

Malawi

Updated version, September 2006.

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 new 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).

Current educational priorities and concerns

The Malawi economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. Nearly 90% of the rural population derive their livelihood from agriculture and produce 90% of the country's exports.

Poverty is significant and widespread, prevalent in both rural and urban areas, and encompasses more than half the population. The World Bank estimates that about 60% of the smallholder population is living below the poverty line. The number of smallholder households is 1.6 million and the average size of a household consists of five members. The extent of poverty amongst female-headed households is significant as they constitute 30% of the poor in the smallholder sub-sector.

In order to combat poverty, the government has instituted the Poverty Alleviation Programme aimed at reducing poverty through a multisectoral approach. Education has been recognized as one of the crucial elements in tackling the problem of poverty in the country, hence the introduction of the Free Primary Education Programme (1994), among other initiatives.

In 1994, Malawi went through a political transition from a one-party dictatorship to a multiparty government. The political transition was preceded by the withdrawal of donor aid in the early 1990s. This, in addition to the drought that hit the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s, affected economic performance resulting in high inflation rates. Inflation rose from 11.9% in 1991 to 22.7% in 1992. The budget deficit in the early 1990s represented 7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); it increased to 13.8% in the fiscal year 1992/93.



In the new political situation, the country has intensified its efforts to strengthen and improve the education system. Beginning in 1994, the government introduced free primary education and increased its recurrent expenditure on education. Efforts are underway to build more secondary schools and to establish a new university.

Before 1994, the government has been guided by two Education Development Plans (EDP). The first EDP was formulated for the period 1973 to 1980. It had the following major objectives: (i) the fulfillment of the specific needs of the labour market; (ii) the development of a school curriculum with relevance to the socioeconomic and environmental needs of the country; (iii) the improvement of efficiency in the utilization of existing facilities and resources; and the achievement of a more equitable distribution of educational facilities and resources. The second EDP covered the period 1985-1995. It intended to address four overall objectives: (i) the equalization of educational opportunity; (ii) the promotion of efficiency in the system; (iii) the improvement of physical and human resources; (iv) the judicious use of limited resources.

The third EDP, the Education Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) for Education in Malawi, covering the period 1995-2005, was worked out and published in 1995 to address the challenges that the education sector faced with the introduction of various reforms including the Free Primary Education. The PIF was revised between 1997 and 2000 to make it more comprehensive, more focused and analytical in terms of priorities and budgetary planning mechanisms.

The government's primary concern relating to teacher training, at both primary and secondary levels, is to increase the number of qualified teachers and to improve quality through a number of interventions such as residential as well as distance pre- and in-service courses, expansion of existing institutions and training of educational personnel.

The expansion and development of technical/vocational education will concentrate on the supply of skilled workers. There will be a doubling of output capacity in technical/vocational education with emphasis on providing more job specialization areas and giving trainees skills and abilities to undertake self-employment in appropriate fields.

The government intends to diversify university programmes, to increase enrolment and to serve clearly identified areas of human resource needs as and when resources are made available. Policy-oriented research at post-graduate programmes has received special recognition and is encouraged. Participation of women in non-traditional courses and admission of candidates with special needs have continued to receive special attention. The Government also intends to encourage individuals and organizations to establish private institutions of higher learning and tailor their courses in line with accepted Ministry standards.

Before the end of the Plan 1995–2005, the Government plans to:

- offer free primary education to all school age children;



- achieve a target of net enrolment ratio of 90%;
- strengthen partnership among all sectors with a view that they finance 40% of the costs of educational services;
- facilitates the development of junior community schools by the private sector, local community, non-governmental organizations and the donor community to cater for Standards I-IV;
- launch several interventions to ensure equity in education;
- ensure that the design of school buildings take into account children with special needs;
- accept back to school pregnant girls and boys responsible for pregnancy after child weaning;
- increase subventions to special education establishments and increase the number of trained teachers;
- ensure that the qualified teacher-pupil ratio is maintained at 1:60;
- provide regular in-service training to all teachers through school-based in-service programmes;
- reduce high classroom-pupil ratio to 1:60;
- reduce school size to a school population of about 1,000 pupils;
- construct 30,000 classrooms;
- provide furniture (364,000 desk benches) for all classrooms;
- improve the textbook-pupil ratio to one textbook per two pupils as an intermediate target;
- put in place an efficient mechanism for ensuring the distribution of teaching and learning materials to the schools;
- adopt strategies to reduce drop-out and repetition rates to less than 5% in Standards I-II and 15% in Standard VIII.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

Article 25 of the **Constitution** (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. A new Act, however, is in the process of preparation.

