the number of students available in the Feeder School catchment area and the Student enrollment in the nearest primary school.

Procedure of identifying the location of a Feeder School needs to be established. Assessment has been made to justify whether it should be a two or four Classroom building. Feeder Schools should be grant aided community schools where under the community participation strategy where NGO's/CSOs and community jointly take the responsibility of the management of the school. Government will provide 2 – 4 classroom sheltered space, teachers, books, learning material and limited financial assistance in setting up of community owned teacher housing, water and sanitation.

Policy Recommendation	
Establish Feeder Schools where:	
(a) There are over 100 students in a class at Standard 1 – 4 and the existing school cannot accommodate the large numbers due to lack of sheltered space, this is particularly true for most of the urban schools;	
(b) In rural areas distance to primary school is too much for age 5 – 8 children to walk; and	
(c) Sufficient number of children - (minimum of 50 students per each standard) is found in the village to establish a junior primary school	
Observation	o
o Present age of admission to Standard 1 is at the age of 6 years and when PCAR is implemented admission will be made to preparatory class at age 5. And very young children may not be able to walk to school if the school is too far from home;	
o Urban schools have got unmanageable number of students in Standard 1-3, in	

several schools the number in these three Standards exceeds 2000;

- o Amongst the Standard 1 admission already 51,665 or 08% are 5 year olds;
- o One reason for children to wait until they are 7 or 8 years older (60% of the new entrants are older than 6 years) is because of the long distance that those children have to walk to the nearest primary school and they are unable to do that at the expected age of admission. Therefore, in such locations bringing school closer to their homes is needed to ensure the actual age cohort is enrolled at the right time.

Age 6 :	275,355	41%	} 59%
Age 7 :	156,353	23%	
Age 8 :	88,253	10%	
Age 9 :	46,804	05%	
Age 10:	29,442	03%	
Age 11:	14,462	02%	
Age 12:	18,008	02%	

Arguments Supporting New Policy:

1. The learning environment in Standard One is not conducive to learning. 18% in Standard one admission are over age children. 25% of students in standard one repeat the grade. (EMIS 2004 Table 24). Only 41% are of age 6. With the introduction of the Preparatory class for age 5 children the complexity in the lower grades will increase further. Therefore, it is advisable to ensure that age 5 -8 are treated as the Junior primary students and make arrangements to ensure the actual age cohort of 5 – 8 are enrolled in school at the right age. The proposed Feeder schools will be an effective strategy of achieving that objective.

2. The developmental psychologists clearly identify that 5 -8 year olds are in one stage of mental development and keeping them one class with the 8 – 12 year old pre-adolescent group is not recommended by any psychological development theory.

3. Over crowding in Standard one - four is a contributing factor for over 50% student repetition in early grades and eventual dropout of school. Grade one in most of the schools is over crowded. It is necessary to avoid over crowding by establishing Feeder schools for the younger students. This will also reduce grade repetition and school dropout due to making the schools more conducive to learning and making the school closer to home.

4. The intention is to increase internal efficiency of the school system by increasing the enrolment of the students at the right age to Preparatory class and Standard One,

reducing grade repetition and school dropout.
5. By making Feeder Schools Community Schools accountability of public spending can be further increased.
6. Particularly in the urban areas feeder schools would ease the pressure of over crowding in the exiting schools.
7. Under-deployed Teachers serving in the urban schools can be effectively deployed to the Feeder schools
Arguments Against:
1. If the location and establishment of the procedure to follow in setting up of a Feeder School is not managed well, it could lead to wastage. Therefore, very clear guideline must be in place to justify the location and the need to establish a feeder school
2. Transfer of students from Junior Primary to Senior Primary may not work out as expected. It is necessary to have a mechanism established and clearly stated that the Senior Primary School will absorb the students graduating from the Junior Primary Feeder schools.

Policy Issue: Four

Establishment of a School Development Council and School Development Fund in all Primary Schools

Policy Recommendation:
<u>Approval of Establishment of a School Development Council and School Development Fund in all Primary Schools</u>
Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The approved Community Participation Strategy will bring many actors to assist in school development. NGOS, CSO, CBOs and well wishers are expected to come together for the development of the school. In view of this the SMC alone is inadequate to accommodate a larger number of well wishes. Therefore, it is recommended while SMC being the legal body vested with the responsibility of managing the school, a School Development Council/Association is recognized by the Ministry to accommodate the expected actors beside SMC members. ○ Also in view of direct assistance to schools all schools are directed to open up bank accounts to increase transparency of all financial transactions.