Administration and management of the education system

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (then the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, and currently the **Ministry of Education and Vocational Training**) is the agency that has administrative, financial and academic control of primary, secondary, technical and distance education and the training of primary school teachers.

The management of the education system is in transition. It is moving from a centralized system which has been in place since independence towards a decentralized management culture. Since this decentralization has not yet been fully institutionalized, the Ministry of Education Head Office still retains the responsibility of administering the education sector. The head of the administrative structure is the Secretary for Education (SE), assisted by two Principal Secretaries, responsible for basic education and higher education, respectively. There is a team of seven sectional heads: Director of Planning, Methods Advisory Services, Secondary and Higher Education, Basic Education, Human Resource Management (management services) and Accounting Services. Through the seven arms the SE controls, supervises, and coordinates activities such as planning, policy formulation, supervision, training and financial management.

The country is administratively divided into six **Education Divisions** and thirty-three **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 headteacher 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 headteacher in issues of school governance, organization and development.

Decentralization of functions such as school inspection and planning is at an advanced stage while that of staff development has just started. In spite of the direct control of the Ministry of Education over primary, secondary, technical and distance education, the responsibility of providing education is shared among the central government, local government, voluntary agencies and the local communities in which the schools are situated. Primary schools are organized through a Zonal system (317 Zones) with each zone served by a Teachers' Development Centre (TDC). A



similar system, Cluster System, has been developed for the secondary sub-sector (96 clusters have been set up).

The central government exercises overall powers in co-ordinating 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 teachers) and the University (graduate teachers).

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.

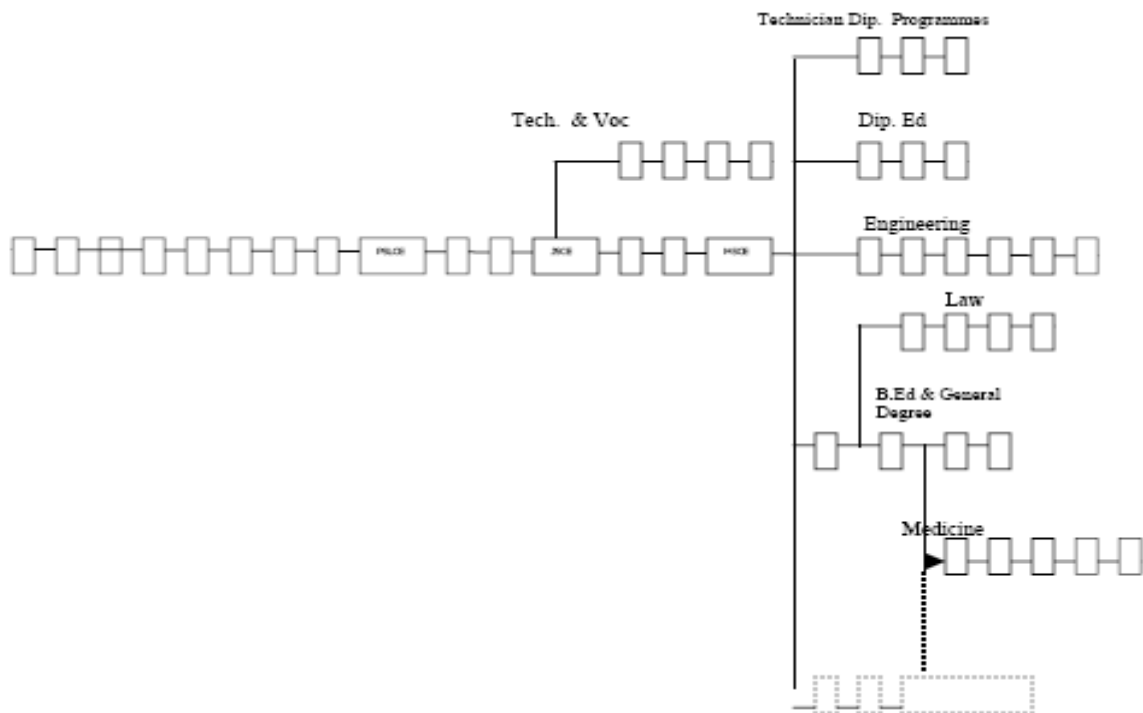
The **National Library Service** is charged with the responsibility of promoting, establishing, equipping, maintaining and developing libraries in Malawi. It currently provides: (a) free library services in the cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu, the municipality of Zomba and Karonga town Council; (b) postal lending scheme; (c) 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.

The **Malawi Institute of Education** (MIE) was established to perform the following functions: (i) undertake, encourage and co-ordinate 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 **Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services** is responsible for adult literacy and adult education.

Structure and organization of the education system

Malawi: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-school education is provided by day care centres and pre-school playgroups (children aged 3-5½). Attendance is not compulsory. It is estimated that access to pre-school education has risen from 1% in 1994 to 23% in 1999, but there is no officially endorsed record of the total number of pre-school playgroups and day care centres. The general picture, however, shows that pre-school playgroups are mainly available in the urban area.

Primary education

Primary education lasts eight years organized into three cycles: infant (Standards I-II), junior (Standards III-V) and senior (Standards VI-VIII). 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 compulsory.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts four years, divided into two stages of two years' duration each. The first stage (Forms I-II) prepares students for Junior Certificate Examination. The second stage (Forms III-IV) culminates in the Malawi School Certificate Examination.



Post-secondary education varies in length, depending on the type of training programme. Teacher-training programmes currently last one year (before the introduction of Free Primary Education, they normally lasted two years). Diploma and degree programmes at the university level take three to five years of study. The Polytechnic offers apprenticeship courses lasting two to four 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. The average duration of the school year, expressed in number of working weeks, is not reported.

The financing of education

Education's share of the national recurrent budget decreased from 13.9% in 1979/80 to only 9.8% in 1990/91. To reverse the trend of underfunding, it was planned to increase the share of the budget for the social sectors and education to 15%. In 1992/93 it stood at 17%. Between 1994 and 1996 the share rose to 21%.

Regarding the distribution of public expenditure by level of education, the education sector has shifted its priorities in allocating resources. Soon after independence and during the 1970s and early 1980s, the University of Malawi had a disproportionately large share of educational resources.

During the Second Educational Development Plan (1985-1995), resources for primary education steadily increased from 38% to 48% of total recurrent expenditure on education. In 1993/94, the recurrent expenditure on primary education rose to 51%. In 1993/94, the expenditure per pupil at the primary level was 84.5 Malawi *kwacha* (MK). The next largest item was the University, with about 18% of all expenditure and an average expenditure per student of MK14,990.4. Administration represented 6% of all expenditure. Secondary schools represented 10%, with an average expenditure per secondary school student of MK712.6. Expenditure for the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) was 2%, with an expenditure of MK119.4 per student. Unit expenditure on student-teachers and technical students amounted to MK3,624 and MK3,316.8, respectively. This may be partly attributed to the relatively low student-tutor ratios.

During the 1996/97 fiscal year, more than a quarter of total public expenditure was directed towards the education sector and 50% of this amount was allocated to primary education. Public current expenditure on primary education as a percentage of GDP has risen from 1% in 1990/91 to 3% in 1997/98. Public current expenditure on primary education per pupil as a percentage of GDP per capita rose from 7% in 1990/91 to 11% in 1994/95, and then declined to 9% in 1998/99 (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In the 1999/2000 Education Sector budget the allocation for primary sub-sector was 50%, while for secondary sub-sector was 25%. Allocations for teacher

education and other tertiary education were 7% and 13% respectively, as shown in the tables below.

Education sector budget 1999/2000 (in 000s)

Programs	Recurrent	Development	Bilateral(est.)	Total
01 Administration and Support Services	172,359	59,451	7,000	238,810
02 Primary Education	1,718,321	365,346	506,620	2,590,287
03 Secondary Education	411,476	629,029	238,000	1,278,503
04 Teacher Education	37,844	0	313,740	351,584
05 Tertiary	563,100	86,000	0	649,100
Other Educational Organisations	107,000	0	0	107,000
Total	3,010,999	1,139,825	1,065,360	5,215,283
Total in USD (est)	66,911	25,329	23,675	115,895

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004.

Programs	Recurrent	Development	Bilateral(est.)	Total
01 Administration and Support Services	3%	1%	0%	4%
02 Primary Education	33%	7%	10%	50%
03 Secondary Education	8%	12%	5%	25%
04 Teacher Education	1%	0%	6%	7%
05 Tertiary	11%	2%	0%	13%
Other Educational Organizations	2%	0%	0%	2%
Total	58%	22%	20%	100%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

In Malawi, early childhood education (ECC) 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 activities of ECC 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 co-ordinate the activities of pre-school playgroups and day care centres with the assistance of District Social Welfare Officers. The government subsidizes the running costs of the APPM and also provides teaching aids to the groups/centres through the National Library Services.

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 Gender, Youth and Community Services) prepared a policy document on Early Childhood Care and Development Activities (ECCDA). This document states 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.