Arguments Supporting New Policy:	
○ SDC will allow a larger number of well wishes and organizations to participate in school development	
○ Under the community participation strategy it is expected that NGOs and CSO to plan an active role in school management. However, there is no provision for their participation beside the SMC. Therefore, it is proposed to have a School Development Council either in addition to SMC or in place of SMC with a larger representation.	
○ The World Bank Financed ESP project is expected to provide direct assistance to 2500 schools and MOE has already agreed to this principle of establishing bank accounts at primary schools to receive external funding.	
○ Education Sector Plan has interventions for all primary schools to receive direct funding for several items: School Maintenance, Support of Orphans, Support for Children with Special Needs	
○ All schools are handing fund. However, not necessarily all schools have bank accounts and suitable arrangements for receiving and managing funds. This unhealthy situation needs to be corrected.	
○ Under Community Participation Strategy it is expected that Schools will be jointly working with a larger group of actors other than the School Management Committee. These interventions are to raise contribution for school development	
Arguments Against:	
Having a SMC and a SDC could confuse the management. It is better to establish a SDC or widen the representation of SMC to include NGOs/CSOs and well wishers	

Policy Issue: Five

Approval of a Policy of hiring community teachers by SMCs/SDCs/NGOs/CSOs

Policy Recommendation	
In view of the large number of Community Teachers serving in schools and growing demand for the hiring of Community Teachers a policy relating to the hiring of community teachers is required.	
Observation	○
○ There is a severe shortage of teachers to serve in the primary sub-sector and	

<p>because of that School Management Committees are forced to hire community teachers. Schools in some areas could function because of the community teachers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of policy has allowed SMCs and NGOs to hire community teachers who are under-qualified to serve. Therefore setting up of minimum standards for hiring of community teacher needs to be established. ○ The education sector plan interventions have recognized the importance of having community teachers to provide non-formal education and even to serve as instructional aides at preparatory classes.
<p>Arguments Supporting New Policy:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current shortage of teacher s cannot be met even with recruitment of the maximum number of trainee teachers to TTCs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community teacher if recruited under set guidelines with stated minimum requirements could be a satisfactory alternative in meeting the severe shortage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the community teachers with set minimum qualification are recruited they can be placed under proposed distance teacher education program and those who successfully complete distance training could be regularized.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Since the community teachers come from the localities, the teacher deployment issues those usually come up with the regular teachers do not come up with them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community teachers hired by the SMCs should be allowed to serve only a four year period as temporary teachers unless they have successfully completed the proposed three year distance teacher education program , they should be discontinued
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All proposed NFE centers should hire community teachers on temporary contracts and should be given short-pre-service training and continued regular in-service training to ensure satisfactory level of performance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If Community Instructional Aides/Teachers are hired to work with a regular teacher at the preparatory class they should be hired by SMC and should be given short-pre-service training and continued regular in-service training to ensure satisfactory level of performance.
<p>Arguments Against:</p>
<p>Having Community Teachers is only a temporary solution. Therefore, it is better to hire</p>

trainee teachers for the distance teacher education program and directly place them in schools. If any candidate who has served as a community teacher and also is qualified to become a trainee teacher can be given priority at selections. This way the supply of teachers could be regularized.

Policy Issue Six:

Reduction of Educational Wastage

Policy Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legalize the Regular Daily Maintenance of Student and Teacher attendance registers ○ All Schools to carryout school catchment area surveys
Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Almost all primary schools do not maintain student and teacher attendance registers on daily basis. ○ Most of the primary schools do not have standard attendance registers ○ School inspection and supervision has not concentrated on this important item
Arguments Supporting New Policy:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To ensure learning achievement in students the most important factor is the students and teachers to attend schools and classes daily. This is the basis of formal schooling and if this is not managed seriously then out comes are bound to be unsatisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is no way the school can ensure accountability of public spending the most essential data relating to school enrollment and attendance are not maintained seriously
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools cannot have a consultative process with the parents if the school and the assigned class-teacher do not have the basic information about the student's attendance of school and class assignments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School is responsible once a student enters the school until that student leaves school after sessions. This legal impact is not seriously taken by the schools and it is a violation of a fundamental human right. Therefore, the school attendance registers should have a legal value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Malawi has no way of assessing its net enrollment in education or the actual wastage in education as there is no basic data collection on day to day basis. For system efficiency gains and effective monitoring the attendance registers and its

regular marking is a must
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ School catchment is survey is an important instrument in school level planning. Also it enables the school and the MOE to know the actual enrollment in schools and take necessary steps in places where the enrollment is unsatisfactory
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Enrollment, attendance, repeater rates, dropout rates are fundamental for the monitoring of school quality and these directly relates to the school attendance registers. Therefore, these needs to be given legal value.
Arguments Against:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Having attendance registers may not solve the problems because teachers may not mark them as expected unless there is an assigned time across the nation for all schools to mark the registers at that given time. Any officer visiting on inspection and supervision should have the right to report to the authorities if this practice is not followed.