Accordingly, the government shall endeavor to:

- expand quality ECCDA programmes through the already existing mechanisms and encourage the provision and sustainability of ECCDA activities;
- strengthen partnership between interested parties in ECCDA programmes to avoid duplication;
- set up and maintain a databank for easy and quick retrieval of information pertaining to ECCDA programmes;
- mobilize internal and external resources (human, material and financial) for more effective ECCDA interventions;



- promote the role of families and communities in ECCDA programmes and strengthen their responsibilities in these areas;
- encourage the exploration of innovative ECCDA initiatives;
- encourage the establishment of more ECCDA centres;
- promote inclusive pre-schooling in order to achieve integration for children with special needs;
- increase and intensify advocacy for ECCDA services at all levels;
- provide institutional support to institutions that develop the curriculum and train personnel;

Primary education

The fundamental objective of primary education is to instill basic literacy and numeracy. Apart from committing itself to open and free access to primary education for all children, the government continues to put special attention on the quality and lasting nature (or durability) of primary education.

The primary school curriculum has been revised and is being implemented in Standards I-IV nationwide. Camera-ready copies for Standard V instructional materials were finalized in readiness for printing and implementation in 1997. Standard VI materials in all other subjects are being trial-tested in schools except for *Chichewa*, English, social studies and mathematics which have already been published.

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 I-IV. However, English and Chichewa will continue to be taught as subjects. Similarly, from 1992, religious education covers the three major religions: Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religions. This, coupled with vigorous social mobilization campaigns, has boosted enrolment in Islamic communities who previously feared to enrol children in schools which were predominantly Christian in culture.

The primary curriculum matrix 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 is being reviewed through the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Review programme (PCAR). The PCAR process is a consultative process responding to needs of the nation. The major departure from the current curriculum is introduction of the readiness year, learning areas and continuous assessment. The government's new language policy is to encourage the use of local vernacular languages as media of instruction in Standards I to IV. However, English and Chichewa are taught as subjects. From Standard V onwards, English is a medium of instruction.

When free primary education 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 children per teacher in rural schools against 46 pupils per teacher in urban schools.

In 1994, the primary school population increased by 68%. More recent figures (March 1996) suggest that there are 3.1 million children in approximately 4,000 primary schools. The primary school enrolment during 1991–1999 is shown in the table below:



Primary school enrolment, 1991–1999

Year	Total	Boys	Girls	%Girls
1990/1	1,400,682	771,776	628,906	44.9
1991/2	1,662,586	917,747	744,839	44.8
1992/3	1,795,451	947,998	847,453	47.2
1993/4	1,895,423	983,725	911,698	48.1
1994/5	2,860,819	1,516,234	1,344,585	47
1995/6	2,887,107	1,530,167	1,356,940	47
1997	2,905,950	1,519,812	1,386,138	47.7
1998	2,805,785	1,442,173	1,363,612	48.6
1999	2,896,280	1,500,273	1,396,007	48.2
2000	3,016,972	1,556,758	1,460,214	48.4

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004.

Primary school enrolment has been stabilized at around 3 million. 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. The situation is now improving, but it is still problematic.

Primary school results for 1994 showed a general increase in the pass percentage, as shown in the table below:

National PSLCE examination results 1992-94

Year	Entered	Passed	% Pass	Form One places	Transition Rate
1992	96,434	60,418	62.7	7,550	8.0
1993	97,600	65,535	67.1	7,550	8.7
1994	103,833	82,288	79.3	7,620	10.8

Note: PSLCE = Primary School-Leaving Certificate Examination.

Source: Basic Education Statistics, Malawi, 1994.

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 drop-out rates. However, remarkable progress in improving efficiency has been made as can be seen from the table below.

Repetition rates by Standard 1992-94 (%)

Standard	1992/93		1993/94	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
I	19.9	20.1	23.2	21.3
II	18.9	18.4	20.4	20.1
III	18.7	18.8	18.0	17.6
IV	13.4	13.1	11.6	11.0
V	14.0	14.7	12.5	12.2
VI	13.0	14.0	10.2	9.9
VII	14.0	15.0	9.6	9.2
VIII	30.2	26.6	16.5	14.8
National average	18.4	18.2	17.5	17.5

Source: Basic Education Statistics, Malawi, 1994.

It can be observed that the highest rate of repetition is in Standards I, II and VIII. 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 VIII, pupils often repeat in an attempt to improve their Primary School Leaving Certificate scores so as to gain access to secondary school.

In order to reduce repetition, a number of measures have been introduced, including:

- reduction of distances that pupils travel to schools by establishing community schools;
- abolition of school fees (the school uniform is no longer compulsory);
- increasing the number of teachers;
- discouraging pupils to repeat in one class for too long, especially in Standard VIII, by allowing pupils to enrol in the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) and by lowering the selection quota for repeaters (75% of Form I places in public secondary schools were reserved for non-repeaters, 25% for first-time repeaters and 5% for multiple repeaters).

The drop-out trends show that Standard I has the highest drop-out rate, as can be seen in the table below.

Drop-out rates by Standard (1993/94)

Standard	Both Sexes	Boys	Girls
I	21.3	21.2	21.4
II	16.7	17.2	16.2
III	16.4	16.5	16.3
IV	15.8	15.2	16.5
V	15.4	14.0	17.1
VI	15.0	12.4	18.2
VII	13.7	10.6	18.0
VIII	–	–	–
National	16.5	15.7	17.4

Source: Basic Education Statistics, Malawi 1994.

The difference between sexes in drop-out 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.

Drop-out rates are higher in Standard I than in subsequent Standards, a pattern that is visible from the early 1990s to 2000. Standard I drop-out rates fell significantly in 1991/92 and 1994/95, corresponding to periods when the Free Primary Education was introduced. Standard I drop-out rate increased sharply in 1995/96 following the implementation of Free Primary Education to 30% and gradually declined in subsequent years reaching 20% in 2000.

Secondary education

Primary education was, for a number of years, 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. It is from this



perspective that the government plans to build 250 additional secondary schools in order to increase access.

Until 1998, secondary education in Malawi 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 now 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: 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: this mainly cater for employees and housewives 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.

According to the Secondary School Census, in 1997 there were 624 secondary education institutions in Malawi, including both government and private registered institutions. At present there are over 1,000 secondary schools in the country. Of these schools 101 are government schools (day schools, boarding and day schools with limited boarding facilities) and 600 are community day schools. The number of community day schools is fluid as communities are allowed to open schools at will. The number of private schools secondary is not easy to ascertain, but it estimated at 300.

The secondary education curriculum includes the following subjects:

Junior Certificate (Forms I and II):

Core subjects: Chichewa, English, mathematics, physical science, biology, general science, agriculture, history, geography and physical education.

Optional subjects: Technical drawing/home economics, woodwork, metalwork, art, Bible knowledge, French and Latin.

Malawi School Certificate (Forms III and IV):

Core subjects: Chichewa, English, mathematics, physical science and biology or general science, history or geography and agriculture.



Optional subjects: Technical drawing and metalwork, technical drawing and woodwork, home economics, needlework and dressmaking, French, Latin, Bible knowledge, art, geography and history.

One of the effects of the increased social demand for secondary education is the record 200% increase in enrolment over the past ten years in the Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE). In 1993/94, the MCDE enrolled 42,308 students; 27,979 were in JCE courses (i.e. lower secondary school), and 14,164 were enrolled for the MSCE (Malawi School Certificate of Education). Only 165 were enrolled in the PSLC course. The unique feature of the Malawi College of Distance Education is the centres programme. The philosophy behind the establishment of these centres was that pupils with the Primary School Leaving Certificate were still not mature enough to study on their own by correspondence, hence communities built centres on a self-help basis, and the government, through MCDE, provided teachers/supervisors to guide the students through their course of study.

Access to secondary schools is restricted to about 10.8% of Standard VIII enrolments (data refer to 1993/94). It is estimated that only 4.5% of the students aged 14-17 years are enrolled in secondary schools.

In 1993/94, there were 46,444 students in secondary schools (both public and private). Of these, 18,179 were female. The average student-teacher ratio was 6.8:1. There are, however, considerable variations, with 31 students per teacher in the government day schools, 20 students per teacher in the government boarding schools, and only about 14 students per teacher in some unaided private schools.

There are also four government technical colleges which are equipped to offer craft- and technical-level training in construction, engineering and business studies. There is a boarding accommodation for 1,058 technicians and 120 commercial students. In 1995/96, there was a total of 1,054 students. In 1999 there were an estimated 1,305 students. Access is limited by the capacity of boarding accommodation. With the introduction of the modular training system which allows for multiple entry points and exit points, the government intends to increase access.

Enrolment in Technical and Vocational Colleges by course of study 1994–1999

Course of Study	1994/95	1995/96	1997	1998	1999
Two-year full time training	249	243	297	285	282
Three-year full time training	0	0	0	0	0
Apprentice training	326	318	389	415	422
Upgrading/Block release	445	434	531	543	545
One-year full time training	60	59	72	65	56
Total	1,808	1,054	1,290	1,308	1,305

Source: Ministry of Education, 2004.

There has been tremendous improvement in access to secondary education since 1994. Despite an enrolment in the 2001/02 school year estimated at 283,128



access is still very limited. With a GER of 18%, there is a big challenge to meet the key PIF objective on secondary education, i.e. to increase the number of primary school graduates who access secondary education from the current 16% to 30% by 2012. Access is also highly unequal, particularly affecting children from low-income families and girls. Studies show that only 20% of the Standard VIII candidates manage to get a place in government financed schools; the latter account for only around 37% of gross enrolment.

The secondary school results for 1994 showed a decline as can be observed in the table below:

National examination: MSCE results (1992-94)

Year	Entered	Passed	% Pass
1992	8,050	5,629	69.9
1993	8,898	5,790	65.1
1994	9,115	5,960	65.4

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 IV and VI (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Results showed that over 60% of Standard IV pupils master a set of nationally defined basic learning competencies in numeracy and life skills, while only 37% master competencies in English. In Standard VI, only 0.6% of pupils reach the desirable mastery level in English literacy skills. The low performance in English at both Standard IV and VI 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. The survival rate up to Standard V of male students has declined by 22.7%, from 68.9% in 1990 to 45.2% in 1997. That of female students has declined by 12%, from 55.6% in 1990 to 43.6% in 1997.

Higher education

Tertiary education in Malawi encompasses teacher training (primary and secondary education), technical education, university education and other post-secondary professional courses. Tertiary education admits a small proportion of secondary school graduates. According to the Malawi Gender and Primary Schooling Drafting Report (1999), in 1995 there were 7,500 places available in tertiary institutions including teacher training, technical and vocational colleges and the University. This means that only about 0.3% of the target population have access to higher education.



Tertiary education institutions may be classified into two categories: certificate colleges, and diploma and degree colleges. The certificate colleges comprise the Teacher Training, Technical Training, Accountancy, Police, Nursing, and Armed Forces Colleges, and the School for Health Sciences. There are currently six teacher training colleges in Malawi, one in the northern region, three in central region and two in the southern region. There are eight technical colleges under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour. The Malawi College of Accountancy is under the Accountant General. The Police Training College is under Ministry of Home Affairs, while the Armed Forces College is under the Ministry of Defense. There are five certificate nursing schools under the Ministry of Health and Population. It is worth noting that a number of private tertiary colleges have mushroomed including some with religious bias.

Tertiary institutions offering diploma and degree programmes include the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi, i.e. Chancellor College, Bunda College of Agricultural Sciences, the Malawi Polytechnic, Kamuzu College of Nursing and the College of Medicine, and the Secondary School Teacher Training College. The University of Malawi was established to meet middle- and high-level human resource requirements for the management and development of the country's economy. The University is given the responsibility to create a capacity for research necessary for the generation of knowledge essential for the country's economic development.

The Malawi Polytechnic offers a wide range of engineering, technical and business studies. The Mzuzu University is situated in the northern region of Malawi and offers a wide range of courses, including education. There are two private higher education institutions that have recently been established (and have been recognized by the government) offering diploma and degree programmes (in education). These are University of Livingstonia, and the African Bible College. The African Bible College is a private college of higher learning offering diploma and degree programmes also in the fields of theology and journalism.

There are also a number of institutions established by the private sector that are offering tertiary level training in various fields of study whose statistics are not easy to get.

In 1993/94, there were 3,684 students at the University of Malawi (an estimated 3,527 in 1999, of whom 895 women). The lecturer-student ratio was 1:17. This represents a drop from a ratio of 1:10.3 in 1992/93, mainly due to the increase of student population and staff attrition.

Special education

The government policy concerning education for students with special needs emphasizes their integration as much as possible into normal schools. To encourage parents to send their children with special needs to school, certain provisions exist for remission of fees depending on the needs of the family. In secondary schools and universities, the Malawi Council for the Handicapped provides more assistance to students on the basis of merit and need.



While integration has worked for the deaf and the blind, there is need for special facilities and programmes for persons with other disabilities. In 1983, the National Statistical Office carried out a survey and found an estimated 190,000 disabled in Malawi. Ninety-three percent of these lived in rural areas. Forty-five percent were in the 15-49 years age group, and more than half of the disabled aged 10 years or more had never received any formal education.

A study carried out in 1991 in six districts showed a very low percentage of disabled children attending school, with only 431 disabled out of 2,264 children enrolled.

Currently, there are four residential special schools for the deaf/hearing impaired and two for the blind/visually impaired at the primary school level. These residential schools accommodate learners with severe impairments who are separated from learners without visual and or hearing impairments. Specialist teachers teach these learners. On the other hand, learners with mild impairments are integrated in resource centres attached to regular schools where a specialist teacher is deployed to the school to support the children with special needs and regular teachers. The rest of the learners with impairments who cannot be accommodated in either residential special school or a resource centre attend other regular schools. Itinerant teachers who operate in several schools in a catchment area assist these learners. This Itinerant Programme is operational in 24 out of 33 education districts.

At the secondary school level there are eight secondary schools where deaf learners are integrated, nine secondary schools for the blind and only two where learners with physical disabilities are integrated. At college level there are students with all impairments at Montfort teacher training college, Domasi College of Education and Chancellor College (University of Malawi).

Government is planning to introduce a component of special needs education in each of the six regular teacher training colleges so that all the students, upon graduation, have skills on how to handle children with special needs. The major challenge in the management of special needs education is inadequate funding. Most of the specialized teaching and learning material are expensive and with inadequate funds there is always lack of materials in the centres. Residential schools and resource centres largely depend on donations.

Private education

In recent years, private schools have become a common feature in the country. The number of private schools has suddenly increased, particularly in urban areas due to the worsening quality of education provided in public schools characterized by extreme overcrowding and poor learning. Private schools charge fees, which in most cases are very high, and thus mainly cater for the urban elite.

For pre-school education, as there is not yet a national curriculum, institutions adopt the available curricula. Private primary and secondary schools follow the national curricula since their students sit the national examinations prepared by the Malawi National Examinations Board. There are, however, some institutions like the



designated schools which cater to children of diplomats and other foreigners. These schools follow international curricula.

The private schools offering secondary education register with the “Private Schools Association of Malawi” (PRISAM) which is aimed at providing a voice and a policy forum for all registered private schools. Private secondary schools account for about 22% of the existing enrolled secondary school students and about 4% of the age cohort.

The government intends to establish a Private Schools Board (PSB) which will be charged with the responsibility to:

- register, advise and monitor private educational institutions;
- encourage private secondary schools to improve their physical facilities through a system of loans which the government shall establish once the PSB is in place and modalities have been worked out;
- consider the needs of private secondary schools, especially in terms of teacher training;
- empower the Advisory Service Division of the Ministry of Education to closely monitor the standards of private secondary schools in liaison with the PSB.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The teaching-learning materials still remain inadequate, with a pupil to textbook ratio of 4:1 and a few supplementary readers. In 1993/94, the average classroom-pupil ratio was 1:120. In most urban schools, classroom-pupil ratios were as high as 1:200.

There is a serious shortage of school furniture. In almost 75% of primary schools, pupils in Standards I-IV sit on the floors which are in many cases unsurfaced.

Some projects funded by the international co-operation involve construction, furnishing and equipping of classrooms and teacher colleges, or assistance in the publication of textbooks, strengthening the inspectorate and school broadcasting. Assistance is also provided for training abroad, adult literacy programmes and other informal education projects.

There has been some improvement in the provision of teaching/learning materials. The pupil to textbook ratio is currently 1:1. There is still a serious shortage of pupils' furniture. About 90% of pupils do not have access to pupils' desks.

Adult and non-formal education

The youth policy in Malawi aims to offer expanded and quality skill-based education and training to out-of-school adolescents (age group 10-14 years) who for some reason have failed to attend formal primary school. It also aims to offer technical-



vocational skills to the out-of-school youth aged 14-25. The policy gives special priority to the urban and rural poor, street youth, school drop-outs in general, the disabled, the semi-literate/illiterate, the deviant, young women and the unemployed.

The national youth policy was launched in October 1995. The National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCM) was established a year later and the Youth Development Action Plan for 1996-2000 was prepared. The NYCM was created in order to: (a) work together with various agencies engaged in youth development activities and foster co-operation among those agencies to promote the provision of efficient youth development services; (b) encourage and carry out research in various fields concerning youth development programmes in collaboration with other research institutions; (c) undertake the responsibility of training of Youth Skills Training Centres staff to ensure the availability of suitably qualified tutors/instructors and administrators; (d) mobilize human, financial and material resources for the youth development programmes.

The National Youth Council Development Plan for 1996–2000 recognizes the important role of basic education as the foundation of all youth programmes. The Plan, therefore, emphasizes activities which will expand access, increase participation, improve quality and relevance of education. The Plan also recognizes that youth skills training for self-reliance constitute the core of youth development programmes. It thus envisaged the establishment of Youth Skills Training Centres through which various types of basic occupational skills will be taught in response to the needs of the youth and the respective communities in which they live. The Plan aims at ensuring equal opportunities of employment for youth in the formal employment sector. It also targets the promotion of small-scale entrepreneurs or co-operatives aimed at engaging the youth in income-generating business enterprises geared towards the promotion of self-reliance. It is expected that individual businesses or co-operative would serve a variety of purposes, such as creation of opportunities for self-employment; consolidation of skills gained in the training centres; and contribution to community and national development.

To date, no research has been carried out to establish how many youth in the age range and social categories involved have benefited from the available skills training. It is still not known how many of the total number of those that have been trained are employed either in the formal or informal sector. Similarly, it is not clear how many of the youth in this category need to be reached. In conclusion, it has been seen that between 1990 and 1999 education of out-of-school youth out of school has been dominated by the private sector and especially religious affiliated non-governmental organizations. The training offered has remained a service confined to limited scope and lacking in business management skills necessary for self-employment. It has also become clear that most of the local NGOs offering services in this sector are either recent developments or area/district-based institutions. (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Since 1986, the government has been offering adult literacy education through the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP). The NALP co-ordinates adult literacy services through an inter-agency advisory body, the National Advisory Council for Literacy and Adult Education. The Programme is administered by the National Centre for Literacy and Adult Education in conjunction with the Sugar



Corporation of Malawi, city and municipality councils of Zomba, Lilongwe and Blantyre, UNICEF and NGOs.

At the time of launching the NALP, the illiteracy rate was approximately 75% with absolute numbers being over 3 million illiterates. The Programme's goal was to make 2.5 million adults literate by the year 2000. The target population for the NALP are illiterate adults aged 15+. As regards the services delivered, at the grassroots level use is made of volunteer instructors identified and selected by communities through literacy committees. After selection, literacy instructors are trained in adult education teaching methods normally for a two-week period. Each literacy class comprises twenty-five learners. Literacy classes are conducted for ten months, four times a week in two hourly sessions, making a total of 365 instructional hours. Currently, a monthly honorarium of MK200 (about US\$4.4) is given to each instructor for having actually taught. At the end of literacy classes, successful learners are awarded a certificate. Literacy committees are responsible for the day-to-day running of NALP at the village level. The objectives of the Programme are as follows:

- to increase the attainment and use of literacy skills in order to sustain the process of learning and lifelong education for adults.
- to enable rural adults, particularly smallholder farmers, take full advantage of modern, simple but effective farming techniques, improve health habits and practices, and foster national integration through education.
- to improve the status, general knowledge and technical skills of rural people, especially smallholder farmers, by making them receptive to innovations and modernization through functional literacy and continuing education activities.

Malawi's illiteracy rate is currently estimated at 58%. Illiteracy among women has stagnated at 66% and the male illiteracy rate stands at 34%. Attempts have been made to make the adult literacy programme equivalent to Standard III of primary education or even above, but limited financial resources have hampered progress.

Functional activities have been incorporated into the literacy programme especially by the non-governmental organizations, but the problem has been the relevance of the functions to the current socio-economic conditions. A curriculum review is underway to improve the situation by incorporating social, economic, political and cultural concerns, which arose from a Needs Assessment Survey conducted in 1997. The lack of sufficient funding has negatively impacted on both the delivery and quality of services of the NALP.

Teaching staff

There were seven primary teacher-training colleges (TTC) with total enrolment of about 3,634 students in 1993/94. There are presently six TTCs with the total bed space for approximately 2,700 student teachers. 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: (i) a one-year full-time pre-service course for 540 untrained teachers at the Domasi Teacher Training College in 1987; (ii) a distance residential training programme called Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme was launched in 1990, with the objective of training 4,500 teachers in three years.

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 has also launched the Primary Teacher Development Programme (PTDP) which is designed to:

- implement an annual programme to introduce the newly recruited untrained teachers into their job and provide them with the necessary survival skills;
- 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);
- 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 implement the PTDP, the Ministry of Education has set up the Primary Teacher Development Unit (PTDU) as a permanent unit within the Ministry, directly answerable to the Principal Secretary.

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. This increase, however, did not correspond with the student/qualified tutor ratio. The student/qualified tutor ratio in 1994 was 19:1 while in 1999 it was 36:1.

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. Total output per year, for both the University and the College of Education, is currently about 300 teachers. 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. The total enrolment at Mzuzu University is only about 200.

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.

Educational research and information

Information is not available.

References

Kunje, D. and Chimombo, J. *Malawi: a baseline study of the teacher education system*. MUSTER Discussion Paper N° 5, Center for International Education, University of Sussex Institute of Education, Falmer, Brighton, UK, December 1999.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. *Education For All 2000 assessment report: Malawi*. (Under the co-ordination of J. Matola). Ministry of Education, Lilongwe, 1999.

Ministry of Education and Malawi National Commission for UNESCO. *The development of education in Malawi 1994-1996*. International Conference of Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996.

Ministry of Education and Malawi National Commission for UNESCO. *The development of education in Malawi, 2004 Report*. International Conference of Education, 47th session, Geneva, 2004.

Web resources

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training:
<http://www.malawi.gov.mw/Education/Home%20%20Education.htm> [In English.
Last checked: October 2007.]